

**Travelling into History: The Travel Writing and Narrative
History of William Dalrymple**

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Abstract: “Travelling into History: The Travel Writing and Narrative History of William Dalrymple”

Doctor of Philosophy.

William Dalrymple is a popular, bestselling author, initially known for his travel writing and subsequently for his popular narrative histories. He is also a prolific journalist and reviewer. His major publications include: *In Xanadu: A Quest* (1990), *City of Djinns: A Year in Delhi* (1993), *From the Holy Mountain: A Journey in the Shadow of Byzantium* (1997), *The Age of Kali: Indian Travels & Encounters* (1998), *White Mughals: Love & Betrayal in Eighteenth-Century India* (2002), *The Last Mughal: The Fall of a Dynasty, Delhi, 1857* (2006), and *Nine Lives: In Search of the Sacred in Modern India* (2009). In each of these works, Dalrymple focuses on his interactions with India and the Middle East.

This thesis examines Dalrymple’s travel writing and histories from a postcolonial perspective in order to map the relationship between travel and history writing, especially in colonial and postcolonial contexts. Travel writing is a textual representation of cultural interactions, even (or especially) if what eventuates is more a reflection of the “home” country than the traveller’s destination. In a similar way, the strategies by which we negotiate, choose and fashion historical narratives construct our place in the present.

Dalrymple's texts repeatedly consider the British Raj and its legacies. The thesis analyses the ways in which Indians, Britons, and the relationships between them are represented. It argues that the British Empire is represented through a sentimental and nostalgic lens, resulting in an overwhelmingly positive portrayal. This thesis is also interested in the ways in which Dalrymple's texts construct their authority. This narrative authority is achieved principally through an emphasis on the first-person, autobiographical experiences of the narrator, blended in varying degrees with an invocation of the importance of history (which is expressed through the narrator's relationship with primary source material). Dalrymple then uses the cultural capital that this authority provides to argue for the value of his version of travel and history writing over other (particularly theoretical, postcolonial) approaches.

In addition to his myriad print publications, Dalrymple has also written and performed in radio and television documentaries, and recently complemented his public speaking appearances (to promote *Nine Lives*) with a travelling stage show featuring Indian song, dance and religious practices. Dalrymple's influence extends beyond that of simple author, to that of an expert, celebrity figure who operates across media platforms to reach his audiences. This thesis undertakes a close reading of each of Dalrymple's monographs, as well as the ways in which they are positioned in the public sphere, both by their author and

by reviewers and critics. This reading enables an analysis of the arguments made about the past and present relationship between India and Britain within and outside the texts.

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Writing a PhD on travel writing and narrative history, and arguing for their serious consideration as cultural objects with important influences has the potential side-effect of losing one's sense of humour. In recognition of this tendency, I thank the very many good sorts (too many to name) that I'm lucky enough to have around me. Particular mention is due to: Nathan, Erenie, Rolf, Anica, Ruth and Letitia for their patience, generosity, friendship, and many laughs that helped to preserve my light heartedness throughout this degree.

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Introduction:

In the lead-up to the 2011 Jaipur Literature Festival Hartosh Singh Bal caused a stir in the Indian magazine *Open*. Singh Bal highlighted the influence of British taste on the Indian literary scene, using the figure of William Dalrymple, co-director of the Festival, as the prime example. How, Singh Bal asks, has a young, white, amusing travel writer become one of the chief arbiters of literary taste in India? Singh Bal's "The Literary Raj" is one of few public critiques of Dalrymple, and it is accompanied by a large colour cartoon of the author dressed in the style of a Mughal ruler. Dalrymple responded in the same week with a strongly worded letter to the editor. He defends the multi-faceted nature of the Festival, and calls Singh Bal's treatment of him, including the caricature, "racist" ("Blatantly Racist").

Perhaps this expose of Dalrymple's status works against his carefully maintained self-positioning as equally part of, and divided between, India and Britain. His objection to his characterisation as a white Mughal is curious, given that this is a representational strategy that Dalrymple often employs himself. Dalrymple's letter is published alongside a corresponding reply by Singh Bal, which is chiefly devoted to combating the charge of racism. He clarifies his earlier arguments, reiterating that the central point of his examination of Dalrymple's presence high in India's literary strata is that it "says something about the Indian literary scene" ("Does Dalrymple Know"). The presence of such conversations about cultural authority in the public

sphere is encouraging, for they echo similar in this scholarly examination of Dalrymple's work.

This thesis examines the writing of William Dalrymple. Each of his five monographs is discussed in a separate chapter, while his prolific journalistic output (encompassing reviews, interviews and articles) is considered in the conclusion. Despite its focus on a single author the thesis is not a biographical narrative about Dalrymple and his works. Instead, it is a serious critical engagement with a kind of text that is traditionally less-well represented in literary studies: popular, middlebrow non-fiction. Dalrymple's popularity and engagement with colonial history and discourse, as well as the way his work spans multiple genres, make his texts particularly interesting examples of the ways in which popular non-fiction functions rhetorically in the public sphere. Dalrymple is a prolific, well-known (at least to a certain section of the reading public) and best-selling author. This is a study of his output, an examination of a successful negotiation with the literary marketplace, and an analysis of the representational strategies that enable or contribute to that success.

Dalrymple's oeuvre is interesting because of the ways in which all of its components function together. His shift between genres, modes and media is complex and continuing. The move from travel writing to narrative history, for example, is not simply chronological: Dalrymple participates in the two genres simultaneously, as they run parallel to and intersect with each other in complex ways. The sum of Dalrymple's body of work is significantly greater than its parts. Considered separately, Dalrymple's travel writing, narrative histories and essay collections may appear of little consequence for a critical study: there

have undoubtedly been more interesting travel narratives, more gripping narrative histories and more in-depth essays on India published. When taken together, Dalrymple's output enables a study that engages with crucial questions of power, representation and cultural capital in the public sphere. Such questions drive this project forward.

Overall, I am interested in the ways in which Dalrymple's texts operate in relation to imperialism and its legacies. Lydia Wevers emphasises the colonial discourse that informs travel writing, and its fruitfulness as an area of study. She highlights "The many fronts on which travel writing facilitates an intersection between a distant culture and a present enterprise, and the ways in which those intersections illustrate pressure points, assumptions and attitudes" (2). This project examines the assumptions, attitudes and arguments advanced by Dalrymple's texts and the relationship of these rhetorical strategies with colonial and postcolonial discourses. I take inspiration from Peter Hulme's description of his *Colonial Encounters* project, which states that it deals "persistently, perhaps obsessively, with narrative structures, tropes, phrases, even single words, in the belief that these can be revealed as sites of political struggle" (xiv).

There has been very little scholarly engagement with Dalrymple's work, although a multitude of reviews, features and interviews follow each of his publications. The sole academic article to date that deals with Dalrymple's travel writing is by Antara Datta. Her article was published in the special issue of the *Yearly Review, Texts Travelling Text*. "Dalrymple in the Eye of the History Storm" is an overwhelmingly laudatory assessment of *City of Djinn*s

and *The Age of Kali* and what they represent as contributions to the field of travel literature. Datta's enthusiasm for Dalrymple's travel writing is evident in her characterisation of author and text as self-aware, redemptive forces for equality: "[Dalrymple] is aware of the colonial baggage that the [travel] genre carries, and he redeems, apart from history, the genre too, which has been doomed to academic pigeonholing since Said. Through his writing and references, Dalrymple exposes cultural hierarchies that are more equitable" (145). Datta argues that Dalrymple "use[s] the travel form to address some of the most crucial debates of our times" (135), particularly in relation to history in a "politically recuperative" project (136). Datta's is certainly the most positive of the scholarly engagements with Dalrymple's travel writing.

In a much more restrained piece, Tim Youngs conducted an in-depth interview with Dalrymple that was published in *Studies in Travel Writing* in 2005. Youngs converses with Dalrymple about all of his monographs published at the time of the interview, with an emphasis on his methods and writing practice. Through a familiarity with the details of the works and a keen questioning style, Youngs' interview forms an important engagement with Dalrymple and his texts.

The few articles that have closely examined Dalrymple's texts have focused more often on his narrative histories than his travel writing. Gyan Prakash's 2007 response to *The Last Mughal* was published in *The Nation*. In this article, Prakash is chiefly concerned with Dalrymple's overarching arguments for the recognition / reevaluation of the East India Company's involvement in India as a symbiotic, hybridised relationship, as opposed to one

of domination and appropriation. He counts Dalrymple among those he calls “revisionist” historians who “counsel us ... to lower the anti-imperial temperature and write old-fashioned narrative history” (25). He stridently opposes Dalrymple’s arguments for hybridity and sentimental reciprocity, stating:

to retail the eighteenth century as a time when Europeans and non-Europeans overcame racial and religious boundaries is to fly in the face of historical evidence. To see the crossing of imperial borders in the lives of “White Mughals” is to misrepresent both the nature of interracial liaisons and imperial conquest. (30)

Prakash’s argument appears within the specific parameters of a debate around conflicting historical approaches. For this project, it provides part of the broader context for Dalrymple’s narrative histories, and the ways in which they are received in the popular press and by other historians.

Joy Wang’s “Sentimentalizing Empire: Interracial Romance in Philip Meadows Taylor’s *Seeta*” is principally concerned with Meadows Taylor’s novel, but Wang begins her analysis with an examination of Dalrymple’s *White Mughals*. Wang’s literary study draws parallels between the two texts’ central inter-racial relationships, and the work that these relationships perform, stating that “*White Mughals* is both a work of sentimental romance and of revisionist history” (113). She describes Dalrymple’s “myopic optimism” and his “political evasion” (114) before moving on to the central focus of her argument.

This thesis takes a step towards addressing the lack of scholarly attention that Dalrymple has received, and engages closely with each of his books. While each chapter focuses on an individual text, the thesis as a whole seeks to highlight the importance and fruitfulness of a critical examination of middlebrow literature. Of chief interest is the ways in which each of Dalrymple's texts constructs their authority, and the arguments that drive them. The uncomplicated reading of non-fiction texts by the vast majority of reviewers and commentators (and therefore, presumably, the wider reading public), makes a critical examination of Dalrymple's writing all the more crucial.

Dalrymple's representations are examined in the context of pertinent scholarship on travel writing, historiography and postcolonial theory. Although it moves chronologically through Dalrymple's monographs, this analysis does not privilege an overarching teleology of growth and progress. Instead, the structure provides a platform for analysing the various ways in which Dalrymple represents himself and his texts. Broadly speaking, Dalrymple's books can be divided into three distinct areas: travel writing, narrative history and collections of his journalism. With the exception of its treatment of his journalism, the structure of the thesis resists the urge to group Dalrymple's texts by genre, instead allowing for a greater consideration of writing that occupies various points on a shifting continuum between travel and history. I emphasise the ways in which Dalrymple's works both fit within and challenge the boundaries between travel writing and narrative history. Each text provides an opportunity to analyse different issues and is approached from varying

theoretical standpoints. This examination takes each of Dalrymple's texts as an example of different rhetorical strategies, but it emphasises the extent to which all of Dalrymple's publications work toward the same representational ends.

The first chapter examines Dalrymple's travel book *In Xanadu: A Quest*, published in 1990 to critical and popular acclaim. Of all Dalrymple's texts, *In Xanadu* conforms most obviously to the generic narrative conventions of travel writing, and provides both an ideal starting point for examining Dalrymple's writing and an opportunity to survey the travel theory employed throughout this analysis. Hulme's careful formulation of the colonial discourses expressed through the travel genre informs this chapter, and indeed the project as a whole. *In Xanadu* chronicles Dalrymple's journey in the footsteps of Marco Polo, accompanied by fellow-students Laura and Louisa in their long vacation from university. Of particular interest are the ways in which Dalrymple represents his first-person protagonist, William. Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan identify the widespread trope of the English gentleman traveller; *In Xanadu* continues this lineage. Also evident is the extent to which William's characterisation in this text is modelled upon that of earlier British travellers such as Eric Newby, Robert Byron and, almost inevitably, Bruce Chatwin (given Chatwin's own debts to these previous travel writers). The characterisation of *In Xanadu*'s protagonist differs from these antecedents, however, by being constantly accompanied by a female companion. The contrast in representation between William and Laura or William and Louisa provides the chief means of defining the character of the protagonist, as well as inserting a gendered power dynamic into the centre of the text.

The journey in the footsteps of Marco Polo is a fast-paced chronicle of William's observations on the countries and people encountered, and the discomforts and hardships he and his companions face in the act of travel. Wevers' analysis of nineteenth-century New Zealand travel writing highlights travellers' awareness of class and social hierarchy. The juxtaposition that *In Xanadu* makes between Britain and the East, and between William, Laura and Louisa and the locals with whom they interact, advances a sense of nostalgic imperialism, and of racial and class superiority.

Chapter two deals with Dalrymple's second travel book *City of Djinnns: A Year in Delhi* (1993), which won the 1994 Thomas Cook Travel Book Award and the Sunday *Times* Young British Writer of the Year Award. As suggested by the title, this is a city-based rather than a journey-based travel text. The impressions and stories that Dalrymple conveys about Delhi and his experiences there regularly move into the realm of history. In particular, the work is concerned with the historical (and continuing) relationship between Britain and India. The ways in which this relationship is represented vary throughout *City of Djinnns*, but a positive, sentimental view of the British imperial endeavour remains constant. The many avenues that *City of Djinnns* takes to advance this conservative representation of India and its past are examined throughout the chapter. Chief among these is a strong Orientalising tendency, especially evident in the text's preoccupation with gendered and sexualised descriptions of Mughal courts, dancing girls, decadence and courtesans. *City of Djinnns* uses descriptions of the different forms of Delhi's

architecture to emphasise particular aspects of the city's populations, past and present, with a focus on Mughal and British colonial structures.

William spends his time in Delhi accompanied by one of a variety of companions: his wife, Olivia, or various locals such as Persian scholar Dr Jaffery or taxi driver Balvinder Singh. Essentially, this text is about settling in and exploring a city—anecdotes about William and Olivia's living arrangements, their landlady, and her family are common. In contrast to the nostalgic imperial adventure mode of *In Xanadu*, this is a story of William as a belated settler colonist.

The third chapter focuses on *From the Holy Mountain: A Journey in the Shadow of Byzantium* (1997), which moves away from the stationary, historically inflected narrative of *City of Djinnns* to a more traditional, movement-oriented travel text. *From the Holy Mountain* chronicles William's journey through the Middle East, following in the wake of sixth century Eastern Christian monks John Moschos and Sophronius the Sophist. *From the Holy Mountain* is positioned as a more serious travel text than *In Xanadu*, with its aim being to investigate the fate of the communities of Eastern Christians since the time of the Byzantine Empire. I am interested in the ways in which the central character is constructed, and, in turn, how this influences the text's narrative authority. This book emphasises William's Catholic background and includes elements of a journey of spiritual development, in contrast to the intellectual, British gentleman traveller invoked for *In Xanadu*. *From the Holy Mountain* uses several different authorising modes, moving between them depending on the particular narrative situation: affective, involved and

autobiographical; detached, observing and journalistic; or scholarly, historical authority.

In contrast to *City of Djinnns*, this religious travel narrative is influenced to a large extent by journalistic, rather than historical, conventions. This results in an emphasis on William's exchanges with the Eastern Christians that he encounters, presented as reported speech. *From the Holy Mountain* exhibits a tension between the modes of serious investigative journalism and entertaining travel writing, further highlighting the complexity of Dalrymple's movement within and between different generic forms.

Chapter four is concerned with Dalrymple's first narrative history, *White Mughals: Love and Betrayal in Eighteenth-Century India* (2002). *White Mughals* won the 2003 Wolfson History Prize (for histories aimed at a general readership) and the Scottish Book of the Year prize. This text is centred around a love story between James Kirkpatrick, the British East India Company's Resident in Hyderabad from 1797 to 1805, and the young, elite Muslim woman Khair un-Nissa. In telling this story, *White Mughals* puts forward a particular view of the broader British / Indian relationship at this time. Rather than addressing the veracity of Dalrymple's historical narrative, this chapter examines the ways in which the text represents Britain, India and their imperial relationship, as well as the individual historical figures. There is much metonymic slippage between the representation of Kirkpatrick and Khair un-Nissa's involvement and that of Britain and India.

Expressions of power and representations of gender are crucial to this book, given the text's cross-cultural romantic preoccupation. Betty Joseph's

and Jenny Sharpe's (separate) insistence on the importance of reading against the grain, and reading documents for their omissions as well as their contents undergird this chapter's interrogation of *White Mughals*. Their emphasis on the partial and contingent presence of women in imperial narratives (and the uses to which they are put) gives focus to the examination of the ways in which Dalrymple utilises constructions of gender and sexuality.

The formal ways that this text is constructed also come under scrutiny, using Hayden White's arguments about the ways in which every historical narrative is a product of choice, emphasis and interpretation. I also examine smaller structural details such as the text's chosen system of referencing, paying particular attention to the ways in which it functions to further the narrative and to confirm Dalrymple's authority as a historian. Central to this chapter is the argument that *White Mughals* retains an autobiographical, first-person narrative that forms the backbone of the narrative: that of William's journey, as a historian, through the archives, with the sources used simultaneously to further the romantic history, and as discoveries and developments in the narrative of William's research. Viewed in this light, the strength of the links between Dalrymple's travel and narrative history texts are apparent.

Chapter five focuses on Dalrymple's second work of narrative history, *The Last Mughal: The Fall of a Dynasty, Delhi, 1857* (2006). In this book, Dalrymple develops his arguments for the value of narrative history, and for *The Last Mughal* as an important historical text, alongside a concomitant dismissal of academic approaches to historical scholarship. I analyse the ways

in which Dalrymple positions himself and his text in the wider historiographic field, and the authorising strategies that they undertake. Of Dalrymple's oeuvre, this text is one that engages most explicitly with the violence and militarism of the British imperial presence in India, through its treatment of the Mutiny of 1857. This chapter follows the rhetorical strategies that enable a simultaneous engagement with imperial violence and an overwhelmingly positive representation of the British in India.

The Last Mughal makes much of the archival sources that it utilises as a central basis for its authority. Such a move is necessitated by the text's vocal opposition to academic history and (particularly postcolonial) theory. In recognition of this textual focus, my analysis highlights the ways in which Dalrymple uses certain sources to further his representation of a particular vision of imperial history in India. It is naturally also informed by Edward Said's *Orientalism*, chiefly through an analysis of the ways in which Dalrymple uses *Orientalism* and Said as a metonym for postcolonial scholarship as a whole. Tony Ballantyne's reminder that colonial archives constitute, rather than simply record, imperialism assists in an analysis of works such as Dalrymple's that valorise primary source material.

I conclude my examination of Dalrymple's output by focusing on two collections of his journalism: *The Age of Kali: Indian Travels and Encounters* (1998) and *Nine Lives: In Search of the Sacred in Modern India* (2009). These collections are separated out from the otherwise-chronological approach of this project because they function as an overview of two decades of Dalrymple's writing. These texts also act as reminders of the complex, overlapping nature

of Dalrymple's oeuvre, which sees his journalism existing alongside and informing his monograph publications and their reception. Likewise, his monographs give authority to, and intersect with, his journalistic publications.

Further, the conclusion provides an opportunity to closely examine the ways in which Dalrymple functions outside of the text, in the public sphere, and his modes of self-fashioning. Dalrymple's continually growing celebrity and expert status provides another example of the extent to which his oeuvre operates beyond the boundaries of individual texts. Dalrymple is a gatekeeper figure, not just in the field of literature (as Singh Bal notes in reference to the Jaipur Literature Festival), but also in the areas of Indian history, Indian religions, the Middle East and Islam. The combination of his cultural capital and the vision of empire that Dalrymple puts forward has implications for popular conceptions of Britain's and India's imperial past. This thesis seeks to highlight and analyse these representational processes in order to challenge the nostalgic, Orientalist notions that they perpetuate.

Dalrymple's presence in the public sphere functions as an extension of his central, first-person characterisation in each of his monographs. Terry Caesar highlights travel writing's complexities, "commitment to individualism" and its similarities to "autobiography or memoir, just as its claim to knowledge discloses its roots in the essay or treatise" (143). There are up to three Dalrymple figures involved in each text: the central, autobiographical character, the narrator, and finally the author / public figure. To avoid confusion, throughout the thesis I refer to the texts' author and

narrator as “Dalrymple,” and the iterations of the autobiographical character as “William.”

Dalrymple’s writing is classified as non-fiction, which, even in literary studies, can result in different critical approaches. For the general reader, non-fiction connotes truth. The rhetorical advantage and authenticity gained from the generalised categorisation of Dalrymple’s writing as non-fiction is significant. One example is the authority that can be acquired through classificatory modes as simple as the ubiquitous “non-fiction / travel” category on the back cover of *City of Djinnns*. Such classifications influence bookstores’ decisions about placement, and inform potential readers’ choices and expectations. Pam Morris remarks in regard to realist novels that they collude with “functional reason to produce philistine readerly narratives. These give comfort to the reader’s moral and cultural expectations of what life should be like rather than challenging the existing conceptual and socio-political status quo” (37). Whatever is represented, the text’s realist form functions to reinforce a sense of truth and necessity. Morris’ charge can be extended to apply to non-fiction works such as Dalrymple’s, whose realist narrative structure functions in a conservative manner. David Carter characterises middlebrow literature by its “distance from low commercial media, at one end, and from the new academy (rather than ‘high culture’) at the other” (198). Locating Dalrymple and his works in the area of middlebrow literature provides a theoretical context which assists in analysing how his texts operate.

Carter has much to say about the self-improving impulse of the middlebrow (198). The generic expectation that non-fiction is

unproblematically truthful works with this self-educatory drive and ascribes greater value to non-fiction genres. Reading fiction and reading non-fiction can be seen to “improve” the reader in different capacities. Non-fiction is more easily aligned with the principles of self-education, with fiction being more generally (and ephemerally) represented as imparting skills in aesthetic / artistic appreciation and therefore facilitating improvements in judgement, taste and social status. Dalrymple’s monographs serve as particularly resonant examples of this non-fiction middlebrow market, and analysis of these texts casts some light on the ways in which this area of literature and reading practice function.

The study of travel and travel writing always requires an engagement with the links between travel, privilege and imperialism: “to talk about travel is to enter into a terrain redolent with markers of imperialism” (Gilbert and Johnston 1). This connection is readily apparent in Dalrymple’s works. Dalrymple’s evident interest in and (precisely calibrated) engagement with the imperial history of his destinations further highlights the centrality of the representation of imperialism to an analysis of his oeuvre.

Central to a postcolonial reading of Dalrymple’s travel and history writing is the extent to which his texts can be read as belated echoes or iterations of prior colonial relationships and representations. Essentially, Dalrymple’s texts portray a privileged, British protagonist who travels to and writes about India (and occasionally other destinations). Not only does an anachronistically characterised William repeat the traditional colonial journey from imperial metropole to colonial outpost, but Dalrymple compounds this

connection by making British India (rather than India itself) his chief subject. This double connection with Britain's imperial presence in India means that the ways in which the British-Indian relationship is represented is all the more significant.

This project highlights the importance of the ways in which Dalrymple's texts use sex and gender, particularly as a way of structuring their representations of the relationship between India and Britain. India is consistently feminised and sexualised, with regular features of this rhetorical strategy being a focus on harems, dancing girls and courtesans. The ways in which Dalrymple's texts represent Britain are more complex and flexible than their treatment of India. On occasion, the British are also feminised (through a focus on the figure of the memsahib), which works toward a sympathetic representation of the Raj through an emphasis on its vulnerability and frailty. The most overt gendered and sexualised representations in Dalrymple's early monographs are their uses of the figure of rape. In his later works this shifts to a narrative of romantic love in what Hulme calls "the ideal of cultural harmony through romance" (141). Dalrymple also embodies this affective connection between the two countries in his self-fashioning as a sentimental India enthusiast. In an interview with Sanjay Austa, he portrays himself as in the grip of his harmless, yet consuming, obsession: "Some people fancy stamps, some railways, some pigeons ... Well, I fancy India" ("Indian Historians"). Such declarations of interest, as well as advancing attractive possibilities for cross-cultural interaction, also allow for more negative representations of the

country. In the introduction to *The Age of Kali*, Dalrymple asserts his feeling for the nation, stating that the text is a “work of love” (xiii).

Dalrymple’s performance as knowingly nostalgic, born-a-century-too-late, with a level of self-deprecation sufficient to engender his readers’ sympathy, is a conscious move towards reviving the acceptability of the imperial-style traveller / scholarly Orientalist figure. For Debbie Lisle, this nostalgic link is common: “travel writers maintain their relevance in a globalised world by mimicking their colonial forebears” (3). Lisle states that the nostalgia that permeates contemporary travel writing is attractive to readers because it “provides a sanctuary from contemporary ‘politically correct’ attitudes about race, gender, sexuality and class” (19). The continuing popularity of Dalrymple’s works shows a widespread receptiveness to this nostalgic, sentimental version of an imperial British past. As Scott McCracken succinctly posits, “narratives read by large numbers of people are indicative of widespread hopes and fears” (2). Dalrymple shifts between a glorification of British mobility and travel and (specific forms of) Indian civilisation in each text, but the effect remains static: to rehabilitate the history of the British empire for a predominantly Western audience.

The anachronistic, belated portrayal of Dalrymple as a digestible representative of a quintessential British imperial traveller normalises and makes acceptable discourses of Orientalism. This restorative project is also advanced through an approach to imperial history and historiography that privileges narratives of mutual respect and exchange while neglecting those of violence and appropriation. The critique of Dalrymple’s texts is not based on

any kind of argument about their veracity (or otherwise) in relation to an outside, absolute historical truth. Rather, I borrow Kay Schaffer's phrase to describe its approach as one that "assumes that there is no guarantee of knowledge beyond the textual representations of the event" (3). Sharpe's description of *Allegories of Empire* as "a reading of the narratives that go into contemporary remakings of the past" (14) is also one that resonates here. It is the ways in which these texts construct particular travel and historical narratives that is of interest.

Dalrymple's texts represent British imperialism in varying ways. Often, the works' representational strategies construct a relationship between an imperial past and a multicultural present, arguing for an imperialism distinguished by tolerance and hybridity. In his classic but still useful work *The Whig Interpretation of History* (1931), H. Butterfield chronicles the pitfalls of turning history into an untheorised narrative of progress and emphasising similarities between past and present situations (34). He also notes the tendency to classify historical figures in relation to modernity: "historical personages can easily and irresistibly be classed into the men who furthered progress and the men who tried to hinder it" (11). I examine Dalrymple's choices in this kind of classification and what implications they have for his representation of postcolonial British / Indian relations.

In the end, what concerns this thesis is power. Dalrymple's influence and authority grow in relation to the number of books that he publishes (and sells), and also in concert with the ways that he positions and promotes his extra-textual authorial persona. Dalrymple, in his particular middlebrow field, has

become both celebrity and expert, each with their respective resonances of popularity and dedication to knowledge. Graham Huggan notes in reference to Dalrymple that “often travel writers are favoured by the media, not only as reviewers of ‘Indian’ (and other ‘Third World’) material, but also as expert commentators on ‘Indian’ (and other ‘Third World’) societies and cultures” (275). In a circular way, Dalrymple’s celebrity and expert status give greater weight to the arguments and representations he makes within and about his texts (which are, themselves, about power and relations between coloniser and colonised). Joe Moran describes literary celebrities as containing “elements of the idea of the charismatic, uniquely inspired creative artist [but that they] ... also gain legitimacy from the notion of celebrity as supported by broad popularity and success in the marketplace” (7). Moran’s argument is made in relation to celebrity fiction authors, and thus emphasises the creative prowess of the writer. In the case of Dalrymple’s non-fiction, this “creative” inspiration can be replaced by an appropriate gesture towards his first-hand experience, which informs his ability to discover or choose the story to be told.

James Clifford analyses the cachet of experience in the field in the context of ethnography. As part of a larger critique of the problematic, under-theorised, nature of authority in ethnography, Clifford pointedly states: “Experiential authority is based on a ‘feel’ for the foreign context, a kind of accumulated savvy and a sense of the style of a people or place” (35). The authority that experience confers is described by Clifford as persuasively egalitarian: “Experience evokes a participatory presence, a sensitive contact with the world to be understood, a rapport with its people, a concreteness of

perception. It also suggests a cumulative, deepening knowledge” (37). Further, and crucially, experience shores up its own authority through its inherently opaque and individualistic nature: “Like ‘intuition,’ it is something that one does or does not have, and its evocation often smacks of mystification” (Clifford 35). It is this sense of experiential authority on which Dalrymple’s celebrity status draws.

Dalrymple’s fame strengthens his authority as a regular reviewer and commentator. As well as his presence within his texts, Dalrymple performs a version of this persona in his interactions with the public sphere; through his public appearances, wardrobe and the arguments he makes, Dalrymple seeks to collapse the distance between author, narrator, central character and public persona. Pierre Bourdieu describes what he calls “bodily hexis,” as “One’s relationship to the social world and to one’s proper place in it [expressed in] in the space and time one feels entitled to take from others, more precisely, in the space one claims with one’s body in physical space” (474). Dalrymple uses his bodily hexis and celebrity status to add to the authority of his texts. Wevers aptly describes travel books as “expressions of the effectiveness of print in putting the world on show and delineating a geography of power” (2). This project maps these geographies of power, observing the connections between text and author, subject and authority, and audience and status.

Nicholas Thomas recognises the ways in which the cultural and governmental elements of colonialism are intertwined (while simultaneously resisting a conception of colonialism as an overwhelming monolith). The success of Dalrymple’s writing, which retails a sentimental, nostalgic

representation of the British empire, indicates a level of public receptiveness to such a portrayal. Whether this stems from a conservative desire for a return to imperialism, or a globalised, multicultural welcoming of cross-cultural interactions is unclear. Through its close examination of Dalrymple's travel and history texts, this study gestures towards a broader consideration of the rhetorical work that popular travel and narrative history performs.

Chapter One: *In Xanadu: A Quest*

Introduction:

The title of William Dalrymple's first book, *In Xanadu: A Quest*, immediately mobilises specific literary and adventure tropes. First published in 1990, the work provides a fast-paced, humorous jaunt through the Middle East and into China following in the footsteps of Marco Polo. The popular and acclaimed work won the *Yorkshire Post* Best First Work Award and a Scottish Arts Council Spring Book Award for 1990, and was a bestseller. For Mary Baine Campbell, "'travel writing' provokes certain kinds of essentially literary questions and formulations. Most interesting ... are works of literary criticism that find themselves directly facing issues of power, knowledge, and identity as a consequence of the very nature of the formal matters raised" (263). Despite the positioning of *In Xanadu* as a light, entertaining student excursion, this chapter takes up Campbell's challenge to analyse the text's expressions of dynamics of power, knowledge and identity. Dalrymple represents himself throughout this book as a young, highly-educated, upper-class, British protagonist, nostalgically referring back to previous generations of British travellers and empire. The work is continually concerned with the strategic construction and maintenance of this central character.

The text leaves an overall impression of a celebration of unreconstructed Orientalism, advanced by the representation of the protagonist as a privileged, nineteenth-century-style amateur intellectual, in combination with the narrator's pronouncements about the places and people visited in the course of

In Xanadu. For Edward Said, “Orientalism is premised on exteriority, that is, on the fact that the Orientalist, poet or scholar, makes the Orient speak, describes the Orient, renders its mysteries plain for and to the West” (20-21). *In Xanadu* is a nostalgic tribute to past European travel to and writing about the Orient, and a central component of the protagonist’s characterisation is this unspoken relationship with Orientalism. This chapter examines the text’s relationships with past travellers, from Marco Polo to Bruce Chatwin, and imperial contexts. Lydia Wevers reminds us that

travel writing involved the author in what Mary Louise Pratt described as the “anti-conquest”: writing which represented travellers, explorers and naturalists as innocent investigators, motivated by their pursuit of knowledge, whose journeys happened to occur at the historical moment of European dispossession and appropriation. (3)

Although texts such as Dalrymple’s are very different to the imperial ones to which Pratt and Wevers refer, it is fruitful to examine the connections between the eras, rather than rule strict delineations between them. In fact, Dalrymple’s narrative encourages such connections, with its explicit characterisation of William as a naïve undergraduate investigator, albeit one fascinated by, rather than actively participating in, the imperial moment.

Wevers also reiterates the necessarily classed nature of travel and travel writing, which she sees as concealed by the genre’s focus on the individual protagonist:

The personal dimensions of travel writing, the celebration of the traveller and the journey which gives travel writing its narrative flavour, disguises

the way in which it is also the expression of a social group characterised by both a cultural conviction that the experience and observations of European people should be recorded, and an economic and physical capacity to undertake long and often difficult journeys. In other words, the focus on the heroic, personalised aspects of travel conceals the fact that it is a class activity, enabled by financial status and cultural knowledge. (6)

Similarly, Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan note that “the freedom of travel writers is not the freedom of all: it is the privilege of mobility that allows them to travel, and to write” (4). It is worth emphasising that the privilege of mobility is one that comes with class, cultural and economic capital.

The chief manner in which an Orientalist flavour is imparted to *In Xanadu* is through the characterisation of William. Unlike the protagonists of many travel texts, Dalrymple does not travel alone. He is accompanied at all stages of his journey, first by Laura and then by Louisa. Although Dalrymple dominates the text, these two characters are central and are appropriately recognised in the acknowledgements: “it must be obvious to anyone who reads this book that I owe an enormous debt to two people without whom the whole enterprise could never have got off the ground. I dedicate this book with love and apologies to Laura and Louisa” (np). Louisa was Dalrymple’s girlfriend with whom he planned the trip, who, despite breaking it off with him for Edward before the journey begins, agrees to travel half of the route with him. Laura, on the other hand, is a casual acquaintance whom Dalrymple knows by reputation. He describes their initial encounter:

Reeling from the blow [of Louisa's rejection], I went off to a dinner party where I poured out my heart to the stranger who was sitting on my left. The recipient was called Laura. ... Laura was as impulsive as she was formidable. At the end of supper she announced that she would take Louisa's place. Over the next two weeks Laura swept me around London as she slashed at red tape, assaulted passport officials, and humbled the bureaucracy of the Asian embassies. (12)

This passage, set prior to the commencement of the journey, in combination with the acknowledgements' statement that the presence of these two women enabled the project to "get off the ground," sets up the central dynamic between these characters from the text's opening. The women are active, while William is carried along with them, whether it be represented through his acceptance of Louisa's "new man" (12) as a "*fait accompli*" (11-12), or being "swept ... around London" with Laura (12). William's passivity accentuates his innocence and naïveté. He is almost a fellow-traveller in his own story—present to record events (such as Laura "assault[ing] passport officials") but distanced from the action.

Through an overarching concern with authenticity, credibility and truth (variously bolstered by the text's journalistic and historiographic leanings), Dalrymple the author and William the character are brought ever closer together as the book progresses. Through this manoeuvre, Dalrymple stresses the straightforwardly autobiographical, rather than the inventive, possibilities of the travel genre. In conversation with Tim Youngs, Dalrymple firmly states: "I never consciously created a persona around the 'I'. The 'I', I suppose, is the

me of that particular moment, and how I see things at that particular moment” (40). Dalrymple’s denial of the use of fictional elements in the construction of the iterations of the character of William glosses any changes in the ways in which William is represented (within individual texts, or, particularly, across Dalrymple’s body of work) as accurate reflections of Dalrymple’s intellectual and emotional development. Such a disingenuous approach necessarily privileges the centrality of the authorial figure, and relies upon the (inherently personal) authority of autobiography for its legitimacy.

Paul Smethurst positions narrative authority in travel writing as “the figurative re-enactment of (or the prelude to) assuming actual authority of peoples and places travelled to and written about” (4). He emphasises the importance of analysing the “strategies by which narrative (and actual) authority are sought, assumed, applied, and questioned in the context of both imperial and post-colonial travel narratives” (4). In the case of *In Xanadu*, the central strategies for the construction of narrative authority are the appeal to autobiographical authenticity and the association of William with a phalanx of past, canonical travellers. The characterisation of the protagonist is central to both of these authorizing strategies.

By utilising the opening phrase of Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s “Kubla Khan or, a Vision in a Dream: A Fragment” for the title of his first travel book, Dalrymple achieves a collection of effects. The reference works to position the text in a particularly British, romantic, poetic (and vaguely Orientalist) manner, at the same time as investing it with the authority of Coleridge’s canonical status. Balanced by the subtitle, *A Quest*, which suggests more concrete,

practical elements, *In Xanadu* harnesses the association with the poem's mythical qualities in order to effect a sense of the exotic. This association is strengthened, and overlaid with a lacquer of Romantic values of the importance of poetry, when William and Louisa solemnly recite the poem in unison upon reaching their destination (300). The comment by their local escort at this recitation, humorously translated as "English people, very, very bonkers" (300), affirms their stubborn dedication to an intellectual, romantic ideal. The text's title immediately alters the object of the journey for the travellers: instead of journeying to (Chinese) Shang-tu—a name mentioned only once throughout the text (285)—they seek the (British) literary destination named by Coleridge.

Beginning in Cyprus, the text traces William's journey from there to Jerusalem, through Iran, Pakistan, India and across China to the destination "Xanadu," following as far as possible the route taken by Marco Polo. Dalrymple chronicles his impressions of the places he visits and the people he meets, and provides comic narration of his travels, rich in dialogue and dramatisation of his experiences and the characters with whom he interacts. For the most part the work is arranged chronologically, echoing the trajectory of the central journey. The text's opening chapter makes much of the legendary, familiar nature of Polo's travels. The chapter begins in Jerusalem, with a conversation between William and a Franciscan monk, from whom he collects the holy oil to take on his journey. It then moves through a brief narrative history of the Polos and the historical context in which they travelled, to an anecdote introducing the reader to William's first encounter with the

figure of Marco Polo. This structure enables the text to start in the middle of the action, with an informal impression of the central character. The reader is then informed (or reminded) of the wider context, and then given details to introduce the protagonist.

Peter Hulme succinctly characterises the particular variant of travel writing to which *In Xanadu* belongs as “in the wake” of earlier travellers (“In the Wake” 18). Hulme observes that “The writing of these journeys inevitably reflects their secondary nature—they are dependent on what some earlier and almost by definition, more famous predecessor has undertaken” (18). This structure provides many benefits to the travel writer, including a ready-made route, structure and an indication of the work’s subject. Hulme sees the chief value of the text that follows a known route or traveller in its “asymptotical relationship to the ‘original,’ the story of the first journey which is usually glimpsed beneath the contemporary text, often held physically in the hand of the travel writer, sometimes quoted, sometimes not” (18-19). For Debbie Lisle, these kinds of journeys inevitably foreground the relationship between the historic and contemporary narratives, giving “the past-to-present framing of the narrative even greater significance. By providing historically informed discussions of the famous figure and his / her original visit, the following author simply explains how a destination has, or has not, changed since that time” (223). *In Xanadu* is a text that constructs itself as being authentic and originary, despite the fact that as a journey “in the wake” it is necessarily neither of these things.

In an effort to attain a greater level of authority, Dalrymple provides a

lengthy explanation of the reasons that make his journey the first legitimate re-tracing of Polo's travels:

Many had, like us, set off in his tracks but no one had ever managed to complete the journey. ... But in the spring of 1986 the opening of the Karakoram Highway, the mountain road which links Pakistan with China, made it possible for the first time, perhaps since the thirteenth century, to plan an overland route between Jerusalem and Xanadu and to attempt to carry a phial of Holy Oil from one to the other. The war in Afghanistan prevented the whole of Polo's journey being followed but in principle it was now possible to follow almost all of it, and to complete the journey. (11)

Dalrymple begins by emphasising the authenticity of his journey and the text that forms its record, claiming the somewhat curious position of being the first—not to make the journey, but to follow Polo properly (although this claim itself is immediately qualified as following Polo's route "in principle," whatever that might be taken to mean, and with the exception of Afghanistan). Dalrymple glibly creates a narrative which brushes aside the historical details in order to situate his journey as significant—to justify the work's existence as both scholarly and historical rather than just an entertaining tale. However, the lack of attention to the historical details (much European travel occurred in Afghanistan in the nineteenth century) serves ultimately to undermine the claims that Dalrymple makes for *In Xanadu's* historical value. As a journey that is intrinsically belated, it might seem that a concern with authentic, originary status is somewhat redundant. However, Dalrymple's justification of

the journey in this way shows a need for the work to be positioned as both relevant to the contemporary political situation and as contributing to knowledge.

Despite the work's desire for authenticity, the protagonist is positioned as naïve. From the text's beginning, William is figured as the novice traveller, especially in relation to his travelling companions. This is evident in even the most crucial aspects of the journey. It is Louisa, not William, who initiates the planning of the trip and the choice of the route: "It was my then girlfriend Louisa who spotted the small article in the *New York Herald Tribune* which announced the opening of the [Karakoram] highway and together we decided to mount an expedition to follow in the Venetian's footsteps" (11). In a text that makes so much of the authenticity of its central narrative device (the route taken), a lack of a similar preoccupation with the authority of the protagonist is significant. More important to the text than the foregrounding of an authoritative authorial presence (as can be found in Dalrymple's later works), is the sustained representation of the work's central figure in a specific mode.

The chief way in which *In Xanadu* represents its protagonist (and therefore the crucial manner of representation for the text itself) is directly related to the class and mobility of this particular traveller. William is represented as a bumbling, ineffectual, upper-class traveller, which forms a vehicle for much of the text's humour. This representational strategy fits remarkably well with the trope of the anachronistic (English) gentleman traveller identified by Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan as "a means of reinstalling a mythicized imperial past" (xi). They describe

the capacity for self-deprecation that most marks the gentleman's progress: an indication not only that he doesn't take himself too seriously, but that we shouldn't take him too seriously either. ... The foppishness of some of these writers, who tend to make light of their misadventures, provides a useful alibi for their cultural gaffes and, at times, their arrogance. (6)

William's constant shortcomings in the practical matters of travel, highlighted through his juxtaposition with his more efficient companions, enable Dalrymple to introduce his (often negative) opinions to the reader. At the same time, these are characterised as somehow harmless, or less important, due to William's foppish eccentricity.

William is introduced through an entertaining autobiographical vignette describing his schoolboy fascination with Polo:

At my primary school we knew all about Marco Polo. He wore a turban, a stripy robe a bit like a dressing gown and he rode a camel with only one hump. The Ladybird book which had this picture on the cover was the most heavily thumbed book on the school bookshelf. One day, my friends and I put some biscuits in a handkerchief, tied the handkerchief to a stick and set off to China. It was an exhausting walk as there were no camels in Scotland, and by tea time we had eaten all our biscuits. There was also the problem that we were not absolutely sure where China was. It was beyond England, of that we were certain, but then we were not absolutely sure where England was either. Nonetheless we strode off manfully towards Haddington where there was a shop. We could ask

there, we said. But when it began to get dark we turned around and went home for supper. After consultation we decided to put the plan on the shelf for a while. China could wait. (10-11)

This piece of amusing memoir constructs the cuteness, and the somewhat ineffectual nature of the younger William, as well as emphasising the continuing youthfulness of the protagonist, linking his present quest with his childlike curiosity. However, the schoolboy William is represented as a particular type of child: not a muscular, capable, Boy Scout type, but instead constructed as rather keen and slightly bewildered. Here again Dalrymple is participating in what Holland and Huggan term “the cult of gentlemanliness in contemporary Anglophone travel writing” (6), characterised by the expression (and, to a certain extent, parody) of the “anachronistic ideals of (English) gentlemanliness ... [that are] likely to attest to the traveler’s honesty and courage, his sense of fair play” (6). The text represents the protagonist as an enthusiastic, though amusingly flawed figure.

It is telling that this anecdote concludes with the postponement of William’s childhood plan, positioning the present trip as the fulfilment of a long-held childhood dream. The influence of Bruce Chatwin on Dalrymple’s writing can be seen in the device of using a childhood object / obsession to kick-start a travel story, recalling the role of the mylodon skin in Chatwin’s *In Patagonia* (a text whose title bears a clear intertextual relationship to Dalrymple’s). While *In Xanadu* devotes a reasonable amount of words to chronicling the conception and planning of the expedition, there is no similar narrative of the conception of the journey’s chief production—the text itself.

Other, less material outcomes are gestured towards (such as the nebulous concept of the general enrichment of knowledge), and Dalrymple does identify himself as a travel writer on occasion. Such moments serve as a reminder that the underlying motivation for the journey is its product, the travel book, although this is generally elided through the text. The relationship between the journey and the text is reinforced when Dalrymple refers to his writing process: “I got out the logbook and began scribbling. But it was cold and getting colder, and after a couple of pages I gave up and went out into the dusk to explore the town’s Seljuk remains” (89). Such passing references to the text’s construction invariably focus on the immediacy of the act of writing to the journey, rather than the removed, subsequent editing and rewriting processes.

More oblique references to the writing process, and the status of the journey as a subject to be written about, are visible in Dalrymple’s relationship with Polo’s text (rather than the mythologised figure of Polo himself). In contrast to his idolisation of Polo as an early example of an intrepid European encountering Persia and Asia, Polo’s text is actively criticised by Dalrymple:

the book [Polo’s *Travels*] is surprisingly dull. Polo did not set out to write an account of his travels, despite the name by which it has always been known, nor did he write a description of a diplomatic expedition originally intended to try to save the Crusader Kingdom. It is not even a general account of the lands he passed through. He says nothing about the sights he saw (he does not even mention the Great Wall of China), and he includes very little about Asian social mores (which might have made really interesting reading). (66-67)

His catalogue of complaints about Polo's text highlights what Dalrymple sees as important in a travel narrative. It seems that, for Dalrymple, what is most interesting is an anthropologically or ethnographically influenced comparison of cultural behaviours (or, to use his morally-inflected term, "social mores"). The ways in which cultural comparisons are used throughout *In Xanadu* offer some insight into what a less "dull" travel text might look like. In contrast to many travel writers following in the wake of earlier (famous) travellers, Dalrymple does not revere or fetishise the original text. That William and his companions would subject themselves to serial discomforts and hardships for the sake of a book that they do not like seems rather remarkable. Of course, though, Marco Polo is more than just his *Travels*. Polo's fame, instant name-recognition status (for a Western audience) and position as one of Europe's first contacts with Asia makes him a celebrity traveller for Dalrymple to follow, regardless of whether his text is "interesting" by William's standards. Assuming that Dalrymple follows his own advice about writing an interesting travel account, *In Xanadu* can be seen as an improved version of Polo's *Travels*—the same route, with more entertaining observations.

In actuality, instead of a focus on the cultural practices of the people whose lands they visit, the backbone of *In Xanadu* is the narration of the daily trials of William and his companions. In a central set-piece of characterisation that reinforces the protagonist's indolent gentlemanly image, Dalrymple narrates William's and Laura's ascent of the old citadel in Sis:

We made slow progress or, rather, I made slow progress while Laura shot ahead and I limped up after her. Although it was mid-afternoon, it was

still hot, and my shirt was saturated. Occasionally I would collapse on a ledge, my head resounding to the military band thumping away in my temples, and douse myself with the tepid chlorinated water from the water bottle. Laura seemed impervious to the heat, the exertion, or the imminent danger of dehydration or heart failure. At first she was impatient with me (“Oh get on with it!” “You should lose weight.” “When was the last time you took any exercise?”) but by about halfway up she seemed to come to terms with the fact that she was not travelling with an athlete and began to tempt me up with gentle, clucking pensioner-talk (“Come on now, only a little bit further.” “Just think, nearly there!” and “Oh well done; one last effort now”) (72-73)

The humorous way in which this passage is put together works to endear Dalrymple to the sympathetic reader, as someone unafraid to send himself up or to reveal his weaknesses. However, as becomes evident in the text, it is only particular kinds of attributes (and chiefly his physical state or stamina) that are open to this treatment. William’s intellectual powers, for example, are never brought into question. Dalrymple’s characterisation of William as a modern embodiment of the enthusiastic amateur gentleman traveller mobilises an interconnected series of related discourses. Harking back nostalgically to a particular incarnation of British imperialism, such a representational choice necessarily implies an acceptance of British superiority. Inevitably, the aspects of imperialism recalled in this belated, nostalgic fashion are those that are daring, heroic and masculine. This image remains, despite William’s distinctly un-athletic characterisation. The conflation of William’s, Laura’s and Louisa’s

attributes reinforces this image of resourceful British travellers, with even the (upper-class) women contributing to the model. The anachronistic characterisation of William and his companions sets the tone for the work and necessitates its own group of conventions of appropriate travelling behaviour, influenced by class.

Locating *In Xanadu*

In Xanadu is a text that is positioned by Dalrymple in a variety of ways. The majority of these are linked to, and revolve around, the ways in which the figure of Dalrymple is represented. The representational conflation of author / narrator / protagonist and the text in which they are manifest (or that they produce) enables the use of the level of authenticity claimed by autobiography, while simultaneously retaining the light-hearted, tall-story inflections common to travel writing. Such a move effectively allows the text to claim both “serious” (read truthful) and jocular (“not to be taken seriously”) status, as the narrative occasion requires. There are two main sites in which the text effects its self-positioning: within the book itself, and outside the text, in the surrounding publicity. The extra-textual positioning chiefly occurs in juxtaposition with Dalrymple’s later monographs. Therefore it is not merely about the positioning of *In Xanadu*, but also about its place in the larger body of Dalrymple’s works. This is achieved through a narrative of the development of Dalrymple’s authorial persona, and his characterisation as protagonist. Here, the conflation of author and text is evident and strategic.

When explicitly comparing his first book with his later offerings, particularly when faced with criticism of some of the views expressed in the early work, Dalrymple represents *In Xanadu* as a naïve work by a young author: “it is a very early book, written at the age of 22. Writing a book aged 22, if it works, is a very exciting thing, but you then have to live with that book for the rest of your life—reminding you what an obnoxious creep you were in your early 20s!” (Interview with Tim Youngs 40). Dalrymple emphasises his intellectual development since that time: “It is a book that I have more or less completely disowned!” (Interview with Tim Youngs 40). He goes on to defend the work, however, appealing to its humour and popularity: “The fact is that it has got the best jokes and is a much funnier book than the others. I think I have got progressively more politically correct and dull as I get middle aged. But in readings *In Xanadu* will get a louder laugh than anything” (Interview with Tim Youngs 40).

The ways in which William is represented throughout the text influence the positioning of the work. Instead of this resulting in an extended focus on William, his characterisation is effected by juxtaposing him with a variety of other travellers. At no point during the work does William travel alone, despite the established mystique of the traveller as the essentially solitary, individualistic nomad (epitomised by the self-representation of figures such as Chatwin). Louisa and Laura are the characters most commonly used as contrast to the protagonist, as well as a selection of other, incidental figures introduced for the development of particular facets of William’s representation as required. There exists a power dynamic between William and Laura (with

whom he shares the first half of his journey) and Louisa (his companion for the conclusion of his travels). Here *In Xanadu* utilises a figure common to much travel writing, that of the traveller's sidekick. The sidekick, or foil, is present in a wide range of travel books including Michael De Cervantes Saavedra's *Don Quixote* (1605 and 1615), Jules Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1872) and the more recent *Into the Heart of Borneo* by Redmond O'Hanlon (first published 1984), and works as a balance to the main character. Passepartout's skepticism, enthusiasm and passion form a counterweight to Phileas Fogg's excessive rationality in *Around the World in Eighty Days*. Sancho's rustic common sense attempts to ground his deluded and dangerous master in *Don Quixote*. And in *Into the Heart of Borneo*, poetic dreamer James makes bearable O'Hanlon's macho amateur naturalist musings.

Implicit in the figures of hero and sidekick is an unequal distribution of status. In the context of travel writing the journey is owned by the author's character, regardless of the centrality of the sidekick to the success of the journey and the narrative. This status gap is often further compounded by the sidekick being a servant or employee of the hero. *In Xanadu's* sidekicks function in much the same way as the above examples—as an organised, bossy balance to William's general uselessness, and a dippy girlishness to highlight his intellectual prowess and (occasional) resourcefulness. That William's sidekicks are both female positions a gendered disparity of power at the text's centre. As demonstrated by *Don Quixote* and *Into the Heart of Borneo*, the often greater wisdom of the sidekick does little to bridge this gap. It is as if their devotion to (or patience with) the eccentric and foolish hero cements their

place in the hierarchy.

Between them, Louisa and Laura provide the means by which Dalrymple can be characterised in wildly divergent ways, depending on the situation: as hen-pecked, childlike, superior, chivalrous, caring, cavalier and so on. It is difficult to overstate the extent to which William's characterisation is reliant on this narrative strategy. His experience of diarrhoea and food poisoning—a reasonably private affliction—is conducted through comparison with Laura, who “spent the morning exploring while I trotted up and down the corridor” (125). Dalrymple then emphasises William's frailness and hypochondriac tendencies: “Languishing in bed I felt empty and weak and ill and sorry for myself. I wondered if I had a temperature. Perhaps I had dysentery. Perhaps I had caught one of those worms that you hear about in medical jokes. Some could grow thirty feet long, others made you go blind” (125). Again, this is contrasted with Laura's command of the situation, as she immediately instructs him on his best course of action: “‘You mustn't eat anything this morning,’ she said. ‘This afternoon you may have a small bowl of yoghurt. The bacteria in it will help fight whatever is in your stomach. On no account take any antibiotics. They will only weaken your resistance in the future and we can't have the expedition delayed any more than it is already.’” (125). Laura is represented as both physically and emotionally stronger than William, dispensing practical advice where he wallows in self-pity and worry. In a sense William is portrayed as childlike (and Laura as fulfilling an appropriately female mothering role), but this scene also adds to his image as a gentleman traveller—he is indolent, and need not come up with his own solutions, instead

relying on others for their assistance. The fact that William isn't evidently sexually involved with either Laura or Louisa during their travels is in line with his gentlemanly characterisation throughout *In Xanadu*. The gentleman traveller is necessarily unattached, represented as the youthful, free traveller who journeys for the sake of travel, amusement and (occasional) self-improvement, reminiscent of the elite traveller of the grand tour.

Perhaps one of the more telling instances of William's representation in relation to Laura is found when they are contemplating what is constructed as the most dangerous section of their journey—their entrance into Iran. The conversation consists entirely of stereotypically British understatements:

[Laura] "Well, what do you think?"

[William] "What do you mean 'what do I think?'"

[Laura] "You know exactly what I mean."

[William] "What do *you* think?"

Laura considered. "Well I think it would be a shame if we got killed."

[William] "So do I."

[Laura] "And I don't much fancy being flogged."

[William] "Not my idea of a good time either."

[Laura] "But I couldn't face anyone at home if we wimped out now."

[William] "So we go?" (114)

What is most memorable here is the overall sense of British pluck and a gung-ho attitude reminiscent of much juvenile adventure fiction. This passage allows William the kudos (and cavalier dashingness) of wanting to preserve his reputation at home in the face of danger, while simultaneously advancing his

characterisation as the novice traveller, by allowing Laura to make all of the decisions, without William having to venture an opinion.

The shift of William's travelling companion from Laura to Louisa similarly provides an opportunity for William's characterisation to both continue and change, according to the requirements of the narrative. This shift is emphasised when Louisa asks: "'Willy, I know I'm awfully stupid, but don't Pakistani hotels normally have beds in them?' 'Yes, of course they do,' I replied, rather enjoying the role of Experienced Traveller that I had assumed since Laura left. Then I looked in the room. It was, as Louisa had indicated, quite bedless" (191-92). Here, if anything, William's amateur nature is strengthened through the send-up of his keenness to appear knowledgeable and experienced. As Louisa and William's journey together progresses, further changes in William's representation become apparent:

When, at breakfast the next morning, I mooted the idea of crossing the river into Gujar territory and climbing Pir Sar, Louisa was less than enthusiastic. She had found Pakistan hard going and said she was feeling tired and frail. She did not feel quite up to climbing mountains. "Don't come then," I said eventually. "Anyway the Gujars developed a taste for memsahibs during the Raj. You wouldn't be safe." "What about you?" "No one will rape me." "No. That's true." (204-05)

For Jenny Sharpe, "*rape* is not a consistent and stable signifier but one that surfaces at strategic moments" (2). The moment at which it appears in *In Xanadu* is an instance of heightened representation of William's manliness. Dalrymple advances no evidence or examples of the putative programme of

imperial sexual violence that he attributes to the Gujar population. Despite this, he represents their investment in the rape of memsahibs as significant: the phrase “developed a taste for” implies a regular habit and appreciation, as opposed to isolated incidents. All Gujars, from the Raj to the present, are represented as automatically inculcated with this “taste.” This representational strategy is embedded in with ideas about racial traits and types and spurious genetic theories that might transmit this “taste” to successive generations.

Louisa and William’s agreement that he need not fear rape can be read in a number of ways. In contrast to the majority of the text, William is represented here as physically strong: ready to climb mountains and able to defend himself from attack, unlike the frail Louisa. In what might be presumed to be an attempt at humour, William’s lack of physical attractiveness is seen to work in his favour, sparing him from the Gujars’ advances. Further, related, representational possibilities include an assumption that the Gujars’ proclivity for sexual violence is limited to heterosexual rape, and that, by virtue of not being a “memsahib,” William is therefore safe.

This transportation of Raj-era tropes and narratives about the rape of white women into the present provides an opportunity for William to utilise a (belated) image of empire for self-improvement purposes. John Tosh describes the ways in which masculinity and empire function together: “the empire in turn answered to profoundly felt masculine needs. The empire needed men; but men also needed the empire, as a resource, as a refuge and as an object of desire” (199). Here, Dalrymple’s desire for the empire is seen in his embrace of the subject-position of plucky Briton encountering imperial foes.

As well as this subtle use of the Laura and Louisa characters to influence the portrayal of William, another, more obvious, representational strategy is simultaneously open to Dalrymple. Chatwin's 1987 text *The Songlines*, which chronicles his theories about humanity and nomadism through a narrative of his travels through central Australia, is an example. The text features conversations between Bruce and Arkady, an Australian of Russian descent with knowledge of Aboriginal cultural practices. Salman Rushdie highlights the extent to which conversation and characterisation in Chatwin's *The Songlines* is constructed to serve the purposes of the text: "Later, after the book is published, Bruce tells someone that 'of course' I am Arkady. ...[I don't] recognize a single line of our conversation in *The Songlines*. The truth is, 'of course', that Bruce is Arkady as well as the character he calls Bruce. He is both sides of the dialogue" (*Imaginary Homelands* 233). Similarly, the realist, non-fiction mode of *In Xanadu* does not foreclose Dalrymple's complete representational control.

Two useful examples of incidental meetings that form crucial components of Dalrymple's self-representation are both found in William's experiences in Turkey. His encounters—with a Turkish transvestite at the Tarsus bus station; and with a group of German cyclists that Dalrymple finds "doing press-ups outside my room" (83) at the Hotel Seljuk—both serve as opportunities to define the protagonist. The Germans are seen as overly physical (at the expense of their mental capacity), boorish types who are embarked on a pointless journey, the embodiment of a binary division between bodily and scholarly pursuits: "They tell me they have bicycled here from

Tiero del Fuego: 'Ze Andes ver ze best bit'" (83). The Germans' almost-aggressive enthusiasm for exercise forms a sharp contrast with Dalrymple's distress mere sentences before: "5.30 a.m. Sivas bus station. Cold. Exhausted. Penniless. 6.00 a.m. ... Discover that my plastic shampoo bottle has broken. There is Head and Shoulders all over my wash bag, my clothes and, horror of horrors, my books" (83). The juxtaposition between the athletic and the intellectual recalls the Cartesian dualism between body and mind, and aids in the construction of a particularly British masculinity in contrast to the German type that so irritates William. Further, different, demarcation of William's gentlemanly masculinity is evident in his anxious depiction of the transvestite as un-manly, freakish and disturbing. Dalrymple narrates in diary form:

10.30 p.m. Set off two hours late, only to stop [half an hour later] at the bus station in Tarsus, the home of St Paul. Enough to give anyone wanderlust: loud Turkish music and some sort of mewling Turkish transvestite. He / she / it tells me Tarsus is "very romantic place". It wore thick mascara, pink lipstick and held a small yellow handbag. (82)

The overdetermined emphasis on the transvestite's feminine attributes, and the telling use of animalistic descriptors, highlights the complexity of Dalrymple's self-construction in a specific form of anachronistic, British masculinity. The contrast between William's efforts at bodily improvement (his wash bag and Head and Shoulders anti-dandruff shampoo) and those of the transvestite (the yellow handbag and pink lipstick) are firmly separated. The message appears to be that there are appropriate levels of self-fashioning which should be adhered to. For Holland and Huggan, such instances of "homosexual panic"

function to draw “the line in the sand,” where “the traveler reclaims cultural norms by detaching himself from a homosexually compromising situation” (133). His emphatic non-identification with the cross-dressing figure works alongside the less histrionic disavowal of a particularly athletic instantiation of masculinity as embodied by the German cyclists.

The formal attributes as well as the content of this section of *In Xanadu* invite analysis. This is the only section of the text that adopts an abbreviated journal style. Other textual devices utilised which produce a similar effect include a reliance on dialogue, and dramatised descriptions of scenes through the use of stage directions, both of which are particularly reminiscent of Robert Byron’s *The Road to Oxiana*. Indeed, when Dalrymple mentions *Oxiana* in the text, he refers to one of Byron’s “playlets” (*In Xanadu* 125). But, though they provide a similar feeling of immediacy, the journal style provides the most reliable guarantee of veracity, crucial for travel writing. As Hulme reminds us, travellers “depend for their authority, in some measure, on that touchstone of travel writing, the conveyed sense of ‘being there’” (“In the Wake” 19). Dalrymple explains: “It was a night of unmitigated horror probably best conveyed through the entries I made at the time in the logbook” (81). A diary is an internal narrative, involving only the author. Therefore, the diary has the potential to house thoughts and opinions that might not be appropriate for public expression. The same is true for William’s “logbook” for *In Xanadu*—reference is made to his keeping it throughout the text, however the material is significantly reworked prior to publication. This sole instance in which the logbook “survives,” then, might claim this private nature as mitigation for its

overwhelmingly negative outlook, as its representation as only being intended for William's eyes endures.

Another facet of William's characterisation throughout *In Xanadu*, which in turn reflects on Dalrymple's self-positioning, is found in the ways in which he is aligned with earlier, famous travel writers. Chatwin, celebrity traveller extraordinaire, is a central model for Dalrymple who repeatedly expresses his admiration: "Bruce Chatwin is one of the great prose stylists of the late twentieth century" (Interview with Tim Youngs 39). He even narrates his own pilgrimage to significant sites in Chatwin's career: "I started the manuscript [of *City of Djinnns*] at the desk where Bruce Chatwin wrote *The Songlines*" (*City of Djinnns* 1). In such instances, Dalrymple appears to be doubly "in the wake" of earlier travellers: as Holland and Huggan note, "[the invocation of gentlemanliness] is both a throwback to another era and an ironic recognition that this era, and the values for which it stands, are now long gone. Self-parody, in this context, demonstrates the awareness of belatedness" (6). While Dalrymple constructs himself in the trope of the anachronistic gentleman traveller, it is without the level of irony or self-reflexivity that Holland and Huggan characterise as usual in such instances, nor the camp performance of Chatwin. Instead, Dalrymple performs this characterisation as if it is still possible (and unproblematic) to be a nineteenth-century gentleman traveller in the 1980s, making imperially-inflected forms and conventions of travel and cultural encounter accessible, amusing and everyday, erasing intervening progress and changes in power relations. As well as constructing himself in the tradition of the gentleman traveller, Dalrymple also simultaneously positions

himself in the tradition of those such as Chatwin who themselves took on this role. In this sense, then, Dalrymple's characterisation of William clearly reflects the self-conscious, upper-class and very British lineage to which *In Xanadu* subscribes.

Holland and Huggan suggest that: "It is an axiom of recent travel writing that writers offer tribute to their predecessors, homage often paid in adulatory terms. Contemporary travel writers thus consciously place themselves in a tradition—a tradition as much literary as historically based" (7). So in addition to the figure (and textual traces) of Marco Polo being visible through (or behind) Dalrymple's writing, the pale shades of intervening travellers are also visible. Another of these travellers, and "The person who influenced me more than anyone else—*In Xanadu* is basically a pastiche of his work—is Robert Byron he wrote one unbelievable masterpiece, *The Road to Oxiana* (1937)" (Interview with Tim Youngs 39). *In Xanadu* shows explicit traces of this influence. In conjunction with Hulme's resonant image of the traveller "in the wake" conducting their journey with the text of their famous predecessor in hand, Dalrymple positions William as travelling with a suitcase full of canonical travel books. Polo is present (and regularly quoted), but it is Byron to whom William appears most attached: "I turned to Robert Byron. *The Road to Oxiana* had done more than anything to lure me to Persia in the first place, and was always favourite reading in times of depression" (125).

In *Abroad* (1980), his study of British inter-war travel writing, Paul Fussell describes Robert Byron as "monomaniacal and doubtlessly slightly mad, carrying in him, as Anthony Powell remembers, 'something of the

genuine 19th century Englishman—a type even in those days all but extinguished in unmitigated form—the eccentricity, curiosity, ill temper, determination to stop at absolutely nothing.” (77). Fussell also writes an introduction to an edition of *The Road to Oxiana* (1982), in which he ascribes great, transformative powers to Byron and his text: “one can learn to see by reading Byron” (xii). In light of this, the genealogy of travel writers engaged in nostalgic, belated iterations of a past ideal is highlighted. Chatwin’s admiration for Byron is evident in his introduction to the 1981 edition of *The Road to Oxiana*, in which Chatwin describes Byron’s work as a “sacred text” (xi). He notes of his journeys to Central Asia: “Sometimes, we met travellers more high-minded than ourselves who were following the tracks of Alexander or Marco Polo: for us, it was far more fun to follow Robert Byron. I still have notebooks to prove how slavishly I aped both his itinerary and—as if that were possible—his style” (xiii). The model for *In Xanadu* was the nineteenth-century English gentleman, a figure that had resonances for Byron and Chatwin (among many others) before Dalrymple. Where Dalrymple differs from these travelling antecedents in his approach to this model is in his resolute lack of ironic or camp sensibilities. A healthy embrace of irony is so endemic in the travel genre, particularly in texts such as Byron’s and Chatwin’s that rely heavily on the conceit of the belated traveller. So much so that in texts where this level of knowing, ironic performance is lacking (like Dalrymple’s works) the lack often goes unnoticed, as the reader projects the expected ironic sensibility into the travel text.

Instances in which Dalrymple invokes this tradition to which he claims

membership can be seen more or less clearly throughout *In Xanadu*, and are evident in general statements such as:

No wonder the Arabs have endeared themselves to generations of European travellers. The conversation was slow, formal and courteous, so much so that it seemed somehow archaic, fabulous, as if we were eighteenth-century gentlemen on a grand tour, rather than grimy undergraduates on a long-vac jaunt. We reclined, and followed the example of the brothers. Some snoozed. Some played backgammon. Everyone belched. But before long Nizar went and fetched a new radio cassette recorder from his bedroom and my eighteenth-century fantasy evaporated. (40)

This passage is the site of a number of discrete, though connected, textual manoeuvres. Most obvious is the manner in which William sets himself up as the latest in a long line of “European travellers,” gently historicising his place as belated, at the same time as highlighting the authority of the tradition in which he is participating. Here, Dalrymple foregrounds the particular era of British traveller to which he is connected. Rather than rehearsing the full extent of the trope of the modern European encountering the ancient Other, or advancing links to Polo, he positions himself as a throwback to the idle touring gentleman. John Tosh states of gentlemanliness that it “had a distinctly ambivalent relationship with [the work ethic]” (93). Dalrymple’s embrace of Orientalised indolence highlights his gentlemanly status.

There is no room for differentiation within this passage, either for the Europeans (who are all presumed to be attracted to the same qualities of

Arabia), or for the Arabs, as represented by Nizar al-Omar's family (who are characterised as essentially and timelessly hospitable). The relation of such characterisation to *In Xanadu*'s overall tendency to orientalising fantasy is seen in Dalrymple's eager appreciation of situations which conform to these types of representation: "In the doorway stood the hotelier. He was holding a breakfast tray. A few minutes later he returned with a bucket of piping-hot water. He bowed as magnificently as an Abyssinian slave from *The Arabian Nights* and withdrew. This was more like it" (84). This is an example of what Helen Gilbert and Anna Johnston describe as "traces of the imperial endeavour haunt[ing] the very vocabulary, grammar, form, and subjectivities available to the Western traveller" (13). In this case, Dalrymple actively embraces this imperial influence on the characterisation of the narrator.

In keeping with William's self-fashioning as a gentleman, and the work's emphasis on his status as a Cambridge scholar, Dalrymple advances his theories on the provenance of particular techniques of castle-building, concluding that

it was wonderful to have the freedom to speculate. In Europe detailed research has dropped a weighty academic veil between the amateur antiquarian and his ruins. He must tread carefully for he treads on someone's PhD. In contrast, the state of Cilician archaeology is only as advanced as its English equivalent was at the time of John Aubrey and William Stukely, and the traveller can still write books of dilettante observations like Stukeley's *Itinerarium Curiosum* [1724], without fear of being contradicted. He is on virgin territory. (74)

Here, William is characterised as a typical Orientalist—the dilettante, amateur enthusiast reaching out into the relatively-unstudied realms of foreign antiquities where there is still space to define and explain ancient mysteries for a home audience. Problematically, William’s intellectual freedom as amateur antiquarian appears to be based upon the relegation of all contemporary Turkish scholarship to a distant past, clearing a path for a British scholarly “deflowering.” Such sentiments are elided when Dalrymple later claims that: “*In Xanadu* is a lark. It’s a student journey. It’s a very light, young man’s book” (Interview with Tim Youngs 38). Rather, *In Xanadu* posits arguments about imperial history and cross-cultural power relations while simultaneously being a “lark.”

Dalrymple and his travelling companions have high levels of social and economic capital, as evidenced by their time spent and connections made with people in high places—as when Dalrymple describes the luxury and service on offer at his friend’s “palatial” residence in Lahore—despite the text’s frequent protestations that their journey is on a budget. In Israel, William describes his encounter with Hamoudi: “he offered us a room for a pittance and we accepted: I had only £600 to see me through to Peking, twelve thousand miles away. This was not going to be a deluxe holiday, whatever else it might promise” (20). Countering statements such as this are the text’s frequent reference to drinks, hotels and activities that do not appear to fit such a budget. Indeed, rather than conveying the experience of shoestring travel, underlying the text is a sense of privilege that continues to reveal itself. Adding to the text’s elasticity on money matters, there is also some confusion around the amount that Dalrymple

has at his disposal: Trinity College is stated as donating £700 in the Acknowledgements.

Anglocentrism and Cultural Comparisons

The tone is set for much of William's interactions with those that he meets on his travels at the opening of *In Xanadu*. Dalrymple effectively positions the reader and the traveller together, in opposition to the various locals encountered. In this instance, William performs his superiority through the use of dramatic irony, with himself and the reader knowing more than the Franciscan monk, Brother Fabian, from whom William obtains the oil from the Holy Sepulchre that he takes to Xanadu in imitation of Polo. Fabian ignorantly asks "who's this Italian you were looking for?" and wishes William "Good luck finding your friend" (6). These responses are encouraged by William's combination of brevity and suggestion, and Fabian's lack of knowledge is represented as entertaining. This manoeuvre concomitantly places William and the reader in a knowledgeable subject position.

Another example of such characterisation is seen in subsequent explanations of the purpose of their journey:

As we tried to edge our way towards the gangplank, a Lebanese merchant began quizzing us on our journey: "Good sir, why are you coming to Syria?" "We are following Marco Polo." He considered this as he walked forward. "This Marco Poodle—he is Englishman?" "No," said Laura, stepping over the epileptic. "Italian." "Oh." Then: "When was Mr Poodle coming to Syria?" "Many years ago." "He is still alive?" "No."

“Then why do you follow him?” (30)

Although this exchange works to place the merchant as the subject of ridicule, the question that he ends with is never fully resolved through *In Xanadu*. Here, the gap appears to add to the general ridiculousness of the merchant, implying that the reason is so obvious as to be above explanation. Throughout the text a variety of answers implied include reference to the inherently peripatetic nature of the travel writer, a quest for knowledge for its own sake (although precisely what this journey is contributing to human knowledge is similarly unclear) and a valorised imperialist tendency to explore or travel “because it is there” or because one can.

Central to the characterisation of William is his positioning as an intellectual. Constant reference is made to study undertaken, books carried, and to the fact that Dalrymple and his companions are travelling during their long university vacation. A good British schooling is seen to equip the travellers for survival and success in foreign lands, as Dalrymple narrates William’s and Laura’s attempt at boarding a bus in the crowded station of Latakia: “We got aboard on our third attempt. Ten school years of cold scrum practice in wet, February North Yorkshire were finally put to good use; we charged forward like a pair of prop forwards, swinging our rucksacks, mercilessly knocking everyone flying; only the Bedouin got in before us” (33). Even better than this schooling, however, is the fact that Dalrymple is not simply a student, but a student at Cambridge University’s Trinity College.

William has many conversations with people from the various countries through which he passes about university, most involving some comparison

between Oxford and Cambridge and their local counterparts, or reference to the fame and centrality of Oxbridge. These instances are expressions of an overt Anglo-centrism. They are not the only points at which such sentiments are expressed, however they form a discrete, contained subject for analysis. William reports on an exchange he has with Rajep, a local of Sis who houses the travellers for the night:

He studied law at the Bosphorus University in Istanbul—and had a T-shirt to prove it. He was appalled to learn that we both studied history. “In Turkey history has no value,” he said as he walked us to his home. “The only serious subjects are engineering, medicine, law and economics.” He was, however, reasonably impressed that we were from Oxford and Cambridge: “I have heard people say that they are quite good universities.” (77-78)

The contrast advanced here comes down to one of differences in levels of cultural and economic capital. William and Laura have sufficient that they can study history and travel for pleasure, while Rajep studies law and stays in Turkey with his family. University studies, of all of the possible aspects of William’s character that could be used to illustrate this difference in status, is chosen to advance this point.

One of the more dramatic examples of the power and usefulness of a Cambridge education is evident in William’s experience of being interrogated by an Iranian police officer, who suggests that he might be a spy. The reader is given an insight into William’s over-wrought consciousness: “*Stop thinking like this. It won’t help. Think of something else. Think of sex. Not in Iran. Think*

of your family. You might never see them again. Stop this. You're upsetting yourself. Laura will come and rescue you" (141). In desperation to prove that he is a student, not a spy, William hands the police officer his university library card:

"What is this?" he said. He looked at the card. Then he looked up. "You are at *Cambridge*?" "Yes." "Cambridge University?" "Cambridge University." His expression changed. "Oh, Agah," he said. "By the great Ali! This is the most famous university in the world." He examined the card. "Ah, my heart! Look at this card. Expiry date June eighty-seven. Borrowing October eighty-six. Five vols. Oh, Agah. For me these are magic words." "For me too." "Agah. I am your servant." I sat up. "Do you mean that?" "Agah. You are a scholar. I am at your service." He did mean it. (142)

Tellingly, on the rare occasion that Laura does not come to William's rescue, Cambridge does. The mere mention of the famous university is capable of transforming antagonists into assistants: "All afternoon, [the police officer] Reza drove us around the monuments of Savah" (142).

A sense of cultural superiority is evident in the many comparisons between Oxbridge and other educational institutions encountered. William then uses the authority of his superior education and proceeds to make a succession of quick, generalised and, to a great extent, harsh judgements about most of the places visited. Dalrymple's treatment of Latakia forms an example: "The food—if you can find it—is the worst in the Middle East, the people the least friendly" (33). To compound the imperialist overtones already making

themselves felt, such generalisations inevitably include recourse to simplistic and problematic arguments about national types. Dalrymple notes of Latakia's population: "They mix Arab deviousness with colonial French arrogance, and add to this a surliness which is uniquely their own" (33). Stereotypes are rehearsed with abandon, with the locals being othered further through relegation to the stone age: "We reached the town in a Neolithic late-evening gloom. Dogubayazit was full of sinister, swarthy Turks. A few had sliteyed [sic] Mongol features. They wore ragged waistcoats and stared deadpan from open doorways" (112). When a particular national type is insufficient for fullness of description, then a racial / cultural comparison (which invokes a hierarchical vision of cultures and races) is utilised to aid the depiction:

Never have I seen a train less likely to raise the spirits. It could not have been further from an Indian carriage. There, for all the discomfort, the seats are packed with people busily unrolling bedding, setting up primuses, cooking supper and generally making themselves at home. Walking into an Indian train is like walking into an Indian village. Entering a Turkish train is like finding oneself in a solitary confinement cell. (108-09)

These hierarchical nuances of racial comparison become more overt when Dalrymple actively (rather than just implicitly) compares the places and people he encounters with Britain and the British:

They were bareheaded and far removed from the noble Afghan of travel books. They did not talk of gardening or Persian poetry; instead they questioned us closely about the West: "Is Inglistan better than Pakistan?"

“In some ways.” “Pakistan is a country of dogs.” I painted a very romanticized picture of Cambridge, and they promised to come and visit me. “Is it far to drive?” “Very far.” I thought how they would look driving down King’s Parade in their truck; we could take them punting.
(213)

As well as highlighting the absurdity of the notion of mutual travel, or travel from the “periphery” to the “centre,” and comparing Afghan and British, Dalrymple also measures his Pakistani fellow-travellers against previous travel writers’ representations, thus simultaneously marking his place in the tradition. This is despite the fact that their Afghan hosts are more capable travellers than William and Louisa—they had hired the truck “in Peshawar, and were driving it to the Chinese border” (212) when the British pair hitch a ride.

The imperialist power invoked by William and his companions manifests most strongly in its icons and symbols. These are carried reverently and described in great and loving detail by Dalrymple:

Before we left Britain Laura wrote to enlist the aid of the Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office. I have the reply in front of me. It is written on a piece of thick, heavily embossed paper with a lion and a unicorn at the top right-hand corner. From it, it would appear that the Permanent Under-Secretary is a personal friend of Laura’s. It also appears that the embassy in Peking has been instructed to contact the Chinese Foreign Ministry to arrange an express permit, and that the embassy in Islamabad is waiting to help us with the Pakistani Civil Service. Of all the wonders I have seen Laura work in the past few

weeks, this must be the most spectacular. I have one other letter in front of me. This I organized (although acting on Laura's instructions). This second letter is written on paper so thick it almost approaches parchment and bears the crest of Trinity College, Cambridge. If it is to be believed any obstacle to our expedition could well prove a major blow to the study of the Orient as we know it. (181-82)

This is the most overt acknowledgement of the extent to which *In Xanadu's* central character is a contemporary version of the traditional Orientalist figure. For Said, this means: "A nineteenth-century Orientalist was either a scholar (a Sinologist, an Islamicist, an Indo-Europeanist) or a gifted enthusiast (Hugo in *Les Orientales*, Goethe in the *Westöstlicher Diwan*), or both (Richard Burton, Edward Lane, Friedrich Schlegel)" (51). In William's case, he attempts a blend of scholar and enthusiast. He also echoes the experiences of Robert Byron and his companion in *The Road to Oxiana*, who also use the authority of their education to advance their "expedition": "'You want visas for Samarcand?' said M. Bouriachenko. 'Of course you do. I will telegraph to Moscow at once to say that two Oxford professors of Islamic culture'—(God forgive us, we both left Oxford without degrees)—'have arrived here and are waiting for permission to cross the Amu Darya'" (*Oxiana* 343). The purpose of William's "expedition" (no longer a "journey," or even the titular "quest") is the very broadly defined "study of the Orient," underwritten in both epistolary and financial form by the scholarly authority of Cambridge.

Reminiscent of nineteenth-century letters of introduction, these missives reinforce William's role as a modern embodiment of the anachronistic

gentleman traveller. The letters are issued, and carried in addition to the usual array of travel documents, for the purpose of overcoming local objections or resistance to their travel. This draws attention to the particularly imperially-inflected mode of travel (and travel writing) in which Dalrymple is engaged. As well as highlighting the apparent willingness of the British to band together to assist their kin abroad, the passage again privileges Laura's organisational skills and connections over William's, as he is careful to point out that his actions were only undertaken at her instigation.

Dalrymple, after reproducing the entire letter from Trinity in the body of the text, expresses his admiration and gratitude to Simon Keynes, author of the letter, through highlighting the extent to which his recommendation is knowingly farcical: "And this [letter, extolling the academic rigour of Dalrymple's 'expedition'], God bless his soul, from a man who had received five essays from me in an academic year, and they on the Anglo-Saxons" (182). There is a collegial sense of the educated British working together to get one over the "natives." Distinguished professors and colleges seem to obligingly give funds and bend the truth to assist Dalrymple. The implication here appears to be that any foreign power that objects to or restricts Dalrymple's endeavour is somehow misguided. This then sanctions the use of bluff and trickery in an attempt to circumvent any obstacles.

In Xanadu is a text that is inextricably linked to the representation of its author, both within and outside its textual boundaries. Dalrymple's construction of William as a travel writer throughout the work is pure self-fashioning, as during the journey undertaken for *In Xanadu* he is not yet a

travel writer at all. His self-identification, then, is both bold and strategic and forms a significant part of his characterisation. As if to test the wisdom that discourse creates its object, Dalrymple represents William as a travel writer throughout *In Xanadu* (although in specific terms, emphasising the creative, intellectual motivations for travel and travel writing):

“Where are you from?” asked the mullah. “What is your job?” “I am from Scotland and I am a travel writer,” I replied. “What is Scotland?” asked the mullah. “It’s a bit like Inglistan.” ... “What is ‘travel writer?’” In Turkish, travel writing sounds like a very sinister occupation. “It’s a man who travels for his living,” I said. “Like a bus driver?” “Yes, like a bus driver.” (151-52)

Later, in an interview with Aviva Tuffield on a publicity tour for *White Mughals* (2002), Dalrymple is more forthcoming about the pecuniary details:

I mention his precocious authorial success and he admits that having secured a “whopping, for an undergraduate, book advance” for *In Xanadu*, he went around “boasting to all my friends and made myself thoroughly unpopular” at college. After spending a year living off the kudos of his publishing contract, he then actually had to write the book.

(3)

The method of production and the choice of writing style are also highlighted by Dalrymple in this interview:

“I used this wonderful staccato Chatwin pastiche which I thought was a thing of complete genius and was going to change the face of travel writing—tiny sentences, very artistic”. Dalrymple sent this draft of the

first chapter off to his editor and soon after found a message on his answer machine: “Willy ... these are notes that you’ve sent me? I hope they’re notes because if you think this is what you’re handing in, we might have to talk about getting that advance back.” (Tuffield 3)

The image of a keen young writer naïvely embracing and failing to master Chatwin’s writing style functions to both recognise and deny the earlier traveller’s influence. In sending up his desire to imitate Chatwin’s prose, he glosses over the continuing impact of Chatwin on his work and on his authorial persona. Heather Henderson highlights the relationship between contemporary and past travel writers: “Travel writing is in fact a double-pronged quest for domination, not only of actual experience (foreign lands and foreigners) but also of literary experience (prior travel texts and their authors)” (245). Dalrymple’s narratorial persona is tightly-constructed and contingent, owing intertextual debts to and taking inspiration from multiple sources, including Chatwin. This is a point worth remembering in the face of Dalrymple’s claims for autobiographical simplicity, facticity and authenticity.

Another manner in which Dalrymple constructs his authorial persona is through the photographs inserted in the centre of the text. In the first instance, the collection of black and white photographs that accompany *In Xanadu* confirms the presence of the author in the landscape, adding to the non-fictional positioning of the text. The style of photographs included functions to emphasise the pseudo-ethnographic nature of the text, with a proliferation of portrait-style images of various exotic, bearded, weather-beaten men (many given titles by Dalrymple such as “Mad Mullah” or “Rasputin”) or enthusiastic

groups of children outnumbering all other subjects, including images of architectural features. Such inserts are reminiscent of canonical travel works such as Eric Newby's *A Short Walk in the Hindu Kush* (1958), which also feature black and white studies of the exotic locals. A notable difference is in the proliferation of portraits of the protagonist in Newby's text. These signify different narratives and opportunities for characterisation, in their portrayal of the author: whether wild and bearded atop a mountain, or smartly dressed alongside his bearer.

By contrast, the only image of Dalrymple included in the text cements his association with Cambridge university, with its caption reading: "Looking smug afterwards, Neville's Court, Trinity College, Cambridge." This picture implicitly positions Dalrymple as the photographer for the rest of the images, reinforcing his representation as author and explaining his absence from the frame. The only visual representation of Dalrymple in the text situates him at Cambridge, and points to the centrality of his affiliation with this institution to his characterisation.

Overall, it is easy to forget that *In Xanadu* is set in 1986. The text's tone, content and characterisation of its protagonist all work together to advance a feeling of nostalgia for past modes and attitudes of travel. *In Xanadu* is another in a long line of iterations of the figure of the British gentleman traveller, without any of the self-recognition or parody that often goes with such a representational choice in contemporary writing. The result is a travel text which rehearses Orientalist modes and ideas, without reservation or comment.

Dalrymple's next work, *City of Djinnns*, has at its centre a quite different

narrator. The text itself largely leaves aside the overt racial / cultural / national comparisons of *In Xanadu* in a work that is less a generic travel text and more an extended consideration of one city: Delhi.

Chapter Two: *City of Djinn*s

William Dalrymple's second monograph was published three years after *In Xanadu*, and tells the story of his sojourn in Delhi with his wife Olivia. The text's subtitle *A Year in Delhi* advances an easy equivalence between the monograph and a year in the author's life. Yet the narrative structure of *City of Djinn*s is more complex than its title indicates, and it uses the "best bits" of Dalrymple's experiences over four years to create a "notional year" spent in the capital (Interview with Tim Youngs 42). The text's relationship with history is deployed through a series of stories about various characters encountered by William, who are in turn linked to historical figures and events. In this way, the work introduces stories about the Mughals, the British, Partition and Independence through William's personal connections. Dalrymple claims: "All the different ages of man were represented in the people of the city. Different millennia co-existed side by side" (9). This passage works to portray India as occupying a different temporal environment to Britain. Johannes Fabian's directive about anthropology—"We must ask *what* it is that anthropologists try to catch with their manifold and muddled uses of Time" (25)—is equally applicable to travel writing here. William's ease at negotiating both the physical and temporal spaces of the capital make him an ideal guide to its past and present.

William's movements into Delhi's past are described in tandem with his explorations of the city:

The further Dr Jaffery and I went into the vortex of vaulted passageways, the less and less sign there was of the twentieth century, with all its noise and cars and autorickshaws, then of the nineteenth and eighteenth centuries with their blank-faced late Mughal town houses. By the time we ducked under a narrow arch and emerged into the daylight of the central enclosure, we were back in the Middle Ages; the legacy of the Tughluk period was lying all around us. (277)

Note the absolute nature of the language used to describe the protagonist's temporal travels: it does not merely "seem as if" they are in the Middle Ages, the words chosen are the decisive "we were back." Claude Lévi-Strauss famously describes his awareness of his own belatedness as a traveller: "insidiously, illusion began to lay its snares. I wished I had lived in the days of *real* journeys, when it was still possible to see the full splendour of a spectacle that had not yet been blighted, polluted and spoilt" (43). Dalrymple's representation of his engagement with history as well as travel functions to minimise this sense of arriving too late.

The character of William operates in a similar way to the protagonist of *In Xanadu* in that he is a repetition of an earlier British model. However, instead of an earnest version of past ironic travellers, the archetype that William emulates in *City of Djinnns* is that of the British colonist. Stationary settler rather than travelling Orientalist is the imperial model chosen for this geographically-bounded narrative. An excerpt from *City of Djinnns* features in the Lonely Planet publication *A House Somewhere* (George and Sattin, 2002), alongside stories that are more about migration and settling than visiting and

moving on by Peter Mayle, Jan Morris and many others. It is ironic that Lonely Planet, with its absolute brand identification with travel, would choose *City of Djinnns* to excerpt. This shows the strength of the association between Dalrymple and travel, and the success of his authorial performance and self-fashioning. Given this significant shift in subject, a change in the characterisation of the protagonist is unsurprising. The William of *City of Djinnns* is equipped with the personality traits necessary to be a valuable and effective settler colonist—he is practical, capable, vigorous and dependable. He is also married, and this domestic dynamic is an important contrast to the unattached individualist at the centre of *In Xanadu*.

One of the central aspects of Dalrymple's work is its interaction with the British imperial presence in India. *City of Djinnns* is the tale of an elite Briton's travel to and residence in Delhi, which makes it available for reading as an echo or repetition of early colonial encounters. Therefore, the ways in which William is represented throughout the text personalises the empire. Both *In Xanadu* and *City of Djinnns* effect a positive portrayal of British imperialism, although they employ what appear to be opposite strategies. The disorganised intellectual traveller of *In Xanadu* shows the empire as an absent-minded, harmless elite construction. In contrast, *City of Djinnns'* protagonist represents the empire as much more stable, responsible, organised, rational, adventurous, domestic, (generally) respectful and long-suffering. Through the construction of the central character, the British colonial presence in India is represented as well-balanced.

In another clear break from his self-representation throughout *In Xanadu*, *City of Djinnns* sees the protagonist portrayed as fit and active, as William's first conversation with regular comic relief character Balvinder Singh, a Delhi taxi driver, demonstrates:

"How do you know I'm a Britisher?" "Because," said Mr Singh, "you are not sporting." "Actually I am quite sporting," I replied. "I go for a run every day, swim in the summer..." "No Britisher is sporting," said Mr Singh, undaunted. "Lots of my countrymen are very keen on sport," I retorted. "No, no," said Mr Singh. "You are not catching me." "We are still a force to be reckoned with in the fifteen hundred metres, and sometimes our cricket team..." "No, no," said Mr Singh. "Still you are not catching me. You Britishers are not *sporting*." He twirled the waxed curlicues of his moustache. "All men should be sporting a moustache, because all ladies are liking too much." (19)

This passage, with its poking fun at Indian English, sets up a hierarchy of levels of English language usage, placing William at the top. Although the change in characterisation of William's physical prowess might appear inconsequential, it facilitates a representation of the British as capable, practical, vigorous colonisers. From the effete gentlemanly protagonist of *In Xanadu* emerges the manly William at the centre of *City of Djinnns*. Note that here the humour of the passage rests on Singh's unclear English phrasing. Also amusing is Singh's presumption that he knows what it is that "all ladies" are "liking." While it is expected in the travel genre that a Western traveller will

make sweeping assumptions about the country visited, a similar universalising by an Indian character is presented as an object of humour.

Throughout *City of Djinnns*, William is represented as a contemporary iteration of nostalgically-portrayed British colonisers. This characterisation, in concert with a number of arguments throughout the text, is an opportunity to represent Britain's imperial relationship with India in a personable, friendly manner. This re-enactment of British / Indian colonial history overlays a complex and conflict-ridden past with an easy narrative of progress, civility and cultural exchange. While such elements form part of the history of the British annexation of India, contemporary texts that exclusively take such a line form a nostalgic, limited representation. These portrayals have the potential to perform their own kind of colonisation, settling in popular (Western) consciousness and impacting on perceptions of imperialism and cross-cultural relations past and present.

The scope of *City of Djinnns* is necessarily dictated by its subject matter: where *In Xanadu*'s journey structure provides ample opportunities for amusing vignettes and cultural comparisons, *City of Djinnns*' geographical location gives Dalrymple the space for a brief, anecdotal treatment of Indian history. Instead of an in-depth consideration of Delhi as a travel destination, or a concentrated study of its history, Dalrymple opts for an approach that uses elements of both. This hybrid model enables a selective, piecemeal approach. This assists in the maintenance of a sense of the positive contributions of the British to India. Despite the work's historical focus, *City of Djinnns* is still careful to remain identifiable as a travel book. The text achieves this identification through

specific gestures towards typical travel tales, such as William's encounters with Indian bureaucracy and "great glistening cocoons of red tape" (20), regardless of the grounded nature of the narrative.

One of the instances in which change is evident between *City of Djinnns* and *In Xanadu* is in Dalrymple's treatment of transvestites and eunuchs. Instead of the disgust and panic evident in *In Xanadu*, *City of Djinnns* offers a more considered portrayal. Tim Youngs comments on this shift in his interview with Dalrymple, highlighting the difference between the "very sensitive and detailed interviews with the eunuchs and the transvestites in *City of Djinnns*" and the earlier "comments on a transvestite whom you referred to as 'he / she (it)'" (41). The section of *City of Djinnns* in which William spends time with some of Delhi's eunuchs, or "hijras," still works to define the protagonist's masculinity, although in a different manner to that of *In Xanadu*. An important qualifier to this is the fact that *City of Djinnns* is the story of William's time in Delhi with his wife, Olivia, as opposed to his unattached characterisation in his earlier narrative. This aspect of William's identity is explicitly mentioned when he first meets Chaman, the head of a hijra "household" (176), in an exchange with William's Indian companion, Zakir, who introduces him to Chaman. The text uses recorded speech to convey the conversation: "'This is my friend, Mr William.' I smiled. Chaman frowned. 'Is he your boyfriend?' 'No,' said Zakir. 'He's married. To a girl.' Chaman wrinkled up her nose in disgust" (176). The protagonist's exchange with Chaman is always polite, but is represented in such a way as to convey to the reader the extent to which William is holding back from agreement with or admiration of Chaman.

In an effort to identify with William, Chaman uses the figure of Sean Connery (a fellow Scot) as common ground, stating, “In the old times we hijras used to be like your zero zero seven. ...Our job was to listen and tell things to the king. We were just like your Sean Connery” (176). Dalrymple conveys his thoughts to the reader: “Somehow I couldn’t imagine Chaman and her household taking on Goldfinger or seducing Ursula Andress, but I let this pass” (176). He consistently refuses to be drawn. Chaman shows William a glamour picture of herself at twenty-five and asks: “‘I was beautiful, no?’ ‘Unique,’ I said” (177). The effect of William’s contact with the hijras is to characterise the protagonist as an ethnographer in the field, penetrating hidden areas of Delhi society in order to bring (slightly titillating) information to his readers. The difficulty of this assignment is emphasised by Dalrymple in the beginning of this section, with the statement:

despite their frequent appearances in public, very little is actually known about the Indian eunuchs. They are fiercely secretive and of their own choice inhabit a dim world of ambiguity and half-truths. They trust no one, and hate being questioned about their lives; if they are pressed, at best they will slam their doors in your face. (170)

As well as this, the presence of secretive eunuchs and brightly-painted dancers furthers the image of a timeless India, in which exists these traditional figures that “you can still find ... in the dark gullies of the Old City—if you know where to look” (169).

In a rare section of the work in which William leaves Delhi, Dalrymple chronicles his and Olivia’s journey to Simla for the summer:

by the mid-nineteenth century the British seemed to have agreed that, even with the aid of the Thermantidote, Delhi was best avoided in high summer. From then on, the majority of the British inhabitants of the city therefore decamped to Simla in April, and stayed there for the duration of the hot weather. Late that summer, as the plains of North India were transformed into one vast shimmering heat haze, Olivia and I bowed to tradition and followed the ghosts of the memsahibs—and much of the modern Delhi middle class—up into the cool of the old Imperial summer capital. Rejecting the plane, we did what Delhi-wallahs have done now for a century: we took the Himalayan Queen as far as Kalka then changed on to the narrow-gauge miniature railway which winds its way up the steep slopes to Simla. (314)

It is significant that this journey is literally in the footsteps of the imperial British, reinforcing William's Delhi sojourn as an iteration or echo of the British / Indian colonial encounter. By "rejecting the plane" in favour of rail, William and Olivia actively extend their connections to the nineteenth-century colonial past. Dalrymple's emphasis on the female elements of the Raj highlights the complex ways in which he represents the imperial British. The particular representation advanced here, is that of the fragile, ghostly memsahib. Of course such a representation of British women in India is limited—Dalrymple makes much of the vigour and engagement of Fanny Parkes in his introduction to a 2002 edition of her *Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque, during four-and-twenty Years in the East; with Revelations on Life in the Zenana* (1850), retitled *Begums, Thugs and White*

Mughals. Like any travel in the wake of, this section, in which William and Olivia literally act out the part of the British imperial population, forms a tribute to those who made the journey beforehand.

City of Djinnns' investment in the conventions of the travel genre, as well as Dalrymple's reputation as an entertaining travel writer with the success of *In Xanadu*, influences its classification as a straightforward travel text. When considering the positioning of *City of Djinnns* within Dalrymple's oeuvre, it becomes evident that different aspects of *City of Djinnns* are emphasised for different reasons. This is particularly obvious in retrospect, when Dalrymple compares it with his later history works. In this context, *City of Djinnns* is positioned in the same way as *In Xanadu*—as the product or reflection of the psyche of a younger, more naïve, author yet to reach his intellectual peak (which is later figured as the properly mature writing of history). In an interview with Tehmina Ahmed in 2003, Dalrymple works to heighten the scholarly credibility of *White Mughals* by emphasising its break from the style of his earlier works:

City of Djinnns and *Xanadu* were books written by a very young man. I was 22 when I wrote *Xanadu* and 28 when I wrote *City of Djinnns*. They have all the pitfalls and the plus points of young men's books. They are also different forms. *Xanadu* is a travelogue and *City of Djinnns* a personal memoir. This [*White Mughals*] is an attempt to write a solid piece of history, it's not at all personal. (Interview with Tehmina Ahmed)

This manoeuvre is of particular interest as it signals a sliding scale of youthfulness that is applied retrospectively whenever required. In a 2005

interview with Tim Youngs, Dalrymple positions *City of Djinnns* as the “mature” text against which the youthful *In Xanadu* is situated: “*In Xanadu* was half-written when I was still at university at the height of the Thatcherite ’80s and *City of Djinnns* was written after 4 years of living in India. It obviously has a very different set of influences. You grow up a lot in that time” (41).

In direct opposition to his earlier statements linking *City of Djinnns* and *In Xanadu* together as irreverent, “young” works, here *City of Djinnns* takes on greater historical value. Another move towards seeing *City of Djinnns* as a “mature” text is found in the introduction to *The Last Mughal* where there is a retrospective portrayal of *City of Djinnns* as a straight history book, represented as forming part of the lineage of Dalrymple’s passion for history, and acting to bolster the impression of an extensive corpus of work:

It was this intriguing and unexpected period which dominated the book that I wrote about Delhi fifteen years ago, entitled *City of Djinnns*, and which later ignited the tinder that led to my last book, *White Mughals*, about the many British who embraced Indian culture at the end of the eighteenth century. *The Last Mughal* is therefore my third book inspired by the capital. (*The Last Mughal* 9)

The key to this statement is the emphasis on the time that Dalrymple has spent with his subject—the “fifteen years” of implied knowledge, familiarity and research which functions to increase his narrative authority. Here Dalrymple has an interest in mythologising his oeuvre. Such representation also functions to sell Dalrymple’s back catalogue. There are, of course, similarities between *City of Djinnns* and Dalrymple’s later, historical, works, but these are eclipsed

by their myriad differences. One example is in each text's approach to citation. *City of Djinnns* does not exhibit the concern with an appearance of academic rigour found in Dalrymple's historical works. Footnotes are absent, and direct quotations are very few—those that are present are bereft of any system of referencing. The text is less about the findings or outcomes of the protagonist's activities than it is about chronicling the experience of William undertaking the research or talking to the people (as opposed to the particularities of what they say).

Although *City of Djinnns* is manifestly non-academic, a glossary of unfamiliar words and an index is appended. This somewhat overdetermined emphasis on Indian word usage, combined with the conversations that William records with a wide cross-section of the Delhi population, advances the impression that Dalrymple has a high level of fluency in a variety of Indian languages, and also works to exoticise the text. However, on the rare occasion that Dalrymple's proficiency is mentioned directly, it appears that the opposite is true. William's contact for all things Mughal, Dr Jaffery, asks him “‘Would you not like to learn classical Persian?’ ‘I would love to,’ I answered. ‘But at the moment I’m having enough difficulty trying to master Hindustani’” (187). The characterisation of William as a belated settler-colonist is advanced consistently throughout the text. Here it can be found in William's echoing of the term “Hindustani,” the mixture of Urdu and Hindi used by the Raj. Later in the work, William's lack of fluency in Hindi also becomes apparent, although accompanied by the emphasis that this is common in non-Indians:

Mr Lal's English was even less fluent than my Hindi, so we chatted, ungrammatically, in his tongue. Thanks to our twice-weekly lessons, Olivia and I had now become confident enough in Hindi for the practice of it to become enjoyable rather than tiresome—if only because people were so surprised to hear any non-Indian speak even the most stumbling version of it. (209)

This admission of William's less-than-fluent grasp of Hindi is immediately deflected by the follow-up assertion of his and Olivia's greater commitment to communication than other Westerners. Given these passages, it can be assumed that either the majority of William's interaction occurs in English, or that significant use of an interpreter is required for William to carry out the detailed conversations that make up much of *City of Djinnns*. Both possibilities go unmentioned in the text, as both would undermine (in different ways) Dalrymple's authority. These potentialities either open up similar conversational possibilities to other travellers (if English is the language of choice then Dalrymple's role as interpreter of India for the Western reader diminishes) or counter the representation of Dalrymple as sole driver of the interactions that comprise the narrative.

It seems that, in the service of the travel genre's glorification of and reliance on the author / narrator persona, the possibility of the presence of an interpreter is elided. This is the case for Dalrymple's later travel book *From the Holy Mountain*: "You don't openly acknowledge in the book, for example, an interpreter if you're talking through somebody" (Interview with Tim Youngs 59). In part this lack of acknowledgement is a convention of the print media,

which, in comparison to the usual radio and television treatment of interpreters and those being interpreted (beginning with the voice of the foreign language speaker and then giving way to the voice of the interpreter), does not automatically foreground their presence. However, it is a convention that functions to highlight the figure of the author and emphasise his individualistic investigative communication talents.

In contrast to the lack of attention paid to the specifics of William's language skills, *City of Djinn*s frequently highlights the peculiarities and hilarities of Indian English usage. Despite careful framing as the natural evolution of a language, Dalrymple's use of this material is overwhelmingly in the service of humour at the expense of the local characters. Instances such as this recall the jocular style of *In Xanadu*'s interaction with local populations. It is telling that there are no similar situations narrated in which William's meaning is amusingly misconstrued (or in which he makes a gaffe) in conversation. One of the more extended examples of Dalrymple's delight in the oddities of Indian English is his gleeful engagement with the *Times of India*:

The news is inevitably depressing stuff ("400 Killed in Tamil Train Crash", "150 Garrotted by Assam Separatists" and so on), yet somehow the jaunty *Times of India* prose always manages to raise the tone from one of grim tragedy. There may have been a train crash, but at least the Chief Minister has *air-dashed* to the scene. Ten *convented* (convent-educated) girls may have been gang-raped in the Punjab, but thousands of students have staged a *bandh* (strike) and a *dharna* (protest) against

such *eve-teasing* (much nicer than the bland Americanese “sexual harassment”). And so what if the protesters were then *lathi* (truncheon) charged by police *jawans* (constables)? In the *Times of India* such miscreants are always *charge-sheeted* in the end. (73)

This passage pokes fun at the unfamiliar ways in which the *Times of India* (in implicit comparison with its British namesake) uses particular words or forms of words. Further, through his careful choice of examples of language comedy, India is portrayed as full of danger and disaster (especially for women), emphasising Dalrymple’s status as intrepid traveller. That Dalrymple’s favourite of the “amusing” words chosen is “eve-teasing” points toward the gendered orientalisng tropes which *City of Djinnns* utilises. The collapsing of gang rape and “eve-teasing” without regard to context is problematic. It is unclear whether the *Times* also conflates the two or if this is Dalrymple’s glib language. As found in *In Xanadu*, the figure of rape is utilised to strengthen William’s representation as manly and as a matter for humour.

Another manly British character at the centre of *City of Djinnns* is also called William. Apart from the protagonist, the British man who receives the most detailed attention is William Fraser, who was appointed in 1805 as Assistant to the British Resident in Delhi (98). The importance of Fraser to *City of Djinnns* can be seen in the text’s narrative economy—twenty-six pages of the work are devoted to a chronicle of Fraser’s career in India. Dalrymple emphasises Fraser’s lack of interest and involvement in the British community in Delhi, and his sporting and military prowess (alongside his various eccentricities). His active nature and distance from British “bores” is illustrated

in the course of an anecdote about an Anglo-Indian dinner party: “William [Fraser] was not among the diners. Not only did he prefer to be on the move with his troops in the wilds of Harayana or fighting the Gurkhas in the hills above Gangotri, he also found ... the bores of the European community intolerable” (114). One of the ways in which Dalrymple’s text positively portrays the British administrators of India is by emphasising the eccentric figures who enthusiastically embraced aspects of the Mughal culture with which they interacted, in contrast to the provincial European “bores” (a forerunner of Dalrymple’s later arguments in *White Mughals* and *The Last Mughal*). Fraser is shown as a representative of an accepting, pluralistic, hybrid culture which was overthrown in the decades prior to the Indian Mutiny of 1857 by “The cold and exact set of mind which could reduce the human casualties of a bloody war to the level of bowling averages [which] was a world away from the attitudes of [Sir David] Ochterlony and William Fraser” (150).

It is revealing that there is no mention of the events of the Mutiny itself within *City of Djinnns*. A possible, generous, explanation for such an omission might be a presumption by Dalrymple that both the British and Indian readership would have sufficient prior knowledge of the events of the Mutiny for a recapitulation to be unnecessary. Another, less generous, reason may be the desire not to have to take up a particular historiographical position, and risk causing offence to readers either in the United Kingdom or in India. Either way, the absence is remarkable given Dalrymple’s focus on the British response to the Uprising. It seems that any concerted focus on the Mutiny

(which was the largest anti-colonial revolt in the history of the British Empire) significantly undermines the representation of the British presence in India as built up through the construction of the characters of Fraser and William. *City of Djinn's* lacunae in regard to the Mutiny works in combination with other narrative devices to provide a strategically limited picture of the British East India Company and the British in India more generally.

One aspect of the text that works in this way is its portrayal of the British military forces in India. The examples chosen present the overwhelmingly unified picture of charismatic British or “half-caste” leaders commanding undying loyalty and respect from their (native) troops: “While he [Fraser] slept, his bodyguard of Indian tribals would unroll their mattresses and sleep around his couch” (99). Despite the British shunning James Skinner due to his mixed heritage, Dalrymple still recruits him as an example of a charismatic British leader. Skinner’s soldiers wore physical proof of their affiliation, Dalrymple writes: “When James Skinner raised his cavalry regiment he had the Skinner clan emblem—the bloody hand—tattooed on the bellies of his Hindu recruits” (128). The crowning example of Indian respect for the British military presence (curiously taken from the height of the Mutiny) is Dalrymple’s description of Brigadier General John Nicholson. Nicholson served as an army officer for the East India Company from 1840 to 1857, in Afghanistan, and the Punjab, and is known for his “ferocious hatred of the mutineers and the civilian population of Delhi” (Vetch). Dalrymple glosses Nicholson as: “the ‘Lion of the Punjab’, who was killed in the storming of Delhi in 1857 but who was still worshipped long afterwards as a hero by the British and as a god by a Punjabi

sect called the Nikalsini” (115). This apotheosis of the British military leader takes the representation of “native” admiration for British military leaders in India to new heights, and capitalises on tropes of Indian superstition, credulity and British superiority. According to his entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*:

The truth seems to be that in 1848 a mendicant holy man, impressed by Nicholson’s ruthless, and often cruel, use of power, tried to get in his good graces by erecting a shrine to him. He succeeded in getting others who feared the strange officer to join in making offerings both at the shrine and to Nicholson in person in order to gain favour and to protect themselves from his wrath. (Vetch)

In light of this explanation, Dalrymple’s phrase “worshipped long afterwards” may be valid for his British admirers, but seems less applicable to his Indian devotees.

As evident in his focus on military officials, Dalrymple clearly signposts the way that he constructs his historical narrative, employing elite, ruling-class individuals and families as a lens through which to view particular historical events and eras. An example is found in Dalrymple’s explanation of his focus on Mughal ruler Safdarjung: “[He] interested me because his life seemed to encapsulate perfectly the intriguing but cataclysmic half-century that linked the Mughal high noon at the close of the seventeenth century with the decay and disintegration of the Twilight fifty years later” (156). As well as linking Mughal rule to “decay and disintegration,” this passage highlights the differences in representation between Indian and British historical personages.

When it comes to British figures such as Fraser, who is used in exactly the same way, as a representative of a period and style of British / Indian interaction, their metonymic status is not signalled to the same extent. Perhaps this is due to the (Western) reader's greater awareness of the multiplicity and individuality of British experiences and a concomitant resistance to an overt simplification. On the other side of the spectrum is the reader's practice with treating exotic people and stories as metonyms for their larger culture. Further enhancing the plural representation of the British, Dalrymple contrasts the monument to casualties of the Mutiny and William Fraser's residence:

the Memorial stands only a few feet from the great white house which William Fraser laboured throughout the early years of the century to build. One monument with its Mughal borrowings and position determined by Timur's camp represents what the Raj might have been. The Mutiny memorial represents—crudely and distastefully—what it was. (150)

Here the varied and rich nature of the British experience in India is played out through the juxtaposition of these two structures, and the potentiality for different outcomes emphasised in a way that does not occur in relation to Indian historical figures.

City of Djinnns is a text with a complex structure that contains a sometimes-unstable mixture of travel and history. What holds all of the elements of this text together is an overwhelming concern with the amelioration of the reputation of the British in India. The text achieves this representational rehabilitation through the employment of a number of

different, though connected, tropes. The most powerful of these effects a vision of the British in India through the lens of a romanticised rhetoric of cultural exchange, highlighting individual Britons' interactions with and contributions to Mughal courtly culture. Dalrymple shares with the reader his search for British imperial memories of Delhi during the Raj period: "Before I went to India I went to Cambridge to see a friend of my grandmother. Between the 1920s and the 1940s, Iris Portal's youth had been spent in ... colonial Delhi ... I wanted to hear what she remembered" (75). The author's interest in British India (rather than India itself) even predates his journey to the country.

One of the ways in which Dalrymple negotiates the shifting relationship between travel and history in *City of Djinnns* is by a repeated narrative technique of describing his reading or research in a place. For example, his musings about the contrast between the dilapidated present and the glorious past of the British Residency building in Delhi are followed by a description of William's situated reading: "To aid the imagination, I got out my copies of the Fraser letters and diaries that I had brought with me" (112). By bringing his narration of his research into the Indian environment, Dalrymple provides a compelling illusion of travel, both through the Delhi landscape and into the past.

After hearing Portal's stories about the officers, polo and class hierarchies under the Raj, William states that he knows that he has to end the interview, but that he has to ask one final question before he departs. The structure of the conversation leaves no doubt for the reader that this is the question foremost in William's mind: "In retrospect," I said. "Do you think

British rule was justified?’” (80). Portal’s answer is dry and humorous:

“Well, at the time we certainly didn’t think of ourselves as wicked imperialists,” she said, answering slowly. “Of course not. But you see, although people of my generation were very keen on Gandhi and Indian Independence, we were still very careless. We didn’t give much thought to the question of what on earth we were doing to that country and its people. That said, I can’t forget the sacrifices made by the ‘wicked’ imperialists over the centuries—the graves, so many very young, the friends I have had, and what good people many of them were.” (80)

Portal’s reply situates the British as overwhelmingly well-meaning, if careless and distracted. This, in combination with her references to unnamed British “sacrifices,” advances the argument that the British were working for the betterment of India, even if they went about it in a careless way. She concludes her answer with a more overt reference to the British colonial authority:

“But on balance I think you must never take land away from a people. A people’s land has a mystique. You can go and possibly order them about for a bit, perhaps introduce some new ideas, build a few good buildings, but then in the end you must go away and die in Cheltenham.” Iris sighed. “And that, of course, is exactly what we did.” (80)

The systematic and strategic representation of figures such as Portal is one of the mechanisms by which this text constructs an image of the Raj as a benevolent, positive force. In this formulation, not only did the British “go away and die in Cheltenham,” but they also built “good buildings” and introduced “new ideas.” The British are presented as a positive, paternalistic

force for cultural evolution who made their contribution to the development of the Indian nation and then peacefully faded away.

Not content with Portal's reminiscences from her home in the United Kingdom, Dalrymple seeks out Phyllis and Edith Haxby near Delhi as further remnants of India's post-imperial British population. He finds them harmless, struggling and mentally unwell in their dilapidated cottage outside Delhi, blaming their declining health and fortunes since 1947 on imaginary persecutors: "There are prostitutes living all over the place, making life hell for us. They say we're English and shouldn't be here. After seventy-eight years!" (87). Although simultaneously highlighting the ridiculousness of their arguments, this passage emphasises the length of time that the sisters have spent in India, their frailty and the legitimacy of their presence. All of the British "survivors" of the Raj interviewed by Dalrymple are women. The feminisation of the imperial experience works (through utilising stereotypical notions of femininity) to imply the vulnerability of the British presence in India, and to undermine the traditional narrative of imperial colonisation as male, militaristic and adventurous. Dalrymple's representational manoeuvre is also rather ironic, given the desire evident in many of the mythologies of the British Empire to blame the increase in numbers of British women under the Raj for the decline of earlier, more intimate, cultural relationships, which is present elsewhere in *City of Djinnns*. Ronald Hyam's *Britain's Imperial Century, 1815-1914* provides an illustrative example of such misogynist stereotyping. Hyam states:

The regulation of sexual relations with indigenous peoples was

inherently a central feature of the colonial relationship, and it was fundamental to the construction of racial perceptions and misperceptions. As race relations became less relaxed in the later nineteenth century, so missionaries and memsahibs insisted on greater controls. (292)

Links between Dalrymple's and Hyam's representation of the British presence in India can be seen in their demarcation of two distinct periods: one centered around sexual relationships between British men and Indian women (portrayed as vital to the relationships between Indian and British men), and the second regulated by the strictures of missionaries and memsahibs (and detrimental to the relationships between Indian and British men). Unsatisfied with merely representing a British India in which, as Gayatri Spivak memorably states, "White men [are] saving brown women from brown men" (297), Hyam and Dalrymple see the relationships between the white men and brown women as instances of utopic, equal, cross-cultural partnerships.

Not only are those who remember their personal imperial experience for Dalrymple represented as eccentric, but more famous historical figures are also subject to this trope. Sir Edwin Lutyens, engineer and architect of New Delhi, is one such figure. On reading Lutyens' collected letters, Dalrymple muses:

perhaps the overwhelming surprise of the letters is Lutyens's extraordinary intolerance and dislike of all things Indian. Even by the standards of the time, the letters reveal him to be a bigot, though the impression is one of bumbling insularity rather than jack-booted malevolence. (84)

Even in the process of calling Lutyens a bigot, Dalrymple mitigates the

obvious negative connotations of the remark through the use of the qualifiers “bumbling” and “insular.” Lutyens is not represented as bigoted, so much as quaint, foolish, harmless and terribly British, in a manner that, implicitly, Dalrymple appears to understand. Of course, the other implication of such a representation is that all Britons are bigots, in their own quaint and isolationist manner.

Dalrymple is interested in architecture, and *City of Djinnns* is full of detailed descriptions of prominent buildings, particularly those that formed part of the British presence in India. For Dalrymple, these buildings function in a similar, though more symbolic, manner to figures like Portal and Lutyens, physically embodying the British impact on the Indian landscape. This is especially so in the case of Lutyens, who was responsible for much of the imperial British architectural presence in New Delhi. Dalrymple is alive to the symbolic possibilities here, and performs a textual manoeuvre which sees Lutyens and his buildings becoming metonymically representative of the Raj as a whole. He devotes lengthy sections within *City of Djinnns* to descriptions of Lutyens’ architecture and his responses to its beautiful, quintessentially imperial, design (80-83). This architecture, described as taking its form from both classical and Eastern traditions, buttresses Dalrymple’s representation of Lutyens’ Delhi as an expression of the beauty of cultural exchange:

East fused with West. Round arches and classical Greek colonnades were balanced by latticework stone screens and a ripple of helmet-like *chattris* [domed Mughal structures, literally ‘umbrellas’]. At the very centre of

the complex, the resolution of every perspective in New Delhi, stood Lutyens's staggering neo-Buddhist dome. (81)

Dalrymple's description of Lutyens' buildings implies the presence of a particularly romanticised culture that takes the best from each contributing society, embodied in the blend of colonnades and chattris. This representational process elides the materialities of colonial rule or of imbalances in power within this "beautiful" exchange. He praises Lutyens enthusiastically:

It was superb. In the dusk, as the sun sank behind the great dome of the Viceroy's House, the whole vista would turn the colour of attar of roses. I would realize then, without hesitation, that I was looking at one of the greatest marriages of architecture and urban planning ever to have left the drawing board. (82)

Such a sentimental representation becomes complicated when Dalrymple highlights the authoritarian, imperial aspects of Lutyens' architecture, and acknowledges the accompanying distaste that it produces.

William chronicles his realisation that "there was a distant but distinct echo of something Fascist or even Nazi about the great acropolis of Imperial Delhi" (82). This notion is immediately qualified, however, when he highlights the "very many, very great differences" between Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany and the British Raj, stating: "Certainly it is far more beautiful than anything Hitler and Mussolini ever raised: Lutyens, after all, was a far, far greater architect than Albert Speer" (82). The juxtaposition of the text's recognition and denial of the less-than-attractive side to imperial power is

intriguing. For instance, Dalrymple quotes the inscription on the gateway of the Baker's Secretariats, in capital letters, and laments its "patronizing" nature: "LIBERTY WILL NOT DESCEND TO A PEOPLE; A PEOPLE MUST RAISE THEMSELVES TO LIBERTY; IT IS A BLESSING WHICH MUST BE EARNED BEFORE IT CAN BE ENJOYED" (83). However, in introducing this inscription, he states "For those who like to believe in the essential benevolence of the British Empire it is a depressing discovery" (83). Given the ways in which *City of Djinn*s represents the British in India, it seems that Dalrymple is to be included in this category.

Dalrymple deals with the uncomfortable nature of Lutyens' legacy in a number of ways, all of which continue to emphasise its aesthetic qualities. He defends Lutyens' New Delhi against Nehru's claim that "New Delhi is the visible symbol of British power, with all its ostentation and wasteful extravagance" (85). For Dalrymple,

[Nehru] was right, of course, but that is only half the story. It is also the finest architectural artefact created by the British Empire, and preferable in every way to Nehru's disastrous commission of a hideous new city by Le Corbusier at Chandigarh. Chandigarh is now an urban disaster, a monument to stained concrete and discredited modernism; but Imperial Delhi is now more admired and loved than perhaps ever before. (85)

Here is Dalrymple's opposition between "new" and "old" India, distilled. The aggregation of the British with India's rich cultural past, in contrast with a soulless modernist present, ascribes further value to the imperial encounter. The final word on the matter leaves the reader with a positive overall

impression of the British presence in India: “in its patronizing and authoritarian after-taste, Lutyens’s New Delhi remains as much a monument to the British Empire’s failings as to its genius” (85). Alongside its “genius,” the empire is described as “patronising.” This is a friendlier, more well-meaning, if condescending, way of representing British rule. If only the empire was less patronising, the argument seems to run, then its “genius” would be even more apparent.

Dalrymple also uses descriptions of various buildings to evoke or represent different periods of Indian history. And although he expresses some reservations, Dalrymple awards his highest praise to the British Raj society and its twentieth-century architecture as represented by the work of Lutyens, rather than Mughal Delhi: “In summer I preferred the less claustrophobic avenues of Lutyens’s Delhi” (8). Comparing Dalrymple’s numerous considerations of multiple forms of Delhi architecture, there emerges an interesting dichotomy: not between purely “British” and “Indian” forms, but, in a more complex manner, between new (modern and modernist) Indian architecture and town planning and old (including late British imperial) Indian architecture, with all praise going to the “elegant” old over the dull, Westernised, new. So, for example, he writes:

When I first saw Delhi it was still a low-rise colonial capital, dominated by long avenues of white plaster Lutyens bungalows. ... One of my strongest memories from my first visit was sitting in the garden of one of the bungalows, a glass to hand, with my legs raised up on a Bombay Fornicator (one of those wickerwork planter’s chairs with extended arms,

essential to every colonial veranda). In front lay a lawn dotted with croquet hoops; behind, the white bow-front of one of this century's most inspired residential designs. Over the rooftops there was not a skyscraper to be seen. Yet I was not in some leafy suburb, but in the very centre of New Delhi. Its low-rise townscape was then unique among modern capitals, a last surviving reminder of the town planning of a more elegant age. (23)

While indulging in rather obvious colonial nostalgia, channeled through the medium of furniture and architecture, as well as signalling toward the level of privilege that he enjoys, Dalrymple highlights the elegance of British rule through its remnants in the cityscape. His repeated use of the descriptors "low-rise" and "colonial" compound the representation. In a manner typical of the majority of travel books and travel guides (such as the highly popular *Rough Guide* and *Lonely Planet* series), he dismisses the highrise metropolis as ugly, soulless and irrelevant to "real" Indian life and culture: "Modern Delhi is thought of either as a city of grey bureaucracy, or as the metropolis of hard-working, nouveau-riche Punjabis" (168). In this context, then, what *City of Djinnns* values is Delhi's past over its present. This is a typical Orientalist preoccupation with a "golden," "classical" past for India, juxtaposed with a fallen present. This equation of the country with history and spirituality effectively forecloses a representation of India as a nation properly equipped for modern state governance. *City of Djinnns*' portrayal of a contemporary Delhi in decline further enshrines the British administration as a sensible, viable stage in the nation's history that has regrettably closed.

Other, earlier historical figures who work in *City of Djinns* as representatives of the British presence in India are Delhi's earlier British Residents. Dalrymple represents these men, whom he locates within the Mughal court in Delhi, as cosmopolitan and eccentric:

the Emperor continued to hold court as he had always done, and at first the charade of Mughal power was maintained with the express approval of the British residents. These early residents were a series of sympathetic and slightly eccentric Scotsmen, whose love and respect for India was reflected by their adoption of Indian modes of dress and Indian ways of living. The first, Sir David Ochterlony, set the tone. With his fondness for hookahs and nautch girls and Indian costumes, Ochterlony was decidedly different from the normal run of starch-shirted, stiff-lipped *burra sahibs*. (98)

The words that Dalrymple chooses enable two parallel, but conflicting, representations to be mobilised at the same time. Reference to the “charade” of Mughal power, which shows the growing influence of the British, is countered by the statement that the Mughal ruler had the “express approval” of the “sympathetic” residents. Dalrymple advances a contrast here, between an imperialist past characterised by Orientalist men, and the contemporary remnants of the Raj as fragile women.

The ways in which central imperial buildings such as the British Residency are represented serve to reinforce Dalrymple's arguments about the British imperial relationship with India, which he sees as overwhelmingly hybrid and fluid, particularly in the late eighteenth century, with many of the

British living in the style of the Mughal Muslim elite. This is not, of course, an isolated or an inherently problematic argument. Dalrymple describes his discovery that the Delhi Residency was built on the ruins of a Mughal mansion:

Behind the classical façade lay the earlier frontage of a Mughal pavilion: a double row of blind arches leading up to a central portal. [T]hey [the British] merely erected a classical façade over a Mughal substructure. It was just like Ochterlony: in public establishing the British presence; but inside, in private, living the life of a Nawab. (111)

Such statements strategically perform and naturalise Dalrymple's arguments about the pluralistic quality of imperial India in a way that elides the inherent difficulty in interpreting "private" ideas, relationships and thoughts. Both the British Residency and Ochterlony, the British Resident, are silent figures onto which particular "private" leanings can easily be projected. Dalrymple's narrative style is convincing because it simultaneously presents historical detail and his own interested interpretation of that detail. But what if we read differently? What if the classical façade is read as an erasure of prior Mughal architecture and modalities of power and privilege? Dalrymple's compellingly readable style forecloses against other interpretations, and it is this that reveals how the generic features of travel writing—autobiographic and subjective—work to mask the partisan histories Dalrymple engages in at this point in his writing career.

As well as focusing on the ways in which Dalrymple represents the British in India, it is fruitful to examine his construction of India before the

arrival of the British, for this in turn impacts on the ways in which the British are viewed throughout his work. In his description of the tomb of Safdarjung, Mughal ruler of the late seventeenth century, Dalrymple uses an interpretation of the architecture to emphasise poetically the decadence and decay of this period:

Safdarjung's tomb exudes the flavour of an age not so much decaying miserably into impoverished anonymity as one whoring and drinking itself into extinction. The building tells a story of drunken laughter as the pillars of [the Mughal] empire collapsed in a cloud of dust and masonry; and afterwards, of dancing in the ruins. (159)

Here again, the straightforward language that Dalrymple uses functions to elide other representational possibilities; the statement that the building “tells a story” of debauched, wilful imperial collapse does not leave room for differing interpretations, or even a questioning of the effectiveness of the buildings’ capacity to relate a narrative. Repeated references to morally dissolute practices (“whoring,” “drinking,” “dancing in the ruins”) work to emphasise the unsuitability of the Mughals for responsible government, the inevitability of their decline and the concomitant rectitude of the British. The language that Dalrymple employs to detail the structure and ornamentation of the tomb reiterates this gendered image of corruption, reinforcing Orientalist tropes about a degenerate, feminised Orient in contrast to an upstanding, masculine West:

Like some elderly courtesan, the tomb tries to mask its imperfections beneath thick layers of make-up; its excesses of ornament are worn like

over-applied rouge. Even the little mosque to the side of the gatehouse has a whiff of degeneracy about it: its three domes are flirtatiously striped like the flared pyjama bottoms of a nautch girl; there is something fundamentally voluptuous in its buxom curves and poise. (158-59)

Significantly, the Mughal empire is not simply figured as a courtesan, but as an ageing one, whose efforts to mask her imperfections are comical and grotesque. The use of the words “voluptuous,” “buxom,” and “degenerate” together function to give the image of the Mughal empire as an overblown, spent force. Thus, in Dalrymple’s representation, India was in a heightened state of decline before the arrival of the British. Rather than a series of geo-political negotiations, or the gradual decline of former imperial powers, the end of Mughal dominance is a direct result of feminised Mughal “excess,” “degeneracy” and wilful self-destruction.

There is something fundamentally attractive about this Orientalist vision, for William and the imperial British. Dalrymple’s description of Ochterlony’s character through the interpretation of his miniature portrait is revealing:

He is dressed in full Indian costume, and reclines on a carpet, leaning back against a spread of pillows and bolsters. The picture summed up the period, to my mind perhaps the most attractive interlude in the whole long story of the British in India. There is a quality of the naughty schoolboy about Ochterlony and his contemporaries in Delhi: away from the disapproving gaze of the Calcutta memsahibs they gather their harems and smoke their hookahs. (111-12)

This passage contains a number of insights into the way *City of Djinn*s

functions. First is Dalrymple's apparently straightforward assertion that the portrait of Ochterlony sums up the period. This off-the-cuff statement condenses the textual strategies of the book. The veracity of the statement that a painting can somehow metonymically represent a whole, infinitely complex, era collapses on closer examination. This manoeuvre—of taking one story and elevating it to representative status—is what *City of Djinnns* does with the narrative of the elite British / Mughal relationship. The statement that this is the “most attractive” aspect of the colonial situation affirms Dalrymple's investment in this argument. What is truly “attractive” about this period is finally enumerated—namely, Orientalist fantasies of a feminised India: dancing girls, harems and hookahs. Here Dalrymple indulges in the common representation of British women as a hindrance to cross-cultural interaction and harmony in imperial India, coupled with a romanticised portrayal of extent of the Resident's interaction with India. For Joy Wang, such instances of “sentimentality about racial and cultural hybridity... [are] inseparable from a problematic stance that tends to view the history of British expansionism as a ‘symbiotic’ relationship rather than one of conquest and exploitation” (114). The elision of the commercial and geographical impetus sustaining the British East India Company's presence in India throughout *City of Djinnns* supports this (strategic) view of the symbiotic nature of the British / Indian relationship.

City of Djinnns frequently slips into clichéd Orientalising fantasy, particularly when Dalrymple chronicles Delhi's history. This is most obvious in the form of William's keen interest in and enthusiastic description of the sexual aspects of courtly Mughal life:

Best of all were the dancers and courtesans—beautiful women like Ad Begum whose speciality was to appear naked at parties, but so cleverly painted that no one noticed: “she decorates her legs with beautiful drawings in the style of pyjamas instead of actually wearing them; in place of the cuffs she draws flowers and petals in ink exactly as found in the finest cloth of Rum.” (167)

Dalrymple’s description of the British experience in India also focuses on such titillating notions, with Sir David Ochterlony and his “harem” given much attention: “Every evening all thirteen of his Indian wives used to process around Delhi behind their husband, each on the back of her own elephant” (98). Ochterlony is a figure who continues to hold Dalrymple’s attention beyond the boundaries of *City of Djinnns*. His later forays into Indian history also feature the Delhi British Resident and his “harem.” Dalrymple’s nostalgia for this eroticised vision of a colonial past is evident when William stands outside the Residency and looks through the windows, trying to imagine its past glory:

Dusty filing cabinets stand where the nautch girls once danced. Doors hang loose on their hinges. Everywhere plaster and paint is peeling. So total is the transformation that it is difficult now ... to people the empty corridors with the bustling [British East India] Company servants, glittering Mughal *omrahs* (noblemen) and celebrated courtesans. (112)

India’s past functions as an exotic, sensual, Orientalist escape from a present characterised by decline. However the British Company officers still “bustle” in a busy, important manner.

In contrast to such portrayals of Indian society as sensuous and dissolute prior to the arrival of the colonisers, the British are represented as forces of improvement and evolution. The benefits of cross-cultural exchange moves in both directions, as Dalrymple emphasises British cultural influences on, as well as appropriations of, Indian culture. Significantly, this influence is not portrayed through any description of the Raj, but rather through representations of post-independence India. William recalls his 1984 interview with another remnant of the Raj, Norah Nicholson, who explains: “I’ve been here twenty-four years and have applied for the land, but they ignore me because I refuse to give them a bribe. ... There is no law and order and still less justice since the British left” (116). In this formulation, the period of British rule in India becomes an oasis of order, truth and justice, in opposition to the corruption and degeneracy evident after independence. Comments by Persian scholar and Dalrymple’s guide Dr Jaffery reinforce such a view: “‘In this city,’ he said, ‘culture and civilization have always been very thin dresses. It does not take much for that dress to be torn off and for what lies beneath to be revealed’” (190). It is in this context that even the lightest, most humorous sections of *City of Djinns* need to be examined. For example, the amusing, if rather stereotypical, references to Dalrymple’s ordeals with Indian bureaucracy:

I left Mr Lal’s office at noon. By four-thirty I had queued inside a total of nine different offices, waiting in each for the magic letter, seal, signature, counter-signature, demand note, restoration order or receipt which would, at some stage in the far distant future, lead to me being granted a telephone. (22)

This passage's overtones emphasise the dysfunctional nature of Indian bureaucracy as an unruly, uncanny child of logical, solid British parents. The suggestion of Indian bureaucracy's superstitious, illogical nature is encapsulated in the designation of each step as "magical." This representation functions alongside the other multiple narrative strategies that work together to provide an overwhelmingly positive representation of the British in India.

The reception of *City of Djinnns* highlights the general acceptance of nostalgic imperial narratives, with its publication generating a flurry of positive reviews and publicity. It received the Thomas Cook Travel Book Award and Dalrymple won the *Sunday Times* Young British Writer of the Year award in 1994. The sole scholarly article concerned with *City of Djinnns* published to date is by Antara Datta in a special issue of the *Yearly Review* concerned with travel. Datta's contribution is an enthusiastic and generous assessment of *City of Djinnns*. With a focus on the text's treatment of history, Datta endows the work with significant, transformative powers, stating that it "use[s] the travel form to address some of the most crucial debates of our times" (135), in a "project [that is] politically recuperative" (136). Datta further argues that the travel aspects of this important text allow Dalrymple to present a range of historical perspectives:

what Dalrymple's history offers is the possibility of heteroglossia within history writing. The narrator / traveller himself, in the process of travelling, narrating, reading, conversing, endeavours to participate in the heteroglossia about which he writes. (140)

Datta's enthusiasm about the "possibilities of heteroglossia" is presumably encouraged by the stories Dalrymple tells about the different characters he meets in the course of his narrative. However, William's interactions, which Datta elevates as inclusive, ultimately serve to reinforce Dalrymple's central narrative. Although the "possibilities" of heteroglossia might be gestured towards, they are hamstrung by the text's overall argument for the positive contribution of the British, and its driving first-person narrative. As well as privileging individual, personal interaction as a part of some kind of universal humanism, Datta's argument leaves aside the inherently singular, individualistic nature of the travel text. Datta attempts to circumvent such issues by noting the trend of contemporary travel writing to emphasise "the arbitrariness of individual witnessing" (137). While this may be true for many travel writers, Dalrymple is not one of them. With his emphasis on the power of travel and the authenticity of his works, Dalrymple's representation of the author is as an embedded source of insight.

Datta enumerates the sources of authority for *City of Djinnns*: "The legitimacy of the travel-history created is not to be sought only from the historical archive, but in the 'recognition' that comes from a common lived experience" (140). What she sees as exciting, inclusive possibilities—the shared "recognition" of commonality—I read more critically as an appeal to the unverifiable, unrepeatable authority of individual experience.

The praise heightens toward the close of the article, which sees Dalrymple as the saviour of both the genres of travel writing and history:

He is aware of the colonial baggage that the genre carries, and he redeems, apart from history, the genre too, which has been doomed to academic pigeonholing since Said. Through his writing and references, Dalrymple exposes cultural hierarchies that are more equitable. That such a project is desirable is beyond doubt, but that it is still a romantic and fringe exercise is difficult to ignore. (145)

While I agree that Dalrymple's project is a romantic one, it is unclear how a text that works consistently toward the amelioration of the British imperial presence in India can be read as a redemptive work free from "colonial baggage." The claim that Dalrymple and *City of Djinnns* "exposes" more "equitable" cultural hierarchies is mysterious, unless Datta is referring to Dalrymple's arguments for the British admiration of aspects of Mughal courtly culture. Such a designation is highly problematic, as it advances as liberal a fundamentally conservative text. Datta ends with a useful reminder of the inequalities inherent in travel writing: "The fact that some people more than others, certain languages more than others, have greater mobility is intrinsic to any debate on travel writing. That writers like Dalrymple use this privilege to create a more liberal consensus should not be understated" (146). I do not dispute Dalrymple's privilege, however the argument that Datta makes for his texts' power to redeem and change is difficult to understand. Instead, *City of Djinnns* may be viewed as an overwhelmingly paternalistic text which works toward a distinctly positive reception of the Raj.

Although *City of Djinnns* is undoubtedly a very different kind of travel book from *In Xanadu* and his next work, *From the Holy Mountain*, it is the

characterisation of the protagonist that provides the link between them; despite the shifts in William's representation between these texts, the centrality of his investigative intellect is clear. In each text, the narrative drive is overwhelmingly presented as the narrator's and the central character's quest for knowledge. Following from this motivation, then, the link between travel and archival research becomes clearer as both are figured as forays in Dalrymple's search for truth. Perhaps this representational conflation can start to explain Dalrymple's later positioning of *City of Djinnns* as an early iteration of his history writing.

In his next book, Dalrymple moves from the static narrative of *City of Djinnns* to another journey-based travel text, *From the Holy Mountain*. Like *City of Djinnns*, it contains much that is based on conversations between William and various locals who he encounters. *From the Holy Mountain* also shifts geographical location from India to the Middle East. However, Dalrymple's engagement with Orientalist tropes continues.

Chapter Three: *From the Holy Mountain*

From the Holy Mountain: A Journey in the Shadow of Byzantium is Dalrymple's third monograph. First published in 1997, it details his travel through the former Byzantine empire, visiting Greece, Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan and Egypt. The journey and its narration are structured around Dalrymple following in the footsteps of two Eastern Christian monks, John Moschos and his pupil Sophronius the Sophist. Dalrymple describes their "epic 30-year journey" (Interview with Lyn Gallacher)

across the entire Eastern Byzantine world. Their aim was to collect the wisdom of the desert fathers, the sages and the mystics of the Byzantine East, before their fragile world—already clearly in advanced decay—finally shattered and disappeared. (*Holy Mountain* 11-12)

This description of Moschos' project as one of ethnographic-style collection and recording signals the ways Dalrymple represents his own journey. Dalrymple positions *From the Holy Mountain* as a continuation of and a companion to Moschos' travels, as a text that uses the length of history and hindsight to compare his own impressions of the state of Christianity with those recorded in Moschos' *The Spiritual Meadow*. Dalrymple privileges his central primary source as an especially valid representation of Byzantium in the sixth century:

through the pages of *The Spiritual Meadow* one can come closer to the ordinary Byzantine than is possible through virtually any other single source. Although it often seems a fairly bizarre book—an unlikely

fricassee of anecdote, piety and strange miracles—as a historical text it adds up to the most rich and detailed portrait that survives of the Byzantine Levant immediately before the advent of Islam. (15)

Dalrymple's claims for *The Spiritual Meadow's* status as not merely useful or interesting, but “the most rich and detailed” surviving record are reiterated throughout the text. However, when taken alongside the quotations chosen for inclusion by Dalrymple—chiefly the “bizarre” miracle stories mentioned (15, 34, 53, 136, 183, 264, 390, 413, 437, 438)—the historiographic utility of *The Spiritual Meadow* seems less evident. Also crucial to his representation of the text's authority is its connection to “ordinary Byzantine” life and people—an appeal to the grounded “reality” of history from below, despite the cloistered, monastic (emphatically un-ordinary) nature of its subjects.

Dalrymple's frequent musings on the thoughts of Moschos, and his statements regarding features that Moschos might recognise, appear with uncanny regularity throughout *From the Holy Mountain*. Though this is perhaps unsurprising for a journey “in the wake of” earlier travellers, the tenuous and qualified nature of these passages is striking. In Constantinople, William notes:

This morning I visited the site of St Polyeuctes, once the greatest church in the whole Christian Empire; Justinian was said to have built Haghia Sophia in an attempt to match it. It would have been a familiar monument to John Moschos; indeed it was probably in a monastery attached to some great church like this that he lodged when he came to the city to finish *The Spiritual Meadow*. (41)

It seems that the presence of these pieces of pseudo-biographical conjecture (that the use of the words “would have,” “probably” and “some” signal) are a product of the paucity of *The Spiritual Meadow* as source material, despite Moschos being invoked as the inspiration behind William’s journey. His continual musings on the state of mind of Moschos appears to spring from a dearth of this kind of information in *The Spiritual Meadow*. Rather, the text consists of a collection of sayings, stories and miracles (12). The structure of “in the footsteps” travel books invariably highlights close parallels between the original traveller and the contemporary protagonist. Given the limited amount of material with which to work, Dalrymple fills the gap with statements such as:

I thought of Moschos standing on this hillside amid these tombs at the end of the world, fretting about the heretics and brigands on the road ahead, checking in his bag to make sure his roll of notes and jottings was safe, then turning his back on this last crumbling outpost of the Christian Empire. (454)

Moments such as this recall Heather Henderson’s recognition of the nostalgia of contemporary travel writing, in which: “The pleasure of imagining scenes from the past on the spot where they took place is often greater than the pleasure of witnessing scenes of today” (232). This passage takes this formulation one step further, as imagining of past scenes is conducted through the eyes of the past traveller as well as the contemporary protagonist. The imagined connection between William and Moschos is given greater importance in these instances than the location in which they are narrated.

Dalrymple heightens these similarities by constructing his version of Moschos' identity solely through his Christianity (as opposed to national or racial "type"). It is religious differences and dilemmas—"heretics"—that William imagines concern Moschos. Of the description "Eastern Christian," it is the "Christian" component that is most useful for Dalrymple here.

Another move that connects East and West within the text, though in specific, limited ways, is Dalrymple's persistent choice of old or Westernised place names instead of their more accurate incarnations—Antioch for Antakya, for example. This choice in nomenclature privileges Western over local imaginings of place, as well as firmly tying Eastern cities to aspects of their past known to a Western audience, rather than expanding that audience's knowledge further.

Although constructed around a similar premise to *In Xanadu*, albeit following a less famous route, *From the Holy Mountain* is remarkably different in a number of ways. The characterisation of the protagonist is significantly altered from the iterations of William present in both *In Xanadu* and *City of Djinnns*. Most notably, the William of *From the Holy Mountain* travels alone: his female companions, Laura, Louisa and Olivia, are jettisoned in favour of a series of monks, guides and taxi drivers, who function in similar—though less sustained—ways to the women of the earlier texts, acting as sounding boards and side-kicks.

All vestiges of the bumbling gentlemanly persona of *In Xanadu* are abandoned—this William is organised, sure of himself and in control of his journey. He is also more serious—what little humour there is throughout *From*

the Holy Mountain comes at the expense of others, rather than of William. The self-deprecation that occasionally accompanied earlier versions of his character is also rejected, and in its stead is a firmly earnest, almost pious demeanour. *From the Holy Mountain* is manifestly a serious travel text, with an appropriately reliable protagonist at its centre. The first sentence of the work's acknowledgements reads: "The journey recorded in this book took place over a single summer and autumn, but incorporates a few episodes from two visits, to Israel and Egypt, made earlier in the year" (xv). Dalrymple sets out the parameters of his travels for the reader. Providing this information in this up-front manner advances a sense of the author's transparency and truthfulness. Dalrymple also foregrounds instances in which details have been altered, for a worthy purpose: "The identity of a great many people has been disguised, particularly in those sections dealing with Turkey, the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Egypt. I sincerely hope that no one comes to any harm through what I have written" (xv). His "sincere hope" that his writing's potential to cause harm is not realised works to highlight its crucial nature—impacting on the safety of real people. Both of these manoeuvres serve as examples of what Hulme and Youngs see as journalist travel writers' "deep investment in maintaining their credibility" (10).

When compared to Dalrymple's earlier travel works, this monograph comes across as a self-consciously mature and responsible text. Vestiges of his earlier travel style remain, however, and occasionally disrupt this earnest demeanour. The ever-present link between travel and pilgrimage is evident in *From the Holy Mountain*. Pilgrimage modifies the notion of travel somewhat,

introducing a higher purpose to the journey. He is earnest and invests himself in his work, sharing his concern about the declining numbers of Christians in Jerusalem with the reader:

All this matters very much. Without the local Christian population, the most important shrines in the Christian world will be left as museum pieces, preserved only for the curiosity of tourists. Christianity will no longer exist in the Holy Land as a living faith; a vast vacuum will exist in the very heart of Christendom. (317)

Dalrymple is figured as a pious traveller—one who can be trusted. He enables an affective connection between Western Christian readers and the Eastern Christian communities he describes. However, he still retains the authority of the distanced observer, through his identification as Catholic. Perhaps the shift in designation of the journey as a pilgrimage helps to lessen the tension within the text between travel and historical and journalistic conventions.

The work moves uneasily between moments of light travel anecdotes and in-depth investigative journalism and is ultimately not quite successful in either endeavour. For example, *From the Holy Mountain* switches, somewhat jarringly, between the text's need to entertain and inform the reader. William the unflinching investigative reporter and William the entertaining traveller do not always gel. In a laid-back, travel writing style, Dalrymple describes his time in Damascus and highlights the levels of privilege that he and his friends enjoy:

After a fortnight of glorious indolence staying with friends in a diplomatic suburb of Damascus, I was woken this morning by the sound

of Bing, their Filipino manservant, blow-drying my now spotlessly clean rucksack. Slowly the daunting prospect of the day ahead began to take shape: leaving the soft beds, the cool blue swimming pool and my hospitable hosts—all for the uncertainties of Lebanon, a country which for the last two decades has been virtually a synonym for anarchy. (195)

Here Dalrymple uses the richness of his surroundings in Damascus and the domestic efforts of Bing with the blow-dryer to highlight the contrasting “anarchy” of Lebanon. What is presented as the central concern of *From the Holy Mountain*, however, is the fate of the Christian populations of the East. Thus, the lighter passages peppered throughout the text (which are reminiscent of *In Xanadu*) appear out of place when contrasted with the narrative of William whose duty it is to listen to and report tragedies. For example, Dalrymple relates Sarah Daou’s story of her dispossession from her home in Palestine and her experiences:

One day they used one of those [suction] bombs on the building next to ours. It was completely destroyed. The four hundred families in the basement—maybe a thousand people—were all crushed to death. ... At about the same time some other cousins of ours were in a building that was shelled by phosphorous. They were killed too, but with phosphorous it is a very slow death. It burns very slowly from your skin down to your bone. (274)

In relating such horrific detail, William is represented as hardened and stoic. The journalistic practice in which *From the Holy Mountain* participates, of witnessing and reporting foreign atrocities or violence, sets up a dichotomy

between home (as safe) and abroad (as a place of extremism and violence). The tone of the narration at these points is reminiscent of international disaster reporting—concerned, and designed to provoke concern in the home audience, with an emphasis on the gravity of the situation, although inevitably mediated by a well-spoken reporter. The tension between the two crucial foundations of the text, which rarely coexist easily throughout, is evident. This juxtaposition works to depoliticise Dalrymple’s interventions, with the lighter moments providing respite from these tragic stories.

This tension is also present in the work’s paratexts: a rough, artistically-drawn map, similar in style to those found in Dalrymple’s earlier works, situates the text in the travel genre in a way that a different (plainer, more geographically accurate) style of map would not. In contrast, *From the Holy Mountain*’s preliminary pages also signal the work as a politically inflected, philanthropic text. Dalrymple’s suggestion to readers that they might like to donate money to support Palestinian Christians introduces a vision of a pan-Christian community, and positions *From the Holy Mountain* as having a role in fostering global Christian connections. It also functions to construct an ideal reader: one who is engaged, concerned, with a disposable income, and motivated by a (untheorised) sense of a global cosmopolitanism. Although *From the Holy Mountain* is dedicated to Dalrymple’s parents, it contains this rather unusual appeal for monetary support:

Anyone who wishes to offer practical support to some of the Christian communities mentioned in this book might like to get in touch with—or

send donations to—Sabeel, a charitable organisation working primarily with the Palestinian Christians. (xvi)

This statement works in a similar way to a dedication, which, in Gerard Genette's terms, implies the support of the dedicatee: "The dedicatee is always in some way responsible for the work that is dedicated to him and to which he brings, willy-nilly, a little of his support and therefore participation" (136). Therefore, then, *From the Holy Mountain* annexes the support of the Palestinian Christian community. For Genette, the "zone between text and off-text," is

a privileged place of a pragmatics and a strategy, of an influence on the public, an influence that—whether well or poorly understood and achieved—is at the service of a better reception for the text and a more pertinent reading of it (more pertinent, of course, in the eyes of the author and his allies). (2)

Dalrymple's expectation of readers' philanthropy further supports the text which it precedes, representing *From the Holy Mountain* as a particularly compelling and moving work, providing important insight and inducing readers not only to sympathise with the situation of distant Christian communities but to donate money, as well.

The extent to which Dalrymple positions *From the Holy Mountain's* chief subject as religion is variable. The most striking example of this changeability is found in the text's two subtitles: the original *A Journey in the Shadow of Byzantium* and the later (1998, for the Henry Holt United States publication) *A Journey among the Christians of the Middle East*. The

seemingly minor differences between the two descriptive titles actually embody a significant representational shift. *A Journey in the Shadow of Byzantium* signals an overall interaction with the various cultures, religions and centres of the former Byzantine empire. The focus of a work subtitled *A Journey among the Christians of the Middle East* is, obviously, Christianity. The inclusive broadness and sense of mystery of the earlier subtitle is lost with the later narrowing of emphasis. In recognition of the text's subject matter, *From the Holy Mountain* also received exposure in faith-based media outlets such as the *Church Times* and ABC Radio National's *The Religion Report*.

Dalrymple's previous travel texts, *In Xanadu* and *City of Djinnns*, are concerned with the relation and interpretation of difference for the Western audience. In contrast, *From the Holy Mountain's* focus is on connections and similarities between Eastern and Western Christian communities. This shift results in a marked increase in empathetic modes of representation. When describing the people of Turkey in his first travel book, Dalrymple states:

Good looks have been shared out unevenly among the Turks. Their men are almost all handsome with dark, supple skin and strong features: good bones, sharp eyes and tall, masculine bodies. But the women share their menfolk's pronounced features in a most unflattering way. Very few are beautiful. Their noses are too large, their chins too prominent. Baggy wraps conceal pneumatic bodies. Here must lie the reason for the Turks' easy drift out of heterosexuality. (*In Xanadu* 71)

The contrast between the impression given by such a light, misogynist and Orientalist description and the William of *From the Holy Mountain's* deeper

interaction with the (Turkish Christian) community is notable: “The priest was away in Istanbul, but from the doorkeeper I learned that the Christian community now numbered only two hundred families. In his lifetime, he said, as many as fifteen thousand Christians had left the town for new lives in Syria, Brazil, Germany and Australia” (61-62). The subject of each passage signals William’s level of engagement—in his observations about the aesthetic merits of the Turks in *In Xanadu*, William is represented as the disinterested observer, recording what he sees (and thinks). For *From the Holy Mountain*, William’s engagement is represented as heightened: as well as looking and thinking, the protagonist also communicates with and records the responses of the local Christian population. The contrast in subject matter also highlights the shift between the two texts—from a decadent, Orientalist, musing on beauty and homosexuality to an earnest concern with the decline in the number of Turkish Christians present in Antioch.

From the Holy Mountain is a text that emphasises its own construction, as an embedded, literal product of experience and travel. From the beginning pages of the work, Dalrymple foregrounds the text as both a product and a part of the journey that it records:

My cell is bare and austere It’s now nine o’clock. The time has come to concentrate my thoughts: to write down, as simply as I can, what has brought me here, what I have seen, and what I hope to achieve in the next few months. My reference books are laid out in a line on the floor; the pads containing my library notes are open. Files full of photocopied articles lie piled up below the window; my pencils are sharpened and

upended in a glass. A matchbox lies ready beside the paraffin storm lantern: the monastery generator is turned off after compline, and if I am to write tonight I will have to do so by the light of its yellow flame. (3-4)

Dalrymple's repeated references to simplicity and austerity function to emphasise the unembellished, truthful nature of the text. His implements—the pencils, the paraffin lantern—conjure up the image of the authorial process as a simple, timeless act unclouded by contemporary pitfalls, fads or distractions. This foregrounding of the work's construction continues throughout the text, most evidently in the continual reference to writing and to his notebooks, and serves to highlight the corporeal presence of the text and the role of the protagonist as the author. The reader is reminded of this fact repeatedly, through numerous asides, such as: "I sat in front of the tomb for twenty minutes before heading back to my cell. There I opened this diary, lit the paraffin lamp and wrote into the night" (422).

Dalrymple's text-in-progress is referred to differently depending on the project of the moment in *From the Holy Mountain*. When Dalrymple's individual, authorial, travel-writer persona is foremost, William refers to the text as his "diary." Such a designation immediately implies notions of autobiography and self-representation. When he is in investigative journalist mode, William no longer keeps a diary, but suddenly carries a notebook (the preserve of important, and potentially dangerous, facts and figures). William and his driver, Mas'ud, are approaching a village in Turkey when they come across a barricade: "'Police?' I asked. 'Inshallah, village guards,' said Mas'ud, slowing down. 'Just hope it's not PKK. You can't tell at this distance. Either

way, hide that notebook’” (89). This change in nomenclature is one small way in which the shift between modes is effected throughout *From the Holy Mountain*. The work ends with a particularly striking example of the ways in which Dalrymple emphasises the physical presence of the text in the narrative:

On the front of my diary was a damp-ring left by a glass of ouzo I drank on the Holy Mountain. Inside were stains from a glass of tea knocked over in Istanbul. Some sugar grains from the restaurant in the Baron Hotel have stuck to the pages on which are scribbled my notes from Aleppo. (454)

All of these instances work in the service of constructing the text as an object produced in the environments that it describes—as being as close to the time and place of events as the traveller himself. The material object of the notebook is represented as absorbing the experiences, along with the stains, of travel. The text becomes its own subject, in a somewhat narcissistic fashion.

Dalrymple’s descriptions of the writing process throughout the narrative are almost invariably set in monasteries. It seems that Dalrymple, through writing in such environments, sets himself up as performing his own kind of asceticism and dedicated ritual. Through this austerity William associates himself with the past and present monastic communities that he describes, strengthening the “in the wake of” structure of his journey. In a similar manoeuvre to the one that sees Dalrymple giving Moschos worries about “heretics” and “brigands,” William also categorises religiosity in these terms. In a description of the stone carvings of Edessa, William sees them reflecting the “heresies that circulated so promiscuously in the city between the first and

seventh centuries A.D.” (69). The designation of interpretations of belief as “heresy,” as opposed to using more neutral language, reinforces the connection between the two travellers by highlighting William’s investment in Christian doctrine.

The religious nature of his narrative and the environments in which it is written is echoed by the evolution of William’s spiritual practices and beliefs throughout *From the Holy Mountain*. Dalrymple presents himself as religious (in particular, as a Catholic) at strategic intervals throughout *From the Holy Mountain*, which work in different ways. Sometimes, somewhat paradoxically, they serve to distance William from the monastic communities with whom he interacts:

“I’m a Catholic,” I replied. “My God,” said the monk. “I’m so sorry.” He shook his head in solicitude. “To be honest with you,” he said, “the Abbot never gives permission for non-Orthodox to look at our holy books. Particularly Catholics. ...” Christophoros murmured a prayer. “Please,” he said, “don’t ever tell anyone in the monastery that you’re a heretic. If the Abbot ever found out, I’d be made to perform a thousand prostrations.” “I won’t tell a soul.” (10)

William is represented as honest to a fault, revealing his Catholicism even in situations in which it might be detrimental to his endeavour. This honesty is strategically contingent, however—the strength of his rapport with Christophoros is shown in their agreement to keep William’s beliefs quiet from the Abbot.

On other occasions, William's relationship with his faith works to add a sense of autobiographical importance to the completion of his journey:

Prompted by the example of the nun, despite having half dropped the habit, I began to pray there, and the prayers came with surprising ease. I prayed for the people who had helped me on the journey, the monks who had showed me the manuscript on Mount Athos, the frightened Syriani of Mar Gabriel, the Armenians of Aleppo and the Palestinian Christians in the camp at Mar Elias. And then I did what I suppose I had come to do: I sought the blessing of John Moschos for the rest of the trip, and particularly asked for his protection in the badlands of Upper Egypt, the most dangerous part of the journey. (287)

William's journey is represented as a vehicle of personal spiritual improvement, enabling him to regain the habit of prayer. His devotions are figured here as an expression of gratitude towards those that had assisted in his travels, and as a sympathetic engagement with the communities of Christians that he has encountered. At this point in the narrative, William's request for Moschos' "blessing" is employed to emphasise the dangerous territory about to be entered. His bravery and vulnerability are simultaneously strengthened. At other moments within *From the Holy Mountain*, William's experiences of monastic life are shown to impact upon his character. He states: "After five days in the calm and quiet of monastic seclusion, I was horrified by everything I saw. Cairo suddenly seemed to be a nightmare vision of hell on earth, fly-blown and filthy, populated entirely by crooks and vulgarians" (423). Here he puts himself in the position of the monks, whose distance from society is

continually emphasised. As a part of this identification, Dalrymple constructs Christian faith and credulity as a positive force that has the potential to bind East and West together, whereas scepticism and rationality are represented as divisive:

At the base of a stylite's pillar one is confronted with the awkward truth that what has moved past generations can today sometimes be only tentatively glimpsed with the eye of faith, while remaining quite inexplicable and absurd when seen under the harsh distorting microscope of sceptical Western rationality. (60)

Here faith and imaginative empathy are recognised as appropriate historiographical tools, as opposed to a (necessarily Western) rational approach. This opposition might be read in two ways: as a simple East / West binary, or, more fruitfully, as a polarisation of gentle faith and harsh logic. The important caveat to this second reading is that while Westerners are represented as being capable of making the leap to faith, the corresponding possibility—of Eastern rationality—is disavowed.

Surprisingly, for a text that Dalrymple describes as having a “detached” authorial presence—“My style as a travel writer in *Holy Mountain* is detached in the sense that I don't interject myself” (Interview with Tim Youngs 58)—it contains an overarching narrative of spiritual growth. Although never represented as pious or ascetic to the extent of Moschos, Dalrymple's strategic moments of religious self-identification serve to advance a comparison between Moschos and himself. Countering the overwhelming piety of the text's religious subject matter is William's continued fascination with an

Orientalist conception of the East in a particularly feminised, sensual manner.

His description of the Pera Palas Hotel in Istanbul is an early example:

After the penitential piety of Mount Athos, arriving here is like stepping into a sensuous Orientalist fantasy by Delacroix, all mock-Iznik tiles and pseudo-Ottoman marble inlay. A hotel masquerading as a Turkish bath; you almost expect some voluptuous Turkish odalisque to appear and disrobe behind the reception desk. (25)

This representational mode continues with Dalrymple's discussion of the Empress Theodora. Although entirely irrelevant to the story of Moschos' travels, reports of the sexual exploits of the Empress are quoted by Dalrymple at length. A sample excerpt is:

There was not a particle of modesty in the little hussy: she complied with the most outrageous demands without the slightest hesitation. She would throw off her clothes and exhibit naked to all and sundry those regions, both in front and behind, which the rules of decency require to be kept veiled. (37-38)

The utility of these descriptions derives from the opportunity they present to show the study of the Orient as full of such accounts of debauchery. Thus, Dalrymple is characterised as a figure whose interest in the Oriental past is entirely understandable, as it is quirky, entertaining and full of dissolute dynastic intrigue. Such titillating interruptions to the religious narrative manage to endow a story that primarily involves celibate monastic communities with an Orientalist haze of sexuality.

Dalrymple's fondness for nostalgic, literary-based Orientalist representations of the East is also evident in his description of Urfa, "a proper Silk Route bazaar-town, straight out of the *Arabian Nights*" (65). He emphasises the confusion of "a warren of covered alleys loud with a Babel of different tongues," "surging" with a "crowd of wild, tribal-looking men" (65). He catalogues the "hawk-eyed, hard-mouthed Kurdish refugees... sallow Persian pilgrims... weatherbeaten *Yürük* nomads... stocky Syrian Arabs" (65) in a manner reminiscent of the easy racial categorisation practiced in *In Xanadu*.

Dalrymple cultivates a credulous, religious persona at particular points throughout *From the Holy Mountain*. He also, when speaking about the text with Tim Youngs, emphasises its journalistic qualities, likening aspects of its production to the practices of professional investigative journalism: "I did with this book exactly the same as I would do if I was writing for a leading newspaper and had to submit my words to a fact checker" (59). Instead of utilising the scholarly authority of the historian, and the accompanying textual conventions such as footnotes, as he does in later works, here Dalrymple relies on the conventions of journalism for his authority.

In his comparison of his methods to the production of "leading newspapers," Dalrymple argues for the political importance of his text while again emphasising its veracity. The work's place in the travel genre means that Dalrymple expends much energy in order to represent *From the Holy Mountain* as a straightforward mix of history and journalism:

In terms of reporting accurately what has happened, *From the Holy Mountain* is pretty scrupulous. If you are reporting genocides and the moving of peoples you simply cannot make things up, you cannot put words into someone's mouth. You could possibly make up a conversation or recreate a conversation with someone who is serving you your dinner, but if it is actually a piece of political reportage with someone in the refugee camp which is evidence for something important politically you simply can't play any games with the truth. (Interview with Tim Youngs 58-59)

This passage attempts to defend, simultaneously, *From the Holy Mountain's* truth status and the authorial privilege of the travel writer to "play games with the truth." The fuzzy nature of the line between fiction and non-fiction in travel writing is highlighted in Dalrymple's enumeration of the situations in which it is acceptable to "make [things] up."

Dalrymple uses the sales figures for *From the Holy Mountain* to add to his arguments for its credibility and importance, as well as separating it from his previous texts (and further highlighting its serious nature): "*Holy Mountain* is the book I am proudest of. It is also by far the most successful internationally of my travel books" (Interview with Tim Youngs 44). Dalrymple describes the ways in which he represents himself as protagonist and narrator in *From the Holy Mountain*, arguing that the presence of William as character is minimal in this text. The basic impossibility of a first-person travel book without a central protagonist is here elided in favour of an emphasis on the journalistic features of the work, such as interviews:

I think this book has got less of me up front than any of my other books: I just talk to people and let them present themselves, so it's not political in the sense of being a first person rant, or indeed an extended comment piece. My own style increasingly, I think, is letting a person speak for themselves. If there's someone I disapprove of I let them hang themselves with their own rope, and I present sympathetically someone with whose view I agree. (Interview with Tim Youngs 52)

Such an argument is rather disingenuous, given that regardless of the level of detachment, *From the Holy Mountain* remains a first-person travel text, in diary form. In such a context, any claim for the text as a vehicle for unmediated representation is naïve at best. The statement that because the text is not an “extended” “first person rant” that it is “not political” is misleading. In fact, the more subtle approach that Dalrymple takes, of either “sympathetic” or “disapprov[ing]” narrative presentation, is potentially more politically effective than a “comment piece.” Dalrymple concedes that the impact of the author's perspective is still present, while simultaneously attempting to downplay its centrality: “Inevitably you are interjecting yourself in that process: how you got it, how you frame it, how you present it, but nonetheless one hopes it is done relatively unobtrusively” (Interview with Tim Youngs 52). Here the self-reflexivity of the text is shown to be strategically limited—although present in the extended consideration of the writing process, any treatment of William's views and how they are distilled and presented throughout the text is absent.

As with Dalrymple's previous works, *From the Holy Mountain* uses descriptions of architecture (particularly religious architecture and design,

given the book's focus) as symbols of the particular culture, period or religious group in question. Such passages are particularly important in this text, which chronicles Dalrymple's impressions of a large array of similar, though not quite identical, Christian communities. Without overtly resorting to the cruder racial categorisation present in *In Xanadu*, Dalrymple describes the Temple of the Sun in Lebanon:

Like the decor of modern Maronite drawing rooms, the emphasis in the temple's decoration seemed to be on opulence rather than good taste: as you wandered around, you kept thinking: "How much did this cost?" The temple was a monument to decorative excess: whole gardens of acanthus tendrils and palmettes voluted over the stonework; imperial lion-masks—unembarrassed lumps of high classical kitsch—roared out over the great baroque orgy of the ruins. The columns, each eight feet thick, were taller than any elsewhere in the classical world; each capital was larger than a fully-grown man, and covered with enough different leaf forms to fill a greenhouse at Kew. It was an exuberant, theatrical monument, designed more for ostentation than religiosity, and it undoubtedly achieved its aim. (265)

Such descriptions convey William's judgement on what he portrays as the Iranian-influenced Ba'albek. The narration of the forms of decoration on the ruins become rather pointed characterisations of the Maronite community with phrases like "opulence rather than good taste," "kitsch," and the damning statement that the temple was "designed more for ostentation than religiosity."

In discussion with Youngs, the extent of the strategic construction of the journey and the narrative and the motives behind them becomes clear:

[TY:] Was *Holy Mountain* a book that you were going to write anyway, and Moschos's book and your following in his footsteps just provided the structure?

[WD:] Yes, exactly.

[TY:] But in the book you disguise your other concerns somewhat and highlight the aim of following Moschos?

[WD:] Correct, though again the political aim grew in clarity as the journey and the book developed. Certainly I think my book proposal before I did the journey would have highlighted overwhelmingly Moschos. (55)

The detailed passages in the early sections of *From the Holy Mountain* which chronicle William's decision-making process regarding the journey and its motivations show the extent of this narrative "disguise." Dalrymple states: "Open on the desk is my paperback translation of *The Spiritual Meadow of John Moschos*, the unlikely little book which first brought me to this monastery" (4). Other aspects of the text's production are later revealed to have occurred differently than they are presented in the text. There are many, overdetermined references to William writing by the light of a hurricane lantern in austere monastic surrounds in the present tense, such as:

The wooden *simandron* has just begun to call from the church; matins will begin in ten minutes. Soon it will be dawn. The first glimmer of light has begun to light up the silhouette of the Holy Mountain. The paraffin in

my lamp is exhausted, and so am I. ... The *simandron* is being rung for the second time. I must shut this book and go down to the church to join the monks at prayer. (21)

Despite these frequent descriptions of ascetic writing sessions, Dalrymple professes his gratitude in his acknowledgements for the use of a friends' house to write: "I would particularly like to thank Alan and Brigid Waddams, who not only looked after me in Damascus but also lent me their house in Somerset, where much of this book was written and edited" (xvi). For a text that spends so much effort on convincing the reader of its objective journalistic credentials, such discrepancies are notable.

The gulf between the historical and journalistic endeavours of *From the Holy Mountain* and the use of the first-person diary structure is illuminated by Dalrymple:

I thought of abandoning that [diary form] altogether but it started off, you're quite correct, more in diary form and by the end it's absurd because I'm referring to huge chunks of secondary and primary texts which I couldn't possibly have carried with me! ... I was very much aware that the diary was becoming less and less plausible in all sorts of ways. (Interview with Tim Youngs 56)

More than just the implausibility of form is evident here. The demands of narrative and research manifestly override the conceit on which their existence depends—that of the centrally important, enabling journey. Dalrymple identifies the (almost inevitable) influence of Robert Byron's *The Road to Oxiana* in his choice of the diary device in *From the Holy Mountain*: "I started

off with a view to writing a sort of Byronish diary but in the end it just became a way of dividing it up” (Interview with Tim Youngs 56-57). Of course, the diary form, as well as providing a structure for the narrative, also brings a sense of immediacy and honesty to the text.

As well as using the autobiographical authority inherent in the diary, Dalrymple seeks out eminent authorities in fields pertinent to the text. Two prominent examples are Dalrymple’s interactions with Sir Stephen Runciman and independent journalist Robert Fisk, each of which works, in different ways, to establish Dalrymple’s position in crucial fields—history and journalism, respectively.

Of the two, Runciman is more recognisable as a traditional authorising figure, whose presence gives Dalrymple legitimacy in the arena of narrative history writing. Dalrymple’s choice of historian also positions him and the text to the right of the spectrum, and establishes narrative history as the mode to be followed, rather than a more analytical approach. The utilisation of Runciman highlights the manner in which *From the Holy Mountain*’s scholarship and audience is positioned. As Jonathan Harris notes, although the central arguments of Runciman’s three-volume *A History of the Crusades*, published between 1951 and 1954, have been comprehensively challenged, the works’ popularity endures: they are still in print and seen as “institutional” Crusade histories. It is this popular, realist approach to history that Dalrymple aligns himself with through his association with Runciman.

Although Dalrymple uses Runciman as historical inspiration and validation, the manner in which Runciman is incorporated into *From the Holy*

Mountain is entirely in the mode of travel writing. Instead of engaging with any of Runciman's scholarly works, either through quotation or analysis, Dalrymple goes to visit him, has coffee and a chat, and describes the encounter in great detail:

I first read about John Moschos in Sir Stephen Runciman's great three-volume *History of the Crusades* He is well into his nineties: a tall, thin, frail old man, still very poised and intellectually alert, but now physically weak. He has heavy-lidded eyes and a slow, gravelly voice, with a hint of an old fashioned Cambridge drawl. During lunch, Runciman talked of the Levant as he knew it in his youth. (18)

Dalrymple's visit to this eminent, upper-class personage serves to give legitimacy to the historical arguments and parallels advanced throughout *From the Holy Mountain*. It also constructs Dalrymple as a privileged figure, who has sufficient status to warrant a personal audience with a "great" sage such as Runciman. The choice of this particular historian as patron, when viewed alongside similar moves in *In Xanadu*, shows a tendency to invest authority and wisdom in aged figures. This is necessary to a degree when obtaining reminiscences of the Raj, as he does in *City of Djinnns*, but adds no appreciable value to a study of Byzantine Christianity (apart from harnessing "commonsense" notions regarding age and wisdom, and perhaps balancing out Dalrymple's own youthfulness).

Dalrymple's engagement with Runciman as a historian is limited, and serves chiefly as a platform from which to espouse his own aims for and arguments about the journey he is undertaking:

Later, over coffee, I broached the subject of John Moschos and his travels. What had attracted me to *The Spiritual Meadow* in the first place was the idea that Moschos and Sophronius were witnessing the first act in a process whose dénouement was taking place only now: that first onslaught on the Christian East observed by the two monks was now being completed by Christianity's devastating decline in the land of its birth. The ever-accelerating exodus of the last Christians from the Middle East today meant that *The Spiritual Meadow* could be read less as a dead history book than as the prologue to an unfolding tragedy whose final chapter is still being written. (19)

The first sentence of this excerpt situates William and Runciman together, but then immediately moves into William's lengthy description of his aims. Although this passage begins as if William and Runciman are in conversation, there is no recorded response from Runciman regarding the traveller's plans or ideas. Instead, the section becomes a place in which Dalrymple airs his arguments about the function of his text, while the presence of Runciman, and the lack of any recorded objection to or debate about Dalrymple's theories serves to validate the premise of *From the Holy Mountain*. It is clear that Dalrymple represents his book as the "final chapter" of Moschos' narrative of decline.

As the description of his visit continues, Dalrymple presents the reader with a story of his inspiration for the journey (and thus for the text itself). His time in the presence of Runciman is portrayed as the necessary ingredient for

the crystallisation of his thoughts on the book and the journey which it is to chronicle:

Driving back home from Runciman, I knew what I wanted to do: spend six months circling the Levant, following roughly in John Moschos's footsteps. Starting in Athos and working my way through to the Coptic monasteries of Upper Egypt, I wanted to do what no future generation of travellers would be able to do: to see wherever possible what Moschos and Sophronius had seen, to sleep in the same monasteries, to pray under the same frescoes and mosaics, to discover what was left, and to witness what was in effect the last ebbing twilight of Byzantium. (21)

In a similar fashion to *In Xanadu's* claim for originary status as the first journey to properly retrace Polo's route, Dalrymple here attempts to lend gravitas to his endeavour by positioning himself as the last witness (excluding, presumably, those still-practising Eastern Christians) to what he represents as a culture in decline. He explicitly, and repeatedly, links his and Moschos's journeys together at the close of *From the Holy Mountain*:

John Moschos saw that plant [Eastern Christianity] begin to wither in the hot winds of change that scoured the Levant of his day. On my journey in his footsteps I have seen the very last stalks in the process of being uprooted. It has been a continuous process, lasting nearly one and a half millennia. Moschos saw its beginnings. I have seen the beginning of its end. (453-54)

As Patrick Brantlinger notes in relation to discourses about savagery and the dying race theory, such visions of “ebbing twilight” are often the product of a “sentimental” combination in which “celebration and mourning are fused” (2).

Where Dalrymple uses Runciman to bolster his credentials in history, he turns to a very different figure in the field of journalism. Fisk, the famous and influential British foreign correspondent, writes for *The Times* and *The Independent* (since 1989), and has also published numerous books. Dalrymple also uses Fisk as an authorising figure, though chiefly by association. Fisk, more so than Runciman, also provides further characterisation opportunities for William, through the contrast between the representation of the two journalists. One of several conversations between William and Fisk functions as an example of the dangers of working as a war correspondent and shows William as a moderate, self-preserving, everyday character (in contrast to other sections that emphasise his bravery). Dalrymple quotes Fisk’s enthusiasm for being in the middle of the action:

“I would do it—no problem. I went to the SLA headquarters in Marjayoun last month, as a matter of fact. There are Hezbollah all round, of course. They might take a potshot at you, but they generally don’t shoot unmarked cars. At least not normally. It’s not as if you’d be travelling in an Israeli army convoy, ha ha.” “Ha ha.” I shuddered at Fisk’s idea of an easy assignment and privately made up my mind to forget interviewing Lahad, and to keep well away from the SLA. (216)

Such a passage works, almost paradoxically, to both highlight Dalrymple’s standing as a journalist—comparable with the famous Fisk—and to position

him in contrast to the seasoned war correspondent. Thus, Dalrymple comes out of the encounter a respected journalist and a figure with whom the reader can empathise, even though he is not prepared to risk personal safety to ensure accurate and representative reporting.

In a more subtle manner, Dalrymple highlights his own bravery and commitment to his project when he talks with his hotel receptionist Merin about his planned visit to south-east Turkey. Merin “seems to think my plans are hysterically funny” (49). He dismisses Merin’s sarcastically-phrased warnings: “Don’t worry, you’ll only get shot if you run into a PKK roadblock, and only blown up if you drive over a landmine. Otherwise the south-east is fine. Completely safe. In fact highly recommended” (49). Here Dalrymple and the reader are constructed as knowing more than Merin, despite his familiarity with south-eastern Turkey. The presence of the book in the hands of the reader is a silent proof of William’s success in his journey (and the mistaken nature of Merin’s predictions of woe). In this sense, the logic of the text’s existence turns Merin (and other similar figures throughout the narrative) into an overly-paranoid worrier, in contrast to the stoic British traveller.

Dalrymple’s companions change regularly throughout *From the Holy Mountain*. They still perform an important role in William’s characterisation, however. They are represented in particular ways, often functioning as a constraining presence that William needs to conquer. Dalrymple recounts his journey to Aysut, which “started promisingly. At six in the morning a black government Mercedes drew up outside my hotel; inside were a chauffeur and an interpreter (or rather minder) named Mahmoud” (435). In his aside

designating Mahmoud as a minder, Dalrymple diminishes the importance of the interpreter (and therefore advances the portrayal of the protagonist as able to communicate on his own). This move also represents William as someone sufficiently important to require “minding.” Later, he shares his rebellion with the reader, accentuating his adventurous, individualistic nature: “After lunch, I gave Mahmoud the slip and walked out alone to the place where I wanted to end my pilgrimage, alone” (451). The repetition of the word “alone” (despite the fact that William is being driven around in a “government Mercedes”) highlights the importance of a sense of independence to his characterisation.

In order to confirm Dalrymple’s authority as a traveller and a travel writer, *From the Holy Mountain* is constructed as participating in a lineage of European travel, and Dalrymple represents himself as a part of a family of risqué and adventurous (if not necessarily scrupulous) travellers. Of the monastery at Mount Athos, Dalrymple recounts:

it was decreed that nothing female—no woman, no cow, no mare, no bitch—could step within its limits. Today this rule is relaxed only for cats, and in the Middle Ages even a pair of Byzantine Empresses were said to have been turned away from the Holy Mountain by the Mother of God herself. But 140 years ago, in 1857, the Virgin was sufficiently flexible to allow one of my Victorian great-aunts, Virginia Somers, to spend two months in a tent on Mount Athos, along with her husband and the louche Pre-Raphaelite artist Coutts Lindsay. (5)

He highlights the exceptional nature of his great-aunt’s presence, again, as well as providing the most sensational interpretation of their activities: “It is the

only recorded instance of a woman being allowed onto the mountain in the millennium-long history of Athos, and is certainly the only record of what appears to have been a most unholy Athonite *ménage-à-trios*” (5). Contrary to Dalrymple’s brief, bohemian description, Lindsay is remembered for his military service and, significantly, as an influential gallery owner and art patron, rather than as an artist (still less as a “louche” one). Instances such as this indicate the extent to which Dalrymple’s quest for a sensational story (and interesting characterisation of the protagonist) come before an adherence to historical detail.

As well as his great-aunt, Dalrymple also makes mention of other related travellers who highlight his own more acceptable aims:

The English traveller the Hon. Robert Curzon is still considered one of the worst offenders: after a quick circuit around the monastic libraries of Athos in the late 1840s (in the company, I am ashamed to say, of my great-great-uncle), Curzon left the Holy Mountain with his trunks bulging with illuminated manuscripts and Byzantine *chrysobuls*. (9)

Such references serve to show the level of privilege from which Dalrymple comes, as well as providing him with a strong travelling pedigree. They provide an opportunity to perform his shame at his predecessors’ Orientalist thefts and insensitivity. Dalrymple further situates himself in the broader travel genre, through repeated reference to writers in whose wake he travels. Sometimes, his journey turns around particular locations. Dalrymple stays in the Baron Hotel in Aleppo: “a legendary place. Everyone from Agatha Christie to Kemal Ataturk has stayed here, while Monsieur T.E. Lawrence’s unpaid bill

of 8 June 1914 is still displayed in a glass cabinet in the sitting room” (133). The most important thing about the Baron is its relationship with past British travellers. Other accommodation options in Aleppo might have more Syrian historical significance, but it is the specific, nostalgic connection to the caricature of the British adventurer to which Dalrymple gravitates. He defines past travellers in a particular way in order to facilitate an easy identification with them:

it is still easy to see why this hotel appealed so much to a former generation of English travellers. At eight this morning I woke up, momentarily confused as to where I was, and looked at the wall beside my bed. There hung an English coaching print and a framed portrait of a black retriever with a pheasant in its mouth emerging from a village stream beside a thatched cottage. ...The inexplicably horrible food, the decaying neo-Gothic architecture, the deep baths and the uncomfortable beds: no wonder Lawrence and his contemporaries felt so much at home here—the Baron is the perfect replica of some particularly Spartan English public school, strangely displaced to the deserts of the Middle East. (134)

In this formulation, British travellers are represented uniformly as upper-class, public school educated men—a series of categories into which Dalrymple also fits. Thus he establishes a place for *From the Holy Mountain* in a long and illustrious tradition of elite travel to the East. At the same time, the imperial processes which facilitate the “strange” displacement of British institutional accoutrements go unmentioned.

One particular author to whom Dalrymple returns is award-winning travel writer and novelist Colin Thubron. When *From the Holy Mountain* covers the same territory as Thubron's texts, Dalrymple seems obliged to contrast their experiences:

When the travel writer Colin Thubron visited the convent in 1966, he claimed to have witnessed a miracle: to have seen the face of the icon of Notre Dame de Seidnaya stream with tears. In the same church I too witnessed a miracle, or something that today would certainly be regarded as a miracle in almost any other country in the Middle East. For the congregation seemed to consist not of Christians but almost entirely of heavily bearded Muslim men. (187)

While acknowledging those that have gone before, this passage also provides Dalrymple with a means by which to differentiate his journey (and his persona as travel writer) from that of Thubron. In contrast to Thubron's more romantic approach, Dalrymple's project is represented as one that observes and records people and practices from an objective distance, rather than becoming entangled in debates over the status of purported miracles.

There are also frequent instances throughout *From the Holy Mountain* in which Dalrymple emphasises the groundbreaking nature of his observations. In most cases, the outcome of such a claim for scholarly importance is to link Dalrymple to early forms or practices of Christianity, thus strengthening the affinity required for the text's central conceit—the comparison between and kinship of John Moschos and William. Examples include Dalrymple's excitement at potential connections between Byzantine and Celtic Christians:

“What has always fascinated me is the extent to which the austere desert fathers were the models and heroes of the Celtic monks on whose exploits I was brought up in Scotland. Like their Byzantine exemplars, the Celtic Culdees deliberately sought out the most wild and deserted places” (106). His narration of the argument for iconographic links shows his investment in the acceptance of such a theory: “[the] illustrations in the *Diatessaron* were iconographically identical to those in the first of the great illuminated Celtic gospel books, the Book of Durrow” (109). Dalrymple spends a great deal of narrative time advancing these connections between Eastern and Western Christianity.

Another instance, which attempts to physically place William alongside “unchanging” Christian tradition, is found in the lengthy discussion of the choral styling of the Urfalee Syrian Christian congregation. He asks musicologist Gianmaria Malacrida: “So it is possible that what we heard tonight may be the most ancient form of Christian music being sung anywhere in the world?” (176). Dalrymple’s desire for the confirmation of this possibility is evident, but is deferred by the scholar’s refusal to rush to conclusions: “‘That’s speculation,’ he said. Then he shrugged his shoulders and smiled. ‘Wait until my research is published’” (177).

Representing *From the Holy Mountain* as an important contribution to Byzantine history are its lengthy descriptions and interpretations of artwork, particularly floor mosaics. He chronicles his experience visiting a collection gathered by Kemal Jumblatt in Beit ed-Din: “There, laid out on the walls and on the floor, in room after vaulted room, unstudied by scholars, unknown to the outside world, lay what is without doubt the most magnificent collection of

Byzantine floor mosaics to survive to the present day outside the city of Byzantium itself” (232). Most important to this passage is the “unknown” and “unstudied” nature of these mosaics, which places Dalrymple and his text in a position to contribute to the body of scholarship on Byzantium. The careful use of descriptors such as “magnificent” creates the impression of the importance of this collection without overtly claiming that epithet. Dalrymple’s claims for the groundbreaking nature of his viewing these objects increases to hyperbolic levels when he states that he was “Carried away by the thrill of being one of the first ever to see these mosaics” (235). Of course such a statement constructs any Eastern viewers of the mosaics as unimportant. Specific historical sources that Dalrymple discusses include the Oxyrhynchus papyri. He informs the reader:

Before setting off on this journey, I had spent a week in the London Library poring through some of the 142 volumes of the Oxyrhynchus papyri that have been so far edited, translated and published. Taken together they provide a uniquely detailed picture of a late antique city: reading them is like opening a shutter onto a sunlit Byzantine street and eavesdropping on the gossip, the scandals and the secret affairs of the people milling about below. (399)

The image of a week “poring” over “142 volumes” invokes intense archival research. The qualifying information—that William has perused some of those that have been edited, translated and published—slips by almost unnoticed. His compelling description of reading historical documents as equivalent to eavesdropping on casual conversation elides all archives’ problematic

relationship with a historical “truth,” as well as the highly contingent and mediated writing, preservation, collection, translation, editing, and interpretation process.

Comparisons can be made between *From the Holy Mountain* and a chapter by Dalrymple called “Palestine: The Monks Tale” in a collection of travel narratives entitled *Intrepid Arabia*. Dalrymple’s contribution to the collection is a series of carefully-chosen excerpts from *Holy Mountain* which leaves out the paragraphs dealing with historical events and William’s journey in the footsteps of John Moschos. What remains is a much more jocular, conversation-based piece (chiefly William and Fr. Theophanes talking about religion, demons, the last days, and so on). “‘Fr. Theophanes,’ I asked, my curiosity finally getting the better of me, ‘I don’t understand why you are so worried by the Freemasons.’ ‘Because they are the legions of the Anti-Christ. The stormtroopers of the Whore of Babylon’” (*Holy Mountain* 308). The style of this modified version of *From the Holy Mountain* is remarkably reminiscent of *In Xanadu*. It appears that, for Dalrymple, generic travel writing is necessarily humorous.

In keeping with this construction, Dalrymple’s narrative histories are presented in a serious manner similar to *From the Holy Mountain*. The heightened authority of the non-fiction conventions of history and journalistic writing seem to preclude the use of humour, in Dalrymple’s case.

Chapter Four: *White Mughals*

Introduction

White Mughals: Love and Betrayal in Eighteenth-Century India, first published in 2002, marks the beginning of another phase in William Dalrymple's oeuvre. The text is a narrative history that tells a "tragic love story" (xxxix). As part of this romantic plotline, Dalrymple uses his lengthy text to set out a broader argument about the significance of relationships between high-level East India Company officials and upper-class Muslim women. This chapter considers the reception and positioning of *White Mughals*, before examining its presentation of the British in India.

The narrative that forms the centre of *White Mughals* treats the marriage of James Kirkpatrick, the British East India Company's Resident in Hyderabad from 1797 to 1805, and Khair un-Nissa, a young, beautiful Muslim woman. Dalrymple tells the story of their mutual love and respect against the odds, which included her previous engagement and his resistant Company superiors. Their relationship is represented as being driven, at least initially, by the fervour of her feelings for Kirkpatrick. Dalrymple uses the term "white Mughals" to refer to those British men whom he represents as embracing aspects of Mughal life and culture.

White Mughals was published to almost universal acclaim. Reviewers called it a "great love story" (Mann), "both romantic and historically revealing" (Blake), and it won a Wolfson History Award in 2002. As Dalrymple later commented in an interview with Bron Sibree, "What was nice

about *White Mughals* ... is that it flattered everybody” (W13). He highlights the text’s positive portrayal of the British, stating: “The British liked *White Mughals* ... because it depicted them as far less racist, more multicultural and highly sexed than they thought they were, and the Indians liked it because it portrayed the British copying Indian culture” (W13). In a comment that quickly found its way on to the book’s cover, Salman Rushdie endorsed it as a “brilliant and compulsively readable book.” In the publicity material surrounding the work, Dalrymple positions it as simultaneously a groundbreaking piece of historical research and a conscious return to what he represents as the unfairly-overlooked genre of narrative history, invoking a tradition of writers such as Stephen Runciman. He argues that *White Mughals* provides a counter to the limitations of academic history writing: “One has to break from the narrow world of academics and oneupmanship” (Dalrymple, interview with Sanjay Austa). Later commentators, particularly Joy Wang and Ann Laura Stoler (who writes brilliantly on the colonial interactions of class, race and sex), raise suggestive and complex questions about *White Mughals* with reference to the status of women and sex.

Despite all of this, the text is not just, or even primarily, a story about the relationship between Khair un-Nissa and Kirkpatrick, or about the British in India, although clearly these are important concerns. *White Mughals*’ central narrative is that of Dalrymple’s journey through and around the pitfalls of academic and traditional history and the dramas of archival research. Overarching all of the work’s putative subjects is the story of William the enthusiastic historian, and the serendipitous discoveries which reveal pieces of

a “fully formed” history, ready to be transmitted to the public. This overarching thread is most commonly constructed in ways reminiscent of Dalrymple’s travel texts, although other representational strategies make use of elements from detective fiction and quest tales. In its close reading of Dalrymple’s history writing processes, this chapter owes a debt to Hayden White’s *Metahistory*. White states that “It is sometimes said that the aim of the historian is to explain the past by ‘finding,’ ‘identifying,’ or ‘uncovering’ the ‘stories’ that lie buried in chronicles.” (6). He goes on to counter this assertion by emphasising the extent to which interpretation and “explanation” are central to the historian’s task: “the same event can serve as a different kind of element of many different historical stories, depending on the role it is assigned in a specific motific characterization” (7). This chapter takes White’s conception of historiography as a guiding precept to untangle the ways in which *White Mughals* constructs its historical narrative.

Travel and History: Authenticity and Self-Fashioning

With the move into narrative history, the character of William unsurprisingly evolves into an amiable enthusiast of Indian history and culture. The textual construction of the work changes too, most obviously with the addition of footnotes and endnotes, in keeping with the more scholarly intention of the text. A tension is present in Dalrymple’s resistance to academic history, and a simultaneous utilisation of the appearance of authority that its conventions provide. The maps and glossaries that adorned previous works are retained, and

are joined by an array of paratexts, giving readers a sense that this Dalrymple monograph is both new and exciting while remaining comfortably familiar.

The characterisation of the narrator begins early, in the work's Acknowledgements section. Instead of a typical, dry, to-the-point paratext, Dalrymple uses the preliminary material as an opportunity to provide the reader with a picture of the text and, crucially, its author, which will guide their reading of the work. Of course this notion is hardly new, and as Gerard Genette has comprehensively argued, all preparatory material functions in this way (2). However, the paratexts that Dalrymple provides exploit this potential through their length, volubility and multiplicity.

One of the central functions of the Acknowledgements is to continue William's characterisation, inherent in his earlier works, as the threefold traveller / author / narrator, with particular emphasis on the traveller persona. He writes:

I began work on this book in the spring of 1997. Over the five years—and the many thousands of miles of travel—since then, innumerable people have been incredibly generous with their hospitality, time, expertise, advice, wisdom, pictures, editing skills, bottles of whisky, family papers, camp beds and cups of tea. (xxvii)

In this section, which marks the beginning of the author's journey into this historical project, the routines of the historian seem uncannily similar to those of the travel writer. The concluding reference to "camp beds and cups of tea" conjures up an image of William as participating in a particularly quaint, British sort of travel, in a boyish spirit of adventure. Perhaps this emphasis on

“miles” of travel is simply an attempt to reassure Dalrymple’s travel writing readership that this departure does not represent an unbridgeable gap. He comments elsewhere that the shift is “like Dylan going electric: you feel like you’re leaving half the followers behind!” (Interview with Tim Youngs 57). Although an obviously flippant remark, this statement demonstrates the extent to which Dalrymple’s self-consciously maintained authorial persona links his evolving oeuvre. The development of Dalrymple’s travelling authorial persona works in several ways. It differentiates Dalrymple from the many other historians who deal with British imperial history, particularly those writing academic histories. Further, it enables him to utilise the particular, difficult-to-challenge, authority that comes with autobiography and grounded experience, without sacrificing that of the historian.

Alongside several other paratexts, including “praise for the book,” a dedication, and an extensive “Dramatis Personae” (reminiscent of dynastic historical fiction sagas), is a request for donations. It reads:

The British Residency complex that James Achilles Kirkpatrick built in Hyderabad, now the Osmania Women’s College, is recognised as one of the most important colonial buildings in India, but its fabric is in very bad shape and it was recently placed on the World Monuments Fund’s list of One Hundred Most Endangered Buildings. A non-profit-making trust has now been set up to fund conservation efforts. Anyone who would like more information, or to make a donation, should contact Friends of Osmania Women’s College, India, Inc. (*White Mughals* xxix)

This somewhat unusual section works to represent Dalrymple as responsible and caring, with strong connections to the community around which the book is based. It advances a picture of the author and his readers as philanthropic, wealthy figures—the type that might well consider making a donation for the cause of restoration and history. This paratext interpellates a reader that cares just as much as the author about the preservation of historical architecture, suggesting an inclusive benevolent community. That the request for funds is in order to preserve an “important” colonial building, as opposed to a Mughal monument, highlights the aspects of Indian history that are most valuable to this project.

The work’s introduction continues in a distinctly conversational, autobiographical vein, situating *White Mughals* within Dalrymple’s life, body of work, and state of mind. As well as advancing Dalrymple’s relationship with the reader, this functions to highlight an autobiographical motivation for the creation of the text, in contrast to an academic or fiscal one. It begins:

I first heard about James Achilles Kirkpatrick on a visit to Hyderabad in February 1997. It was the middle of Muharram, the Shi’a festival commemorating the martyrdom of Hussain, the grandson of the Prophet. I had just finished a book on the monasteries of the Middle East, four years’ work, and was burnt out. I came to Hyderabad to get away from my desk and my overflowing bookshelves, to relax, to go off on a whim, to travel aimlessly again. (xxx1)

The first word of the introduction is “I,” and Dalrymple sets up his narrative history by outlining his “discovery” of Hyderabad. The opening sentence

shows William “hearing” about Kirkpatrick, but without mentioning who brought him to his attention: the focus remains solely on the narrator. The emphasis on the author as traveller continues too, with “aimless” travel positioned as a restorative antidote to academic stultification. That an explicitly non-fiction work draws so heavily upon autobiography is revealing for the ways in which Dalrymple constructs himself and his brand of history. From the beginning, Dalrymple’s book is history with the historian in the foreground.

In some instances, such an approach might seek to highlight the individual and arbitrary nature of history, as Linda Hutcheon chronicles in her description of novels that can be classified as “historiographic metafiction”—works that deal with the past with a “narrative voice, wondering about its reader, ... thematizing or allegorizing, in a sense, the act of ènonciation, the interaction of textual production and reception” (229). For Hutcheon, “[t]o write history—or historical fiction—is equally to narrate, to reconstruct by means of selection and interpretation. History (like realist fiction) is made by its writer, even if events are made to seem to speak for themselves” (231-32). In *White Mughals* this conception of history is elided. Rather, the characterisation of Dalrymple works to reinforce a representation of the author as an embedded, knowledgeable, passionate authority on the material with which he works, and glosses the interpretative process through a teleological narrative.

Contrasting Dalrymple’s different portrayals of the same place shows the necessarily constructed nature of all narratives. Between *From the Holy Mountain* and *White Mughals* Dalrymple published *The Age of Kali*, a

collection of his journalism from 1989 to 1998. One piece in this collection is also set in Hyderabad. *The Age of Kali* is a largely negative text about contemporary India, and Hyderabad is presented as “a pretty unprepossessing place” (199). In *White Mughals*, which offers a generally positive portrayal of a past, British-influenced India, the description changes dramatically. Dalrymple uses *White Mughals* to highlight the “timeless” qualities of the city of Hyderabad, remarking: “It was as if Hussain had been killed a week earlier, not in the late seventh century AD. This was the sort of Indian city I loved” (xxx). This temporal vagueness also assists in heightening Dalrymple’s traveller subjectivity—if Hyderabad does not change, then Dalrymple can gain physical access to its past through his presence there. He then sets himself up as a guide for the (Western) reader to what he represents as an exotic, distant and untouched locale:

a relatively unexplored and unwritten place, at least in English; and a secretive one too. ... Hyderabad hid its charms from the eyes of outsiders, veiling its splendours from curious eyes behind nondescript walls and labyrinthine backstreets. Only slowly did it allow you in to an enclosed world where water still dripped from fountains, flowers bent in the breeze, and peacocks called from the overladen mango trees. There, hidden from the streets, was a world of timelessness and calm, a last bastion of gently fading Indo-Islamic civilisation where, as one art historian has put it, old “Hyderabad gentlemen still wore the fez, dreamt about the rose and the nightingale, and mourned the loss of Grenada.” (xxx)

This passage works both to increase Dalrymple's authority as author through his exploration of "unexplored and unwritten" territory, and to give the text a value corresponding to its rarity and originality. Also important is the heavily gendered representation of the city of Hyderabad—as a demure native woman, veiling herself from "curious eyes," ready to be romantically conquered by the dashing traveller / historian. Behind this "veil," a "timeless" India is again invoked. As well as illustrating the different approaches of *The Age of Kali* and *White Mughals*, this passage is an example of the way *White Mughals* blends travel writing and history. By switching between the two, and using aspects of both discursive modes, Dalrymple draws upon the different authorities associated with each in order to support and legitimise this text.

Dalrymple's rhetoric of exploration developed through his travel texts is continued in this history work. It is also taken up by his reviewers. Margo White calls him a "heroic researcher," and describes his "breakthrough" archival "discoveries." Dalrymple also highlights, with ubiquitous gendered pioneering metaphor, the originality of his work:

None of these [Persian and Urdu] sources had ever been translated into English, and so were virgin territory for those unfamiliar with either nineteenth-century Deccani Urdu or the heavily Indianised Persian that the manuscripts were written in—which meant virtually everyone bar a handful of elderly Hyderabadi scholars. (xxxiv)

Curiously, this emphasis on the rarity and authenticity of these sources results in Dalrymple highlighting the fact that he himself is unable to read such documents, although this is never explicitly stated. The crucial message here is

that Dalrymple (unlike the “elderly Hyderabadi scholars”) is uniquely equipped to guide the reader through this “virgin” historical territory.

Dalrymple then embarks on a narrative of his English-language research, highlighting the breadth of his study and his tenacity:

Back in London, I searched around for more about Kirkpatrick. A couple of books on Raj architecture contained a passing reference to his Residency and the existence of his Begum, but there was little detail, and what there was seemed to derive from an 1893 article in *Blackwood's Magazine*, “The Romantic Marriage of James Achilles Kirkpatrick”, written by Kirkpatrick’s kinsman Edward Strachey. (xxxv)

Dalrymple heightens the excitement and challenges of often tedious archival work by narrating his finds in a manner reminiscent of detective stories: “The first real break came when I found that Kirkpatrick’s correspondence with his brother William, preserved by the latter’s descendants the Strachey family, had recently been bought by the India Office Library” (xxxv). The *Blackwood's* article to which Dalrymple refers, “The Romantic Marriage of Major James Achilles Kirkpatrick, Sometime British Resident at the Court of Hyderabad” (1893), is a brief, sentimental, amateur family history in a publication with a particularly colonial / imperial focus and readership. The story that it tells forms the backbone of *White Mughals*. Strachey’s history is similar to Dalrymple’s in its first person perspective and autobiographical tendencies, as well as in its subject matter. Strachey concludes his piece with the statement: “Such is the story of Hushmat Jung (Glorious in Battle) and Khair un Nissa (Excellent among Women), so far as I can give it. But I have been unable, from

failing eyesight, to make complete examination of the papers, and some further facts and fresh light may possibly be still found in them” (29). Despite this qualification in the source material, there is little in *White Mughals* that Strachey has not already covered, except the story of Khair un-Nissa after Kirkpatrick’s death. The extent to which the love story of *White Mughals* has already been written is hidden by Dalrymple’s narrative of his archival discoveries.

As part of his narration of his “heroic” research, Dalrymple also carefully describes the material properties of his findings:

There were piles of letter books inscribed “From my brother James Achilles Kirkpatrick” (the paper within all polished and frail with age), great gilt leather-bound volumes of official correspondence with the Governor General, Lord Wellesley, bundles of Persian manuscripts, some boxes of receipts and, in a big buff envelope, a will—exactly the sort of random yet detailed detritus of everyday lives that biographers dream of turning up. (xxxv-xxxvi)

Such passages create a sense of closeness between the reader and the research and writing process—this particular vignette giving a behind-the-scenes look at the dreams of biographers. This romanticised portrayal of historical research emphasises the (“frail,” “leather-bound”) beauty of Dalrymple’s findings. Scattered liberally throughout his narrative of his quest through the archives, Dalrymple offers examples of the “mundane” details available to the researcher—glossed as an inevitable part of the labour of archival work: the letters contained details such as “the occasional plea for a crate of Madeira or

the sort of vegetables Kirkpatrick found unavailable in the Hyderabad bazaars, such as—surprisingly—potatoes and peas” (xxxvi). Dalrymple’s narrative of his research and writing is conspicuously silent about the wide scope of the historian to shape the story that begins in the archive.

Although vocal about the richness and variety of the sources available, there is no mention of Dalrymple’s choice of one over another, or of any interpretation of the material. Following the logic of this narrative, *White Mughals* is told in the only way possible—through faithful transcription of the already-present story from the archives. In Susan Kurosawa’s profile of the author at the time of the text’s publication, Dalrymple describes the process as like “watching a Polaroid develop.”¹ In the context of *White Mughals*’ representation as telling the only available historical story, then, it is unsurprising that Kirkpatrick’s requests for Madeira, peas and potatoes are dismissed as mundane rather than contributing to a picture of the Resident as both engaging with India and missing Britain—this is the manner in which this information best fits Dalrymple’s narrative.

In order to make the authenticity of his work more explicit, Dalrymple inserts a footnote which explains: “It is one of the quirks of modern Indian historiography that the Deccan remains still largely unstudied: little serious work has been done on any of the Deccani courts” (xxxviii). Suddenly, *White Mughals* is not merely a popular entry-point to Indian history, but also an important contribution to knowledge. The sense of freedom from the strictures

¹ In yet another instance of the dual representation of Dalrymple as historian and traveller, and his text as an untheorised mixture of both, Kurosawa is a regular contributor to, and editor of, the *Weekend Australian*’s “Travel and Indulgence” section.

of academic research that William enjoys in relation to “antiquities” (74) in *In Xanadu* is evident in the field of history, too: “In an age when every minute contour of the landscape of history appears to be rigorously mapped out by a gridiron of scholarly Ph.D.s, this huge gap is all the more remarkable” (xxxviii). In contrast to the image of the network of PhD research as a stultifying “gridiron,” *White Mughals* takes on the characterisation as free and unlimited by academic constraints.

Strengthening the representation of *White Mughals* as direct transcription from the archive is a sense of the providential appearance of crucial, authentic sources. Dalrymple highlights the quirks of chance and the lucky status of the narrative by chronicling his discoveries on the final day of his research trip to Hyderabad:

There were some moments of pure revelation too. ... The shop did not in fact sell boxes, but books (or “booksies”, as my guide had been trying to tell me). Or rather, not so much books as Urdu and Persian manuscripts and very rare printed chronicles ... [which] lay stacked from floor to ceiling in a dusty, ill-lit shop the size of a large broom-cupboard. More remarkably still, the bookseller knew exactly what he had. When I told him what I was writing he produced from under a stack a huge, crumbling Persian book, the *Kitab Tuhfat al-'Alam*, by Abdul Lateef Shushtari, a name I already knew well from James Kirkpatrick's letters. The book turned out to be a fascinating six-hundred-page autobiography by Khair un-Nissa's first cousin, written in Hyderabad in the immediate aftermath of the scandal of her marriage to James. ... I spent the rest of

the afternoon haggling with the owner, and left his shop £400 poorer, but with a trunkload of previously untranslated primary sources. Their contents completely transformed what follows. (xxxviii)

The “transformation” that Dalrymple chronicles here is the addition of an Indian perspective to the British tale told by Strachey. In his *Archive Fever*, Jacques Derrida plays with the phrase “*en mal d’archive*,” seeing one of its interpretations as a “nostalgic desire for the archive, an irrepressible desire to return to the origin” (91). Dalrymple’s fetishisation of these sources recalls this nostalgic desire. The role of archival serendipity functions to reinforce the sense of a single possible narrative, but also works toward the representation of *White Mughals* as a book that was somehow meant to happen. The ever-present emphasis on the rarity and authenticity of these discoveries highlights its status as an important and original text. The centrality of these “previously untranslated” documents to the positioning of *White Mughals* cannot be overstated—they “completely transformed” the text. Betty Joseph reminds us that “the archive is not evidence of the real India but of the ways in which colonial rule went about the task of writing fictions and governing through them” (20). She asks, provocatively, “What information was preserved and for what purposes? Who gets left out, and why, when the historical record is put together in a particular way?” (15). This questioning approach is absent from Dalrymple’s compelling, coherent historical narrative.

The publicity surrounding the book’s publication contributes to the sense, developed throughout *White Mughals*, of the pieces all miraculously falling into place. In interviews and publicity material surrounding the work,

Dalrymple combines this “luck” with a narrative of his personal investment in the story:

All this material turned up after the advance from the publisher was spent. So I took a great financial gamble, re-mortgaged my house and spent two more years researching Kirkpatrick. I was hugely in debt at the end of it, but within a week of being published, the book had gone to being the No. 1 bestseller in London. So thank God for that. (Interview with Mukund Padmanabhan).

Despite the faintly ridiculous notion of the privileged Dalrymple casting himself in a kind of rags-to-riches story here, this tale of determination in the face of potential financial hardship highlights the extent of Dalrymple’s commitment to the Kirkpatrick narrative. Dalrymple’s focus, risk-taking and eventual commercial success not only provide a narrative of the rewards of individualism, but also work to further support the representation of the text as serendipitous and Dalrymple as highly committed to his work. *White Mughals* becomes a text of which God and the market approve.

Dalrymple makes the reader privy to certain of the thought-processes of the author, and encourages a sense of openness and transparency by revealing his connection to Kirkpatrick, his historical protagonist: “By 2001, four years into the research, I thought I knew Kirkpatrick so well I imagined that I heard his voice in my head as I read and reread his letters” (xxxix). His knowledge of the material and the depth of his research are emphasised here, along with the length of time spent on the project. His affinity with Kirkpatrick links his and Kirkpatrick’s characterisation. This connection is encouraged in Dalrymple’s

self-representation, both within and outside his text, until identification of Dalrymple as a belated “white Mughal” becomes difficult to escape. As Natasha Mann writes in a profile of Dalrymple around the time of *White Mughals*’ publication:

I can’t resist making an analogy between Dalrymple and the hookah-smoking white Mughals in his book. “Oh yes,” he says with good-humoured openness. “No one spends five years digging up a corpse unless they see some element of themselves.” Olivia, who has been cooking lunch in the kitchen, pipes up. “He wears his Indian kit every evening.” “My old kurtas,” chuckles Dalrymple. “It’s certainly a fantasy fulfilment, I suppose. I admire James Kirkpatrick. His views are my views. So, definitely a clear, unembarrassed, unequivocal identification with the hero.”

Dalrymple’s extra-textual identification with Kirkpatrick, particularly the statement that “his views are my views” works to mediate readers’ interaction with Kirkpatrick—he becomes a figure whose views are able to be embraced by a contemporary, apparently self-deprecating figure like Dalrymple. This move makes Kirkpatrick (and others in Dalrymple’s “white Mughal” category) recognisable to the modern reader, despite their temporal distance. Dalrymple’s self-representation as an enthusiastic historian who performs a daily role-play in his “Indian kit” enables various readings. It establishes Dalrymple’s passion and eccentricity, and shows the depth of his connection to his subject. It is worth emphasising that it is not India, or the Mughals with which Dalrymple identifies—it is a particular version of British India, personified by the cross-

dressing, hookah-smoking Kirkpatrick. The domestic surrounds that Mann describes suggest that Dalrymple occupies his own world, one which is not quite as temporally present as the rest of the population, but rather a relic from Kirkpatrick's hybrid era. This temporal ambiguity positions Dalrymple as uniquely equipped to mediate the historical narrative for the modern Western reader.

Dalrymple's representation as linked with and sympathetic to his white Mughals' views is heightened when he informs the reader of his blood ties to his subject-matter, giving him a biological as well as a representational connection:

in the course of my research, I discovered that I was myself the product of a similar interracial liaison from this period, and that I thus had Indian blood in my veins. No one in my family seemed to know about this, though it should not have been a surprise: we had all heard the stories of how our beautiful, dark-eyed Calcutta-born great-great-grandmother Sophia Pattle, with whom Burne-Jones had fallen in love, used to speak Hindustani with her sisters and was painted by Watts with a *rakhi*—a Hindu sacred thread—tied around her wrist. But it was only when I poked around in the archives that I discovered she was descended from a Hindu Bengali woman from Chandernagore who converted to Catholicism and married a French officer in Pondicherry in the 1780s.

(xli)

The relation of this discovery reinforces the characterisation of Dalrymple throughout the book as a belated white Mughal himself. Of course, the

presence of “Indian blood” in Dalrymple’s veins further adds to a rather dubious essentialist sense of his authority to write on the behalf of the British in India. That even his family was unaware of this connection highlights Dalrymple’s considerable powers of research and “discovery.”

Through his continued identification with his white Mughal characters, Dalrymple the historian, with his enthusiastic use of arguments about hybridity and multiculturalism, paves the way for a significant re-visioning of the British in India. Dalrymple continues his overwhelmingly positive portrayal of the British in India not through an argument for the multiplicity of experiences of the British / Indian encounter, but through a focus on the weakness of other scholars: “This seemed to be the problem with so much of the history written about eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century India: the temptation felt by so many historians to interpret their evidence according to the stereotypes of Victorian and Edwardian behaviour and attitudes with which we are so familiar” (xlii). Dalrymple posits the need for a thorough reconsideration of British / Indian history, and inserts *White Mughals* as a balanced antidote to other, stereotypically-influenced, histories. Dalrymple’s approach to history is represented as overcoming the problems faced by the (undifferentiated mass of) nineteenth- and twentieth-century historians.

Dalrymple subtly inserts himself into a conversation between Kirkpatrick and his contemporary, General William Palmer, to again emphasise his connection with his characters: “the two were soon comparing notes on their favourite varieties [of mango], agreeing—sensibly enough—that Alphonsos were hard to beat” (273). This two word intervention (“sensibly enough”)

continues the sense of the narrator's presence—ready to add his opinion and insight to aid the reader—and to represent the narrator alongside his white Mughal protagonists, as a (albeit atemporal) part of the conversation. Dalrymple is a third white Mughal in this discussion. His narratorial interruption also implies an extensive knowledge of all things Indian, including the particular merits of different varieties of mango.

Another way in which Dalrymple aligns himself with Kirkpatrick is through heavily descriptive textual manoeuvres which recall the style of his travel writing. In a passage in which Dalrymple conflates himself and Kirkpatrick and takes on Kirkpatrick's point of view, he states:

Early in the morning after a night of rain, the scent of flowering *champa* wafting from a roadside tree, James would find that a thin haze veiled the ground like a fine dupatta, blotting out the muddy road ahead but leaving a strangely disembodied forest of palm trunks rising out of the mist, silhouetting the half-naked toddy-tappers shinning up their trunks to harvest their gourds. Roadside caravansaris—strikingly solid and monumental after the floating world of the palms—lay empty but for colonies of monkeys scampering in from the road. (394)

Dalrymple plays with temporality, locating himself (as narrator) in Kirkpatrick's era. The tense employed in this passage adds to this feeling of temporal slippage—the haze that “James would find” and the caravansaries that “lay empty” bring the two Britons together. Such instances erode the distance between Kirkpatrick's and Dalrymple's times, and foster an impression of closeness, which sees a combination of Kirkpatrick's

representation as a man ahead of his time, and of Dalrymple as endearingly anachronistic.

Dalrymple's detailed descriptions of the (high-status, academic) environment in which he undertook research for *White Mughals* function to involve the reader in the writing process, and to rarify it at the same time—it both makes the environments familiar and highlights their prestige: “Day after day, under the armorial shields and dark oak bookshelves of the Duke Humfrey's Library, I tore as quickly as I could through the faded pages of Russell's often illegible copperplate correspondence, the tragic love story slowly unfolding fully-formed before me” (xxxix). The description of the tale emerging “fully-formed” for Dalrymple might be read as lessening his authorial role. However, in the context of the narrative of his research practices, and of the contrasts advanced between Dalrymple and other historians, the key words here are “before me.” He represents himself as a kind of archival-based Sherlock Holmes figure, able to make meaning from the clues where others struggle. Dalrymple's evocative descriptions of the Duke Humfrey's Library reinforce a sense of his privilege, and also provide a suitable backdrop for the revelation of Khair un-Nissa's story after Kirkpatrick:

It took another nine months of searching before I stumbled across the heartbreaking answer to that, in the Henry Russell papers in the Bodleian Library in Oxford. The tale—which had never been told, and seemed to be unknown even to Kirkpatrick's contemporaries—bore a striking resemblance to *Madame Butterfly*. (xxxix)

The specific library in which the papers were located is certainly not crucial

for the text; however mention of the Bodleian Library adds to the sense of the romance of discovery that Dalrymple constructs.

There are a number of ambiguities in Dalrymple's representation of this revelation. For instance, there is no justification for his assertion that the story of Khair un-Nissa's life post-Kirkpatrick had "never been told," and that it appeared "to be unknown even to Kirkpatrick's contemporaries," nor any indication of who these "contemporaries" might be—British or Indian, closely or distantly related to Kirkpatrick. Dalrymple's description of the story of Khair un-Nissa's life and death as appearing "fully-formed" elides the presence of authorial interpretation and influence. Given Dalrymple's later statements about the challenges of Khair un-Nissa's story, such assertions are somewhat misleading. Much later in *White Mughals*, after a multitude of compelling descriptions of Khair un-Nissa's strong will and individualistic yet loving character, Dalrymple notes:

Though she was the central figure in the life of James's family, and clearly a quietly forceful personality, the loss of her letters means that today we can see her only obliquely, reflected through the eyes of her lover, her husband, her mother and her children. Only rarely—and then indirectly—are her own words recorded. Nevertheless, through the impressions of her family and her own actions, a coherent mosaic does emerge. (343)

The import of this statement (that there is a significant gap in the archive, with no surviving documents authored by Khair un-Nissa) is lessened as Dalrymple strives to reassure the reader of the reliability of his representation. His

insistence that a “coherent mosaic does emerge” manages to represent the writing process without recourse to the author at all—the story simply “emerges.” He uses convincing language to describe his central female character: “Khair was clearly a pious, impulsive and emotional woman, as well as being a remarkably brave and determined figure when the need arose, and few people—certainly not her mother, grandmother, or her husband—seemed willing or able to stand in her way once she had made up her mind about something” (343). The repeated use of words such as “clearly” work to close the archival gaps, even as they are revealed to the reader.

When it comes to the historical narrative, Dalrymple continues to trade upon his authority as a travel writer, presenting the reader with a scene of timeless India at the beginning of *White Mughals*: “Waiting in the shade of the gates, shoals of hawkers circled around the crowds of petitioners and groups of onlookers who always collect in such places in India, besieging them with trays full of rice cakes and bananas, sweetmeats, oranges and *paan*” (3). Such temporal generalisations (“onlookers who always collect”) render Dalrymple’s knowledge of contemporary India somehow also applicable to its history, and foster a representation of the narrator as someone who can travel to and guide the reader through India’s past. Dalrymple the narrator is a consistent presence throughout *White Mughals*, both in the footnotes and in the body of the text.

The footnotes throughout *White Mughals* ostensibly provide an opportunity for Dalrymple to reference his source material and relate further information. And they do achieve this. However, as these functions are also carried out by the text’s endnotes, Dalrymple could equally have chosen to

dispense with footnotes, leaving the reader to progress through an uninterrupted narrative. What these notes provide—frequent reminders of the sources and expertise used in the creation of the text, and regular opportunities for the representation of Dalrymple as a scholarly India enthusiast—were evidently judged to outweigh their intrusion into the story (an unusual choice for a text aimed at a general audience).

In Anthony Grafton's detailed examination of the function and history of the footnote, he endows them with two central functions: "First, they persuade: they convince the reader that the historian has done an acceptable amount of work, enough to lie within the tolerances of the field. ... Second, they indicate the chief sources that the historian has actually used" (22). The referencing system employed throughout *White Mughals* also contributes to the presentation of the text (as well as adding to the characterisation of Dalrymple as author). For Grafton, footnotes tell a parallel story "which moves with but differs sharply from the primary one. [They document] the thought and research that underpin the narrative above them" (23). *White Mughals* uses a combination of numbered endnotes and footnotes with symbols to provide the reader with further information, including detailed references. The endnotes are generally, though not exclusively, used for the particulars of Dalrymple's sources, and the footnotes (which are much more likely to be read) chiefly provide an opportunity for Dalrymple to relate further or interesting information, therefore extending the role of the narrator. Dalrymple's footnotes are vital to the maintenance of his characterisation as historian. They provide an avenue for a direct reader-narrator connection. For example, a discussion

about European conversions to Islam is continued in his footnote, which states in a casual tone: “All this [conversion], of course, went down very badly at home, and the treacherous ‘renegade’ soon became a stock character on the English stage” (19). However, the footnotes are also used to provide references, on occasion, and, likewise, endnotes are used for authorial argument and anecdote, so as to give Dalrymple considerable latitude in how and where he presents his additional information. This flexibility can then be used for furthering certain representational strategies, while allowing the state of the sources to remain unclear to the general reader. Chiefly, though, this results in the rather comforting sense that all of the required information, but not the “dry” history, is readily available in the regular, entertaining footnotes.

Similar rhetorical strategies are also employed in the body of the text. *White Mughals* is laid out in a way that mirrors the narrative of Dalrymple’s archival, authorial quest. This results in information being withheld from the reader, or being introduced and then countered, as “new” material is brought to the story. While this is a clever and engaging representational strategy which adds to the suspense of Dalrymple’s narrative in a similar way to the structure of the detective story, it also has other effects. This textual device is used to advance and consolidate stories, characterisation and arguments unsupported by Dalrymple’s source material. For example, in the introduction, Dalrymple describes his growing interest in his eventual subject in a narrative of a visit to Kirkpatrick’s residence in Hyderabad:

Here I was shown a battered token of Kirkpatrick’s love for his wife in the garden at the back of the Residency. The tale—apocryphal, I

presumed, but charming nonetheless—went as follows: that Khair un-Nissa remained all her life in strict purdah, living in a separate *bibi-ghar* (literally “women’s house”) at the end of Kirkpatrick’s garden, she was unable to walk around the side of her husband’s great creation to admire its wonderful portico. Eventually the Resident hit upon a solution and built a scaled-down plaster model of his new palace for her so that she could examine in detail what she would never allow herself to see with her own eyes. Whatever the truth of the story, the model had survived intact until the 1980s when a tree fell on it, smashing the right wing. (xxxiii)

This passage, and particularly the unambiguous assertion of Kirkpatrick’s love for his wife, informs the reader’s reception and interpretation of the text that follows. It is not until the final quarter of the lengthy work that the more reliable interpretation of this object is provided. Dalrymple states:

As a home for the dolls, James built a four-foot-high model of his planned new Residency mansion. The model still lies (albeit now in a ruinous state) immediately behind the remains of Khair un-Nissa’s *mahal* and within its old enclosure wall. Later tradition in the Residency has it that it was built for Khair, who was locked so deep in purdah that she could not go around the front of the house to see what it looked like—but this story (still current in the town) clearly has no basis in reality. (344-45)

Here the object, which has been taken for the last 350 pages to show Kirkpatrick’s devotion to Khair un-Nissa, is used to show Kirkpatrick’s

affection for his children, and mention of the purdah story is dismissed with the zeal of a scholarly triumph over the old-wives'-tale. Thus, Dalrymple's equivocal statements at the text's beginning ("whatever the truth of the story," "apocryphal, I presumed,") can be seen as more complex than they first appear. Dalrymple continues his self-representation as rigorous scholar in the accompanying footnote, stating: "The fact that Kirkpatrick was ordering dolls from Europe at the same time as he was building the replica—a fact unknown to [preservationist Elbrun] Kimmelman—can be taken as clinching evidence of their speculations" (345).

As an object invested with multiple meanings for *White Mughals* and Dalrymple, the doll house also provides an example of the ways in which Dalrymple (like any historian) necessarily interprets the evidence with which he works. The request by Kirkpatrick for European dolls to inhabit this house ("we know that James asked his agent to send out from England 'a few Europe dolls in high Court Dress' for the children to play with—possibly as a way of familiarising them with European dress and complexions" [344]) could be taken as an indication of the extent of the children's identification as European, albeit European children in Hyderabad. Dalrymple, however, in the service of his narrative, attributes the dolls' presence to a need to familiarise the children with "European dress and complexions." Here, the children are so Indian that they require concrete reminders of what Europeans look like.

A thorough reading of *White Mughals* reveals the extent to which Dalrymple presents unreliable information as evidence, exploits the complexity of the historical record, and relies on the chosen system of referencing to

discourage the reader from pursuing further information. What differentiates *White Mughals* from more academic treatments of imperial history (such as Maya Jasanoff's *Edge of Empire*) is its tendency towards exaggeration. Prior to a lengthy quotation describing Kirkpatrick's and Khair un-Nissa's loving relationship, Dalrymple states: "The dialogue put into James's mouth in the *Gulzar i-Asfiya* is presumably invented, but the substance of the conversation has the clear ring of truth and tallies with all the other evidence" (206). While initially (and appropriately) qualifying the reliability of the "invented" material quoted, Dalrymple then, in the same sentence, endows it with an unquantifiable "ring of truth" in what appears to be an attempt at legitimisation. Earlier on the same page, Dalrymple works to bolster the value of the *Gulzar i-Asfiya*, calling it "usually very reliable." Such apparently overdetermined claims for truth status culminate in a (presumably unintentional) impression of a flimsy argument, requiring justifications not present in the source material.

Narrative passages expressing the points of view of the central characters also reinforce this impression through their assertion of improbable, unknowable detail: "[Kirkpatrick] was forced to sit impotently in the Residency gazing over the Musi [River] to the old city where Khair un-Nissa lived, forbidden to contact her or reply to her letters" (235). This passage reinforces the differences between academic and narrative history. Doubtless, if such an action on Kirkpatrick's part was documented in the material available to Dalrymple, this would form a crucial element of his discussion of Kirkpatrick's and Khair un-Nissa's relationship. The absence of documentation leaves Dalrymple using persuasive language to put forward his opinion of

Kirkpatrick's behaviour, particularly evident in the use of words such as "forced," "gazing" and "forbidden." Kirkpatrick is the chief recipient of such representational strategies, as seen when Dalrymple narrates the process of James telling his brother William about the affair with Khair un-Nissa: "he made it clear that in fact he was far, far more deeply involved than this. He wrapped up the revelation in the language of honour and duty so as to make it seem less objectionable to his brother, and still pretended that the connection was forced upon him; but the import was exactly the same" (235). Whether James indeed "wrapped" his feelings in the "language of honour and duty" and "pretended" that it was "forced upon him" or whether he was sincerely expressing his feelings of duty at an unfortunate "connection" is open to interpretation, though the language that Dalrymple uses is sufficiently strong to elide this flexibility.

Another example of the ways in which Dalrymple makes use of his sources is found in his description of the first British Resident in Delhi, Sir David Ochterlony, who, despite his temporal and geographical removal from the central story, is enlisted as another white Mughal figure: "When in the Indian capital, Ochterlony liked to be addressed by his full Mughal title, Nasir-ud-Daula (Defender of the State), and to live the life of a Mughal gentleman: every evening all thirteen of his consorts used to process around Delhi behind their husband, each on the back of her own elephant" (30). This unambiguous statement provides a picture of a man revelling in the trappings and advantages of high Mughal society. It also reinforces Dalrymple's vision of what it is that is ultimately attractive about British / Indian "hybridity"—sexualised

representations of cross-cultural interaction and the titillating possibilities of the harem. It is only in the accompanying endnote that Dalrymple concedes: “Sadly this much-repeated and thoroughly delightful story may well be apocryphal: I have certainly been unable to trace it back further than Edward Thompson’s *The Life of Charles Lord Metcalfe* (London, 1937), p. 101, where it is described as ‘local tradition ... [which] sounds like folklore’” (514). The entirety of Thompson’s reference to these unsubstantiated wives reads: “local tradition tells how when he was Resident the gallant soldier’s thirteen wives evening by evening took the air on thirteen elephants. This sounds like folklore” (101). Again in the endnote, Dalrymple then reveals that “In his will (OIOC L/AG/34/29/37), Ochterlony only mentions one *bibi*” (514). However, even in the midst of the revelatory endnote he still attempts to bolster the truth-value of this “delightful story,” arguing:

Nevertheless it is quite possible that the story could be true: I frequently found old Delhi traditions about such matters confirmed by research, and several Company servants of the period kept harems of this size. Judging by Bishop Heber’s description of him, Ochterlony was clearly Indianised enough to have done so. (515)

However, although employing persuasive language (“quite possible, “clearly Indianised,”), Dalrymple provides no details to support this argument.

Later in the text Dalrymple again refers to the story, without any reference to its “folkloric” status, cementing it in the mind of the reader. He effects this through reference to Ochterlony’s only documented wife:

An even more dramatic change in status was experienced by General Sir David Ochterlony's senior *bibi*, Mubarak Begum. Though Ochterlony is reputed to have had thirteen wives, one of these, a former Brahmin slave girl from Pune who converted to Islam and is referred to in his will as "Beebee Mahruttun Moobaruck ul Nissa Begume, alias Begum Ochterlony, the mother of my younger children", took clear precedence over the others. (183)

Dalrymple presents the reader with several, overlapping pictures of the Delhi Resident. Ochterlony is represented as an enthusiastic Indophile gentleman, vastly enjoying his powerful position and the accoutrements that come with it (including an abundance of women and elephants). In this later passage, Ochterlony is seen as forming a strong relationship with one of the thirteen women, adding to Dalrymple's tally of Kirkpatrick-style men in a committed cross-cultural relationship. This second image could have been developed much more fully by leaving out Thompson's unreliable reference to Ochterlony's multiple wives. That Dalrymple refrains from making this textual move highlights the power of ideas of exotic, sexualised Indian women, and the harem, throughout *White Mughals*. Inderpal Grewal sees the harem as a colonial phantasm "of the incarcerated 'Eastern' woman, lacking freedom and embodying submission and sexuality" (5). The cover of the United States edition of *White Mughals* features a portrait of William Palmer and his family in India. This image (which is also present as a colour illustration in the UK edition which has Khair un-Nissa on the cover) shows Palmer with multiple wives. This cover choice seems at odds with Dalrymple's narrative of a

committed, monogamous, cross-cultural relationship. However, both cover images convey the same message about the attractions of India. Given such portrayals, the white Mughal's relationship with Indian women is represented as one of power, pleasure, and decadence over one of mutual respect and understanding.

Even later in the text, the story of Ochterlony is repeated again, this time in a discussion of the fate of children of British and Indian relationships: "he [Ochterlony] hesitates to bring them [his female children] up as Muslims, with a view to marrying them into the Mughal aristocracy, as 'I own that I could not bear that my child should be one of a numerous haram'" (382). This statement, which could, more probably, be taken as support for the argument against Ochterlony having thirteen wives (and, significantly, shows the limited extent of Ochterlony's crossing over), is instead employed to reiterate the exotic tale yet again. Dalrymple's footnote to this passage works to counter any conflicting interpretation, stating "This was rather rich coming from Ochterlony, who, it should be remembered, was reputed to have thirteen wives, all of whom took the evening Delhi air with the Resident, each on the back of her own elephant" (382), without any reference. Whether this tale "should be remembered" or not is clearly open to argument.

Here is a sustained and repeated example of Dalrymple using the sources and his system of referencing to present an unreliable story which the reader is invited to accept as truth. There is a possibility that, in the manner of more postmodern approaches to history and narrative, Dalrymple's reiteration of different versions of this story provides a means by which to question its

authenticity. However, taken alongside the emphasis throughout *White Mughals* on the authority and legitimacy of both author and sources, the valency of this possibility diminishes. The image of Ochterlony and his thirteen wives atop elephants, promenading nightly around the capital, is a captivating one, and its presence in the opening chapter of *White Mughals* ensures its notice by reviewers. Kurosawa informs her readers that:

Those who went all the way and dressed in loose and flowing Indian garb and smoked hookahs became known as “white mughals”—one Scotsman, Alexander Gardner, embellished his adopted costume with tartan; David Ochterlony took 13 Indian wives, each of whom had her own elephant for family outings.

The power imbalances and imperial context behind these relationships pass without comment by the reviewers. The simple statement that “Ochterlony took 13 Indian wives,” regardless of its problematic truth status, has the potential to open a conversation about the sexual and affective components of imperial power. Instead, it is glossed as a novel, exciting part of a positive, energetic, nostalgic portrayal of empire. The novelty of this image is conveyed by Margie Thomson, who states: “Dalrymple tells many fascinating stories of other British people who lived in a multi-ethnic style. Some of the images are hilarious, such as that of General Sir David Ochterlony, who took the evening air in Delhi along with his 13 wives, each of them on the back of her own elephant.” In this way, “hilarious” Ochterlony and his thirteen wives become a symbol of the enthusiastic, eccentric (and, crucially, harmless) white Mughal figure, and almost for *White Mughals* as a whole.

The term “white Mughal” appears frequently throughout the text. This liberal sprinkling works to naturalise the term, which is never explicitly defined, as in: “The true reason for his removal, as Palmer immediately realised, was that he represented exactly the sort of tolerant, Indophile white Mughal that Wellesley most abhorred, and which he was determined to weed out of the Company’s service” (263). In this instance, it is possible to read “white Mughal” as a term in use in Kirkpatrick’s time, giving the category further valency.

The importance of Dalrymple’s nomenclature and the overarching narrative of his research and the relationship with his sources is most evident when there are gaps in the archive. He dramatises a moment in which his sources are incomplete:

And then, quite suddenly, nothing. In a story powered by a succession of extraordinarily detailed and revealing sources—letters, diaries, reports, despatches—without warning the current that has supported this book suddenly flickers and fails. There are no more letters. The record goes dead, with James critically ill, delirious and feverish on the boat. The lights go out and we are left in darkness. (396)

In order to strike a balance between the dramatic tension contributed by the chronicle of the failure of the archive, and the destabilising notion of an unreliable empirical basis for *White Mughals*, Dalrymple highlights the general reliability and richness of the archive. This is achieved through a series of electricity-based metaphors, which, more subtly, position Dalrymple as powered by his sources rather than having agency over them. The word choice

throughout this passage—“extraordinarily detailed and revealing sources” that are the “current that has supported this book”—emphasise the presence of the sources (and the already-present story that they convey), even while dramatically announcing their absence.

Such gaps in the source material, soon to be filled with Dalrymple’s next revelation of a research breakthrough, form vital parts of the book’s meta-narrative. More serious lacunae, which remain unaddressed, and are therefore threatening to the narrative’s stability, are engaged with more briefly. What remains unmentioned in this picture of a plenitude of sources is the lack of documentation surrounding Khair un-Nissa. Dalrymple’s statements about the “extraordinary” nature of his sources enables and encourages the reader to forget such matters. Further, Dalrymple, as author / historian / narrator, strengthens his link with the reader through the use of the word “we”: “The lights go out and we are left in darkness” (396). At this moment, in the meta-narrative of the author’s quest through the archives, both reader and narrator are in the same place—the “dark.”

Dalrymple shares his lack of progress with the reader: “Four years into the research for this book, I was still none the wiser as to what happened to Khair. After James’s death, there was not one single reference to her in the hundreds of boxes that make up the Kirkpatrick Papers in the India Office Library in London” (401). Dalrymple’s need to work through such narrative gaps is the aspect that most distances *White Mughals* from professional historiography—here the narrative drive proves more powerful than the sources on which it is based. He chronicles the discovery of further sources: “It

was like coming up for air. After four years of searching, here at last was a lead. The Begum was alive, and heading for Calcutta in the company of Munshi Aziz Ullah. But what was she up to? I read on as fast as Russell's faded and often illegible copperplate would allow" (402). Details employed here, especially the mention of copperplate, enhance the sense of Dalrymple as archival detective following "leads," as well as the authenticity of this appropriately old-fashioned source. Dalrymple's enthusiasm for his search, and the story that he puts together, is palpable: "Yet even here the story does not quite end. For after a gap of more than thirty years there is one, final, extraordinary coda" (466). As well as conveying his excitement and driving a long narrative forward, these passages also portray Dalrymple as a classic detective, preparing his final dénouement.

Romance and Sensuality: *White Mughals* and Women

White Mughals is a text that positions itself in curious, and sometimes conflicting, ways. These are demonstrated in its material construction—its physical presence and attributes—which is both important and peripheral. The work's title evokes its concern with the British in India in the eighteenth century, which is also evident in the majority of the text. The cover of the UK edition, however, does not show a representative of these men, even Kirkpatrick, on whom the text principally focuses. Instead, the cover features a portrait of a pale, wistful-looking Indian woman, covered in jewels, which is later revealed to be Khair un-Nissa (155-56). Dalrymple showcases his talent

for portrait-interpretation, emphasising his heroine's beauty and strong personality:

Only one contemporary picture of Khair un-Nissa survives, and it dates from 1806 ... Yet even then, when she was aged about twenty, Khair un-Nissa still looks little more than a child: a graceful, delicate, shy creature, with porcelain skin, an oval face and wide-open, dark brown eyes. Her eyebrows are long and curved, and she has a full, timidly expressive mouth that is about to break into a smile; just below it, there lies the tiny blemish that is the mark of real beauty: a tiny red freckle, slightly off-centre, immediately above the point of her chin. Yet there is a strength amid the look of overwhelming innocence, a wilfulness in the set of the lips and the darkness of the eyes that might be interpreted as defiance in a less serene face. (155-56)

Dalrymple's lengthy description shows what he defines as beautiful and attractive qualities in an Indian woman. She is childlike, a "delicate, shy creature ... timidly expressive." Balancing this retiring representation are hints of "strength... [and] wilfulness," although serenity is the adjective which closes the description. In the many interviews he gives and in the publicity material produced by the publisher, Khair un-Nissa is represented as the centre of the story, to such an extent that Dalrymple thanks his wife in the work's acknowledgements for her patience: "Olivia has, I think, found living in a *ménage à trois* with Khair un-Nissa a little more trying than she did previous cohabitations with Byzantine ascetics, taxi-stands full of Sikh drivers and the courtiers of Kubla Khan, but she has borne the five-year-long ordeal with

characteristic gentleness and generosity” (xxviii). Dalrymple’s personal, sexualised relationship with Khair un-Nissa again links him, wittingly or unwittingly, with Kirkpatrick.

The tenor of Khair un-Nissa’s description is similar in many ways to the treatment of India by Dalrymple. She becomes, in a somewhat predictable move, a metonymic representation of the country. As Khair un-Nissa “conquers” Kirkpatrick, so India “seduces” her colonisers, in this narrative:

India has always had a strange way with her conquerors. In defeat, she beckons them in, then slowly seduces, assimilates and transforms them. Over the centuries, many powers have defeated Indian armies; but none has ever proved immune to this capacity of the subcontinent to somehow reverse the current of colonisation, and to mould those who attempt to subjugate her. So vast is India, and so uniquely resilient and deeply rooted are her intertwined social and religious institutions, that all foreign intruders are sooner or later either shaken off or absorbed. The Great Mughals, as one historian memorably observed, arrived in India from central Asia in the sixteenth century as “ruddy men in boots”; they left it four centuries later “pale persons in petticoats”. Until the 1830s, there was every sign that India would have as dramatic a transforming effect on the Europeans who followed the Mughals. Like all the foreigners before them, it seemed that they too would be effortlessly absorbed. (11)

Dalrymple represents the land as a seductress and agent of degeneration. Following this line, then, Khair un-Nissa can be read as some kind of personification of India, as the relationship between Khair un-Nissa and

Kirkpatrick appears to take a similar form to Dalrymple's description of India's effect on its colonisers. Further, the relationship between Khair un-Nissa and Kirkpatrick can be read as a symbol for the British / Indian relationship, loosely characterised as one of mutual attraction and love, though stronger on Khair un-Nissa's / India's side. Or, perhaps more fruitfully, as an idealized version of that relationship and how it might have played out without the interference of the British Dalrymple characterises as "Imperial." In the concluding paragraph of *White Mughals*, Dalrymple indeed uses Kirkpatrick's and Khair un-Nissa's relationship as an idealised expression of the positive possibilities for cross-cultural communication:

The white Mughals—with their unexpected minglings and fusions, their hybridity and above all their efforts at promoting tolerance and understanding—attempted to bridge these two worlds, and to some extent they succeeded in doing so. As the story of James Achilles Kirkpatrick and Khair un-Nissa shows, East and West are not irreconcilable, and never have been. Only bigotry, prejudice, racism and fear drive them apart. But they have met and mingled in the past; and they will do so again. (501)

Dalrymple credits his white Mughals with attempting to "bridge these two worlds." The decidedly complex, evolving, commercial and imperial context within which they operated goes unspoken here, in favour of a sentimental representation of respect and "mingling" across cultural boundaries.

Dalrymple's text is full of "eccentric" characters whom he portrays as Indophiles, and, crucially, as sexually attracted to Indian women. These two

traits are represented as essentially intertwined. Dalrymple informs the reader of a man known as “Hindoo Stuart,” an eccentric champion of India in the early 1800s, stating: “Stuart was not just an admirer of the Indian religions, he was also an enthusiastic devotee of Hindu women and their dress sense” (44). Dalrymple gives figures such as Stuart more space in his footnotes—thus presenting a picture of the text as a conversation between Indophile gentlemen: “Stuart was also perhaps the first recorded devotee of what the Bollywood film industry now knows as the wet-sari scene[writing] ‘the Hindoo female, modest as the rosebud, bathes completely dressed [...] and necessarily rises with wet drapery from the stream’” (44). This passage also draws a link between past and present representations of Indian women, giving Stuart’s words a (recognisable and harmless) modern referent for the contemporary reader. *White Mughals* works to make such overt sexualisation an entirely appropriate and natural component of imperial history.

Dalrymple paints a picture of a courtly India as experienced by British East India Company officials, as inhabited by invariably exotic, attractive and (implicitly) available women: “If there appears to have been no shortage of beautiful Muslim Begums in Hyderabad, their European counterparts seem to have been in shorter supply—and to have been something of a mixed blessing” (121). Here, again, Dalrymple affects to speak from the same position as his white Mughal characters, whom he portrays as surveying the country for the most beautiful women. The implicit argument here is that the sexual connection between British men and “beautiful Muslim Begums” was inevitable, due to the limited number and regrettably unattractive countenance

of the British female population. Cities such as Hyderabad are touted by Dalrymple in *White Mughals* as places most fruitful for the cross-cultural interaction that the text valorises: “[British men in] more distant centres of Mughal culture made a more profound transition, dressing in Mughal court dress, intermarrying with the Mughal aristocracy and generally attempting to cross cultural boundaries as part of their enjoyment of, and participation in, late Mughal society” (511). It is curious, then, that these places are also depicted as entirely unsuitable for European women:

Hyderabad at this period was no place for a demanding, or fashionable, or socially ambitious European woman. Unlike Calcutta, Madras or Bombay, there were no milliners or portrait painters, no dancing or riding masters, no balls, no concerts, no masquerades. Boredom and loneliness led to depression, or dissipation, or that sour, embittered *ennui* that Kipling depicted in his *Mrs Hauksbees and Mrs Reivers* a hundred years later. (121-22)

It seems that even Dalrymple, such an enthusiastic advocate for British / Indian relationships, cannot envisage a place for white women in this scenario, perpetuating the trope of their need for protection from contamination. Passages such as this make apparent the extent to which transculturation, for Dalrymple, is dependent upon sexual relationships between British men and Indian women.

With this in mind, the continual presence of sexually-inflected Indian women in the text takes on added significance. Put simply, these women make Dalrymple’s “white Mughals” possible. This explains the inclusion of lengthy

paragraphs in praise of Indian courtesans familiar from *City of Djinnns*, despite their tenuous connection to the text's central narrative and their geographical distance from Hyderabad, in *White Mughals*:

This was the age of the great courtesans: in Delhi, Ad Begum would turn up stark naked at parties, but so cleverly painted that no one would notice: "she decorates her legs with beautiful drawings in the style of pyjamas instead of actually wearing them; in place of the cuffs she draws flowers and petals in ink exactly as found in the finest cloth of Rum." Her rival, Nur Bai, was so popular that every night the elephants of the great Mughal *omrahs* completely blocked the narrow lanes outside her house; yet even the most senior nobles had to "send a large sum of money to have her admit them ...whoever gets enamoured of her gets sucked into the whirlpool of her demands and brings ruin in on his house ... but the pleasure of her company can only be had as long as one is in possession of riches to bestow on her." (172)

Interest in Delhi courtesans is not confined to *White Mughals*—indeed, it seems to form a vital part of Dalrymple's representation of Indian history. The reader of a Dalrymple history is presented with an image of India as a place of refined, sensual decadence. The underlying current of sexualisation throughout *White Mughals* brings to mind Robert Young's statement about nineteenth-century racial theories, that they "did not just consist of essentialising differentiations between self and other: they were also about a fascination with people having sex—interminable, adulterous, aleatory, illicit, inter-racial sex" (181). Dalrymple's emphasis on the overwhelming availability of these women

works to represent those British men who pursued relationships with Indian women as merely taking advantage of the apparent situation, rather than actively exploiting their position of power.

Back in Hyderabad, Dalrymple expands upon images of India as decadent, available and committed to a sensual existence:

Nizam Ali Khan even founded a department of his civil service to oversee and promote the business of dancing, music and sensuality, the *Daftar Arbab-i-Nishaat* (the office of the Lords of Pleasure). At the same time there was an explosion of unrestrainedly sensual art and literary experimentation: in Delhi, Lucknow and Hyderabad, poets at this time wrote some of the most unblushingly amorous Indian poetry to be composed since the end of the classical period seventeen hundred years earlier. (172)

However, the more Dalrymple unpacks the situation, the less viable the image of a decadent courtly atmosphere becomes, and power negotiations become more apparent:

This approach was not in fact some radical colonial departure, but was part of an old Indian tradition: providing wives or concubines for rulers had long been a means of preferment in courtly India. As the British rose to power across the subcontinent it became increasingly politically opportune to marry princely Indian women to them, so binding the British, and especially the British Residents, into the Indian political system and gaining a degree of leverage over them. (170)

Suddenly, an image of the curious British man taking advantage of a heightened sexual environment and embracing other cultures transforms into a much more mundane narrative of an East India Company official accepting Mughal court tradition, or, indeed, accepting courtly favours that amount to a bribe.

Dalrymple's characterisation of Khair un-Nissa is particularly revealing given the paucity of available source material with which to work. She is therefore a character whose interpretation lies wholly with the author, and, consequently, becomes a measure for the issues of particular importance to Dalrymple. Much of the description of Khair un-Nissa highlights what Dalrymple represents as her passion and love for Kirkpatrick. For example: "About Khair un-Nissa's motives there is little dispute: James Kirkpatrick certainly believed that the girl had fallen in love with him, and he may have been right: certainly nothing in her behaviour contradicts this view" (181). Ironically, the overuse of the word "certainly" here indicates a level of uncertainty. Further, the assertion that Khair un-Nissa's "behaviour" corroborates Dalrymple's statements could have equally been made the other way—that there was no evidence to confirm it, either. The lack of source material with which to ascertain Khair un-Nissa's mindset enables Dalrymple's representation. Here again, the need for narrative cohesion is more important than historiography. The necessity of love and devotion to the narrative is enough of a reason for the choice of this interpretation over its opposite.

Towards the end of the text, Khair un-Nissa's death provides an opportunity for lengthy description: "There was no clear cause for her

condition: she just seems to have finally turned her face to the wall” (463). Here, somewhat paradoxically, the lack of sources enables such statements—without historical documentation, of course the cause of her death remains unclear. Dalrymple highlights her beauty and reiterates the character traits that he has constructed throughout *White Mughals*: “When she died—this fiery, passionate, beautiful woman—it was as much from a broken heart, from neglect and sorrow, as from any apparent physical cause” (465). The word “apparent” is key here. The looseness of Dalrymple’s phrasing makes possible the interpretation that a lack of physical symptoms was apparent to Khair un-Nissa’s contemporaries. This is, of course, impossible to ascertain. That physical (or other) causes of her death are not apparent in the historical record makes a much less dramatic statement, however.

Dalrymple’s prose knows no bounds when it comes to his central Indian female character—she is “like some broken butterfly, wounded, and unhealed by the passage of time. At her most vulnerable point, she had opened up her heart, only to be seduced, banished and then betrayed” (462). Echoes can be heard in such passages of Dalrymple’s portrayal of the different stages of British colonialism in India, and the shift between what he represents as hybrid and imperialist modes. Dalrymple’s treatment of Khair un-Nissa is questioned by one interviewer:

When I suggest he does rather idealise this young Muslim noblewoman—often prefacing references to her with such adjectives as beautiful, fragile, charismatic, butterfly-like—he holds up the paperback

edition of the book, which is graced with her image, and laughingly responds: “Well, look at her. She is beautiful.” (Tuffield)

His response serves to further align the figures of Kirkpatrick and Dalrymple, both represented as open-minded Britons with a fascination with Khair un-Nissa. The response: “look...She is beautiful” is effective, and utilises one of the few pieces of information now available. As to Khair un-Nissa’s butterfly-like fragility or charisma, there is no such simple confirmation.

Dalrymple’s British in India: Hybrid or Imperialist

Throughout *White Mughals*, Dalrymple contrasts his “hybrid” protagonists with other examples of British engagements with India which he terms as imperialistic. Leaving aside that, as East India Company officers, Kirkpatrick and his ilk were also undeniably imperial figures, Dalrymple concurrently emphasises this hybridity and his own scholarly rigour at stepping beyond what he carefully defines as the borders of traditional history:

The Kirkpatricks inhabited a world that was far more hybrid, and with far less clearly defined ethnic, national and religious borders, than we have been conditioned to expect, either by the conventional Imperial history books written in Britain before 1947, or by the nationalist historiography of post-Independence India, or for that matter by the post-colonial work coming from new generations of scholars, many of whom tend to follow the path opened up by Edward Said in 1978 with his pioneering *Orientalism*. It was as if this early promiscuous mingling of races and ideas, modes of dress and ways of living, was something that was on no

one's agenda and suited nobody's version of events. All sides seemed, for different reasons, to be slightly embarrassed by this moment of crossover, which they preferred to pretend had never happened. (xli)

Dalrymple brings together the disparate (and conflicting) approaches to Indian history through a shared designation of them as (differently) limited by their theoretical frameworks. In so doing he represents his work as unique in its independent, fresh look at the field (free from theoretical "agendas"). This argument is also an expression of an (untheorised) anti-academic sentiment evident throughout *White Mughals*. Dalrymple's use of words such as "promiscuous" and "mingling" to describe this hybrid state is another example of the way in which a positive British / Indian relationship is portrayed in sexualised terms.

In his attempt to advance a picture of East India Company officers engaging in widespread transculturation, Dalrymple uses common symbols of "passing"—hookah-smoking and pyjama-wearing—to stand for "attempting to cross cultural boundaries" (511). There is no explicit mention of what might constitute such a boundary, or, indeed, how such boundaries might be overcome. This vagueness allows eighteenth-century characters to be depicted in the attractive language of multiculturalism without requiring specific references. Dalrymple makes some acknowledgement of this point in seemingly straightforward statements such as: "Having an Indian concubine did not of course lead to any automatic sympathy with India or Indian culture on the part of a Company servant—far from it" (35). However, in the sentence immediately following, he significantly undermines the value of this idea.

Indeed, he effectively negates it when he adds: “But it was recognised at the time that in practice cohabitation often did lead to a degree of transculturation, even in the transplanted Englishness of Calcutta” (35). Such highly-qualified statements—“it was recognised,” “in practice,” “often,” “a degree of,” “even”—introduce a sense of fairness, reasonableness, and charitableness to the other side of the argument, without conceding Dalrymple’s own point. So, despite the baldness of the first, theoretical, statement, the reader is left with the sense that, in practice, the transculturating nature of these encounters was significant.

Dalrymple uses inclusive language to maintain the representation of a liberal community of readers, and simultaneously brings himself closer to the audience:

the more one probes in the records of the period, the more one realises that there were in fact a great many Europeans at this period who responded to India in a way that perhaps surprises and appeals to us today, by crossing over from one culture to the other, and wholeheartedly embracing the great diversity of Mughal India. (10)

Dalrymple argues for the existence of a period in which the prevalence of communication across cultures was higher than his readers might expect: “At all times up to the nineteenth century, but perhaps especially during the period 1770 to 1830, there was wholesale sexual exploration and surprisingly widespread cultural assimilation and hybridity” (10). This passage’s complexity becomes visible under closer examination. The first point to consider is what “sexual exploration” might entail, or even what would

designate “sexual exploration” as “wholesale.” Whatever the conclusion, it does not seem something that easily dovetails with mutual respect and understanding, which is the implied outcome of this sexually-instigated transculturalisation process as narrated by Dalrymple. The (unexplained) “cultural assimilation and hybridity” appear more promising, particularly their “surprisingly widespread” nature. However, without establishing what level of hybridity constitutes a surprising one, the statement could be taken to indicate something anywhere on the “cultural assimilation” spectrum. In the face of *White Mughals*’ investment in the representation of sexual relationships between British men and Indian women as constitutive of cultural understanding, it is worth remembering the work of scholars such as Margaret Jolly, who emphasise “the extraordinary presumption that sexuality between white men and colonized women was indicative of racial harmony” (108).

Often, although undoubtedly relating instances in which Europeans take on Indian dress and accoutrements, the sources seem to actively oppose the point that Dalrymple wants to make about the depth of European attachment to India:

An eyewitness account of one of the earliest defections was written by the early English trader Nicholas Withington. His account gives a clear picture of the number of independent Europeans on the loose in India at the beginning of the seventeenth century, all of them intent on making their fortunes and quite prepared, if necessary, to change and change again their clothes, their political allegiance and their religion. (15)

This passage, more than emphasising any particular feeling for India, shows

the fiscal and material advantages of such behaviour. Dalrymple's statements that "They also demonstrated the remarkable porousness and fluidity of the frontier" (16) seem somewhat arguable, on closer examination.

Dalrymple does note that the British East India Company benefited from Kirkpatrick's interest in Mughal culture:

If, under James Kirkpatrick, the Residency's participation in the social and cultural life of Hyderabad led to much cross-fertilisation of ideas and the growth of a number of deep friendships between the Residency and the *omrahs* (nobles) of the court, it also led to some very real political benefits. European ignorance of the complex codes of Mughal etiquette often caused unexpected and diplomatically disastrous offence at Indian courts. (125)

Indeed, it seems that Kirkpatrick's loyalty and concern is for himself and for the British interest in India: "By mastering the finer points of etiquette of the court and submitting to procedures that some other Residents refused to bow to, James quickly gained a greater degree of trust than any other British Resident of the period, and so was able to reap the diplomatic rewards" (128). What perhaps needs further emphasising is the fact that even if Kirkpatrick was overwhelmed with love for Khair un-Nissa, and it was this that was the driving force behind his efforts at participation in the Mughal court, his work there greatly benefited the East India Company's position and power, and ensured a British (rather than French) influence at the Hyderabad court. His efforts at cross-cultural communication, whatever their motivation, achieved unmistakably positive results for the Company's imperial ambitions.

Dalrymple's emphasis on (and separation of) personal over imperial facets of Kirkpatrick's time in Hyderabad functions to downplay the impact of British colonialism on India.

Dalrymple also offers other views of British experiences of Hyderabad which provide a counterpoint to the arguments for hybridity that he wants to make:

the cantonments were intrusions of unadulterated Englishness in the utterly Indian landscape. Here the two youths went shopping in a "Europe Shop"—an emporium which sold only imported luxury goods from Europe—consulted a European doctor (about Elphinstone's severe clap) and went to see an English farce at a makeshift open-air regimental theatre. They went shooting (though apparently only hit an owl), attended regimental balls, gambled and played whist, billiards and backgammon in the officers' mess. (287)

If such vignettes serve to highlight Kirkpatrick's higher level of cultural assimilation by contrast, they also show that cultural isolationism was highly prevalent (even during what Dalrymple represents as the heyday of the "white Mughals").

The contrast that Dalrymple makes between "hybridity" and "imperialism" can be distilled in his description of the different directorial styles of Wellesley and Cornwallis: "the old Marquis [Cornwallis] did not believe in threats and belligerence as an instrument of policy, and saw no need for the sort of naked imperialism imposed by Wellesley; moreover he was appalled by the needless bloodshed and expenditure it had caused" (368). The

outcome, put somewhat glibly, appears to be that subtle imperialism is acceptable, but if it becomes “naked” then it is objectionable.

Overall, *White Mughals* portrays British / Indian imperial relationships in a positive, sexualised, nostalgic manner. Dalrymple argues for the depth and importance of his research and the paucity of accurate treatments of British / Indian history. Together, these positions work toward an overwhelmingly positive representation of the British imperial endeavour and an investment in Dalrymple’s growing status as “expert” on India and Islam.

Chapter Five: *The Last Mughal*

William Dalrymple's second foray into narrative history, *The Last Mughal: The Fall of a Dynasty, Delhi, 1857*, was published in 2006. In conversation with Bron Sibree, Dalrymple mentions that "The book has been a bestseller in the UK, and in India" (Interview with Sibree W13). Its popularity is indeed widespread. According to the Sydney *Sun-Herald*, data supplied by Nielsen BookScan's book sales monitoring system had *The Last Mughal* as Australia's second-highest selling history work in June 2007, behind Antony Beevor's *The Battle for Spain* ("Top 10 History."). Perhaps in response to such sales figures, Dalrymple compares his work to George Lucas's popular culture phenomenon when describing his success and plans for future projects: "this has expanded into a quartet, of which *The Last Mughal* is the first, although chronologically it is the last. 'I've signed a deal to write three prequels, rather like *Star Wars*'" (Interview with Sibree W13). In the surrounding publicity, reviewers have seen it as an unofficial sequel to *White Mughals*, with their similar titles inviting comparison. According to Dalrymple, in contrast to the overwhelmingly positive representation of Indians and Britons in *White Mughals*, "In *The Last Mughal*, ... 'the Indians are portrayed as confused and disorganised, while the British are depicted, I think accurately, as hideously vile, Victorian, genocidal racists'" (Interview with Sibree W13).

As its title suggests, *The Last Mughal: The Fall of a Dynasty, Delhi, 1857* chronicles the events of 1857 and what it represents as the change from Mughal power (albeit under the influence of the British East India Company)

to British power in India. The work closes with the end of the siege of Delhi, the somewhat later death of the Mughal ruler, and the introduction of the “Act for the Better Government of India.” This Act transferred the revenue-gathering administrative functions of the East India Company to state control (the Company’s original trading monopoly and profitability having evolved into one of territorial expansion and tax-collecting) (Lawson 137). Of a wider scope than *White Mughals*, which had the romantic storyline as its backbone, *The Last Mughal* centres its narrative chiefly through a biographical focus on Bahadur Shah Zafar II (called Zafar throughout by Dalrymple), the titular Mughal Emperor. Other characters also provide a focus for the text. Some are elite Indian figures: Ghalib (a prominent, Muslim court poet), and Maulvi Muhammad Baqar (editor of the Muslim, Urdu-language court paper the *Dihli Urdu Akbhar*). Others are British civilians and military officers: Sir Thomas Theophilus Metcalfe (Delhi British Resident) and members of his family; Brigadier General John Nicholson (British military hero who led the British assault on Delhi with a mixture of “piety, gravity and courage, combined with his merciless capacity for extreme brutality” [*The Last Mughal* xxiii]); and Robert and Harriet Tytler (Robert was an officer and “veteran of the 38th Native Infantry” [xxii]; Harriet’s *An Englishwoman in India: The Memoirs of Harriet Tytler, 1828-1858* [1986], are an important source). Notably underrepresented are non-elite and Hindu characters.

Despite the manifestly different subject matter to *White Mughals*, Dalrymple continues to provide his familiar version of British imperial history. Dalrymple’s representation of a deeply attractive, symbiotic relationship

between Britons and Indians, within a story ostensibly about a period of conflict between them, is enabled by splitting the British into two groups. The attractive British are those represented as a hangover from the *White Mughals* era, contrasted with those that Dalrymple represents as insensitive, overreaching, Victorian and, crucially, evangelist. *The Last Mughal* offers a limited view of the events of 1857, located almost exclusively in Delhi (thus providing a reason to leave aside the well-covered uprisings in places such as Meerut, Kanpur and Lucknow). Dalrymple explains:

In this book I have chosen to limit references to developments elsewhere, except in cases where the Delhi participants were explicitly aware of them, thus attempting to restore the sense of intense isolation and lonely vulnerability felt by both the besiegers and the besieged engaged in the battle for control of the great Mughal capital. (11)

The notion that Dalrymple's focus on Delhi makes *The Last Mughal* a rare text does not stand up to scrutiny. This geographical location chiefly serves as a justification for a more limited purview for an already longwinded text. As well as delineating the work's focus, this passage privileges sympathetic qualities such as "isolation" and "vulnerability" over other representational possibilities which might show the conflict as motivated by aggressive militarism or the desire for revenge.

Dalrymple positions the overall narrative as a reasonably straightforward chronicle of the simultaneous decline of Mughal power and the rise of British influence in India. This narrative choice leaves aside (convincing) arguments for a dramatic increase in British military influence significantly earlier. For

example, Philip Lawson states of the period from 1748-63 that “Success in war, the acquisition of territory and expansion of trade transformed the [British East India] Company from just another enterprise in India to power-broker, and even kingmaker in Bengal” (86). Dalrymple’s narrative also downplays the lengthy, complex diminishing of the power of the Mughal empire prior to this period.

Ralph Crane and Radhika Mohanram usefully précis the Mutiny and its generally accepted causes:

In May 1857 a series of insurrections broke out across a large area of northern India, which together are commonly referred to as the Indian mutiny of 1857-8. A number of factors are now commonly accepted as the main causes: the annexation of Oudh in February 1856, after which Oudh became a province of British India; the General Service Enlistment Act of 1856, which required Indian soldiers to accept service anywhere ... and a growing belief that British missionaries were conspiring with officials to convert (Hindu) sepoys to Christianity. Finally, the so-called greased cartridges affair was widely regarded as the spark which ignited the mutiny. (ix)

Although his account does list these causes, Dalrymple’s text emphasises the religious facets of the unrest, focusing particularly on the Muslim population. He takes up this argument to the exclusion of concerns about land use and taxation traditionally favoured by Marxist-inclined scholars. Dalrymple represents such standpoints as more the product of wishful thinking than research: “Some historians, pleased to have found a rare document from 1857

that explicitly mentions economic and social grievances, have linked this remarkably modern document with the Red Fort, and thereby perhaps exaggerated its influence and importance” (220-21). The argument implicit here is that Dalrymple would not be so hasty as to exaggerate or distort his sources in such a way.

Dalrymple represents the root cause of the Mutiny as being a mutual lack of cultural understanding, on behalf of both Indians and Britons in India. He sees the cause of this lack in the growing religious fundamentalism on both sides:

As the nineteenth century progressed, such rigidly orthodox views gathered in Delhi, and the position of the *'ulama* solidified, so that by the 1850s the tolerant Sufi ways of Zafar and his court slowly came to look as old-fashioned and outdated as the hybrid lifestyles and open-minded religious attitudes of the White Mughals did among the now solidly Evangelical British. The stage was being set for a clash of rival fundamentalisms. (82-83)

This is not a narrative that is new or that is unique to Dalrymple.² This story of a “clash of rival fundamentalisms” is problematic because it removes any consideration of the colonial situation from the conflict. It manages to displace the material geopolitical reality of imperialism by privileging religion. It also features an implied argument that there is no inherent problem with colonialism, as long as it does not involve religious extremes (if the “tolerant Sufi[s]” and “open-minded” White Mughals had their way, all would be well).

² For a well-known example, see: Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. 1996. New York: Touchstone, 1997.

Resorting to an argument for a timeless, fundamental, East / West difference, distilled through religion, is uncharacteristic of Dalrymple, who elsewhere rails against such formulations³. It is his denial of imperialism that leads to such a convoluted set of rhetorical strategies. Dalrymple later cements this representation of continuing, timeless conflict by dramatic reference to “today’s” issues: “Today, West and East again face each other uneasily across a divide that many see as religious war. Jihadis again fight what they regard as a defensive action against their Christian enemies, and again innocent women, children and civilians are slaughtered” (485). The colonial context for the 1857 Mutiny is incidental to this continuing “religious war.”

The results of such an argument reach further than the text itself. This representation of the Mutiny as a product of fundamental religious differences between Christians and Muslims finds its way into reviews of Dalrymple’s text. An example is Ross Leckie’s review in *The Times*, which distills Dalrymple’s problematic argument down to a few sentences: “British mercantile greed—and evangelical Christianity—sought dominance. Moderate Muslims became fundamentalists. In 1857 the Indian Mutiny, the largest popular uprising against British imperialism, was the result.” Thus, in two moves, the vast Hindu majority disappears from the picture altogether.

Dalrymple’s positioning of *The Last Mughal*

Dalrymple uses the text’s introduction and its preliminary material to present a narrative of his research and the production of the monograph. However, the

³ See his article: “Islamophobia.” *New Statesman* 19 Jan. 2004, Society sec.: n. pag. Web. 2 Jan. 2008.

introduction to this work situates *The Last Mughal* in its historiographical context in a more specific manner than the introduction to *White Mughals* does for that text. This reflects the myriad existing work on the events of 1857 and Dalrymple's need to find, or create, a space for his contribution. This positioning entails an explicit engagement with imperial history and its various theoretical standpoints. As well as an opportunity for self-representation and historiographical contextualisation, the introduction to *The Last Mughal* provides a brief synopsis of the narrative which is fleshed out throughout the body of the text. Perhaps due to its better-known subject matter (which occupies a significant place in the British imagination), none of the narrative techniques of suspense and mystery employed in *White Mughals* are present here.

The first section of the introduction is a dramatic synopsis of Zafar's "fate." This begins with his burial, moves back in time to his imprisonment, and then further back into the past to offer a narrative of the decline of Mughal power and the increase of British influence, then the Mutiny, British victory and Mughal humiliation. This convoluted, not-quite-reverse, chronology does not continue in the body of the text, but it provides an introductory narrative that begins and ends in a dramatic fashion. The second section of the introduction tells the story of Dalrymple's research, and provides an opportunity to remind the reader of his connections to Delhi and to India:

It is a story I have dedicated the last four years to researching and writing. Archives containing Zafar's letters and his court records can be found in London, Lahore and even Rangoon. Most of the material,

however, lies in Delhi, Zafar's former capital, and a city that has haunted and obsessed me for over two decades now. (6)

His personal investment both in the story and the place is reinforced through his description of his younger, backpacking self exploring the Indian capital:

In particular what remained of Zafar's palace, the Red Fort of the Great Mughals, kept drawing me back, and I often used to slip in with a book and spend whole afternoons there, in the shade of some cool pavilion. I quickly grew to be fascinated with the Mughals who had lived there, and began reading voraciously about them. It was here that I first thought of writing a history of the Mughals, an idea that has now expanded into a quartet, a four-volume history of the Mughal dynasty which I expect may take me another two decades to complete. (7)

This passage moves through the past and the future, to highlight Dalrymple's connection with the places that keep "drawing [him] back." The depth of his interest is cemented by reference to future, rather than current, projects in which he is willing to invest "another two decades." It is worth noting that—like his previous works—despite his emphasis on his "fascination" with Mughal India, it is the relationship between the British and the Mughals that is at the centre of this text.

The introduction demonstrates the development of Dalrymple's approach to history from *White Mughals* to *The Last Mughal*. Dalrymple spends a significant amount of time in the introduction enumerating the value and importance of his sources—particularly those in Persian and Urdu. Unlike *White Mughals*, there is no conceit of crucial texts being "discovered" by

happenstance at the last minute. In *The Last Mughal*, the narrative advanced to legitimate the text is one of hard research, translation and editing work. He thanks his translator, highlighting the dedication and time involved in the production of *The Last Mughal*:

This book would have been quite impossible without the scholarship and industry of my colleague Mahmoud Farooqi. For four years now we have been working together on this project, and much that is most interesting within it—notably the remarkable translations from the sometimes almost indecipherable *shikastah* of the Urdu files in the Mutiny Papers—is the product of his dedication, persistence and skill. (xxv)

The research, translation and writing process is represented in a typically approachable, autobiographical light, and located in the Delhi landscape: “one of the most enjoyable aspects of working with him [Mahmoud Farooqi] on Bahadur Shah Zafar has been gradually piecing together the events and shape of this book over a Karim’s kebab, a Kapashera biryani or, more usually, a simple glass of hot sweet National Archives chai” (xxv).

Further, Dalrymple, somewhat self-deprecatingly, uses the introduction to advance his academic standing and highlight the seriousness of his approach to *The Last Mughal*, to a degree absent in his previous works:

At the end [of the writing process], Professor Fran Pritchett at Columbia volunteered to give the book the most thorough edit that I think any manuscript of mine has ever received. It took me nearly two weeks to go through all her notes, improved transliterations and suggestions, so I can only imagine how much of her valuable time she gave up to produce

them in the first place. (xxv)

Dalrymple's mention of Pritchett's title and the university in which she works adds to the academic credentials of *The Last Mughal*, despite Dalrymple's continuing hostility to academic history writing—he experiences the benefits of academic advice without having to be a part of the system. That Pritchett gave the text such a “thorough edit” and devoted her time and energy to its improvement adds an institutional legitimacy to Dalrymple's most “serious” history text to date.

Dalrymple's representation of his primary sources and his relationship with them is crucial to the overall positioning of *The Last Mughal*. His hostility towards theory and academic history writing, also evident in *White Mughals*, continues here. This disdain for theory means that the remaining avenue for advancing his textual authority is a reliance on “new,” “pure,” primary source material. The sources on which Dalrymple places the most emphasis are what he calls the “Mutiny Papers”: an “extraordinarily rich and almost unused archive” (xxv) of materials “collected by the victorious British from the Palace and the army camp” (12). *The Last Mughal's* focus is chiefly Delhi's elite (both Muslim and British), as would be expected with the Mughal ruler as the titular biographical subject. However, in his description of this archive Dalrymple makes much of the “ordinary,” “street-level” nature of the sources utilised, and highlights the impact of the events of 1857 on Delhi's citizenry. He states: “What was even more exciting was the street-level nature of much of the material...they contained huge quantities of petitions and requests from the ordinary citizens of Delhi” (12). Claims for *The Last Mughal* as a work of

“history from below” produce a feeling of historiographic equality, fairness and democracy—of Dalrymple giving ample time for all kinds of past Delhi residents to air their views, and an affiliation with a whole ideologically inflected school of scholarship. Although a particularly attractive image, it conveys a sense of the archive as a neutral tool that records (and preserves records) indiscriminately, which, as Tony Ballantyne reminds us, is a fallacy:

the manuscript collections, parliamentary papers, court records, periodicals, and newspapers used by historians of South Asia are not simply documents that allow us to access the colonial past, but rather themselves were constitutive of the multiple inequalities of the past. This recognition of the archive as both the product of the uneven dialogics of the colonial encounter and a space where the conceptual schemas of colonialism were worked out raises fundamental questions about historical scholarship. (107)

Dalrymple employs a much less nuanced approach to his project and the archives upon which it is based than Ballantyne. Although he does not acknowledge the archive as such an “uneven” space, Dalrymple’s work nonetheless reflects it, in its predominant focus on elite characters.

Kalpana Wilson, in contrast to the majority of reviewers of this monograph, questions Dalrymple’s claims for the sources that he champions, and highlights the focus of *The Last Mughal*:

While Dalrymple enthuses about the “street-level nature” of the documentation he has unearthed relating to “ordinary citizens of Delhi”, the fact is that the overwhelming majority of the book, where it is not

revisiting the oft-cited accounts of various British officers and civilians in Delhi, is written from the perspective of the Mughal elite of the city.

(109)

There is no doubt that *The Last Mughal*'s focus is on the upper strata of society, both British and Mughal. Such a situation is, of course, not limited to histories by Dalrymple. Archives privilege the powerful (although they can, of course, preserve voices of the powerless that would be otherwise lost). However, his continued insistence that the task of the historian is to tell the stories of "ordinary individuals," whose "fate" it was to be "accidentally" present at such upheavals becomes problematic in this context. Dalrymple uses a simultaneous recourse to "ordinary individuals" and a denigration of theoretical "abstractions" to advance his argument against academic historical approaches. He argues: "Cumulatively the stories that the collection [of papers] contains allow the Uprising to be seen not in terms of nationalism, imperialism, orientalism or other such abstractions, but instead as a human event" (13). Without elaborating what a "human event" might entail, Dalrymple separates ideas of nationalism, imperialism and orientalism from these "human events," putting forward an image of such abstract concepts being applied later, acting as a barrier to human understanding of the past and having no relation to the historical truth:

150 years after the event, scholars are still arguing over the old chestnut of whether 1857 was a mutiny, a peasants' revolt, an urban revolution or a war of independence. The answer is that it was all of these, and many other things too: it was not one unified movement but many, with widely

differing causes, motives and natures. (17)

Such statements work toward a representation of Dalrymple as above, and unconstrained by, petty academic debate, which is portrayed as more concerned with classification and terminology than the events themselves. Dalrymple's "answer," which puts forward an image of plurality and complexity, shows his sophisticated approach. It is in situations such as this in which the utility of Dalrymple's travelling authorial persona to his historical project can be seen. He comments in an interview with Santiago J. Henríquez Jiménez: "Serious travel should give you the birds [sic] eye view, and free you from the imprisonment of your own culture and upbringing" (182). His self-representation as a participant in, as well as having a cultivated critical distance from, both British and Indian society adds to his historical authority here.

The continuing representation of Dalrymple's texts as operating as travel guides, despite their historical content, is evident in the *Entertainment Weekly* report that the bestseller of the week of 29 June 2007 at the Globe Corner bookstore, a "travel-guide shop," is *The Last Mughal*. In a similar manner to his earlier travel texts, Dalrymple's histories promise an escape from dull everyday life. As Georg Lukács states: "History shimmering colourfully in its distance, remoteness and otherness has the task of fulfilling the intense longing for escape from this present world of dreariness" (246). Dalrymple represents a past India in which Britons escaped from their dull home existence to an exotic land of harems, hookahs and dancing girls. Chris Bongie, in *Exotic Memories*, highlights what he sees as two kinds of exoticism: "Whereas imperialist exoticism affirms the hegemony of modern civilization over less developed,

savage territories, exoticizing exoticism privileges those very territories and their peoples, figuring them as a possible refuge from an overbearing modernity” (17). In *The Last Mughal* we see a combination of these two forms, depending upon the particular narrative context. The attraction of a past India as an (exotic, hybrid) refuge from modernity is evident, and the text’s conclusion, with the establishment of responsible British state rule of India, affirms imperial hegemony. In a similar manner to *White Mughals*, Dalrymple in *The Last Mughal* represents India and Indians as unchanging. This heightens the narrator’s authority to speak about the country, given his extensive experience of contemporary Delhi. For example, Dalrymple describes a procession in 1852 as if it were something that he had witnessed: “The people of Delhi have never much liked being restrained by barriers and were in the habit of breaking through the bamboo railings hung with lamps that illuminated the processional route” (27). Such representational strategies position the narrator as a guide to the readers’ journey into the (transparent, accessible) past.

Dalrymple argues that: “The British histories, as well as a surprising number of those written in English in post-colonial India, tended to use only English-language sources, padding out the gaps, in the case of the more recent work, with a thick cladding of post-Saidian theory and jargon” (15). This statement positions *The Last Mughal* as not only superior to previous British engagements with Indian history, but to Indian accounts as well. He manages to denigrate theoretical approaches without having to clearly define them, or their problems. A brief reference to “post-Saidian theory and jargon” is

sufficiently vague to gesture towards Dalrymple's issues with theory without having to engage with it in any meaningful way. Theory is represented as something that is used as a poor replacement for proper research, and as something that academics might rely upon instead of a legitimate and unbiased direct engagement with the sources in question.

Here again *The Last Mughal* shows an evolution from *White Mughals*, with the earlier text's anti-academic sentiment moving to an outright antagonism towards theoretically-framed histories and academic historical practice. As part of his claim for original, groundbreaking archival research (so necessary for authenticity when arguing for a step away from theory), Dalrymple works to establish *The Last Mughal* as the first true engagement with the sources it uses: "the question that became increasingly hard to answer was why no one had properly used this wonderful mass of material before" (13). Of course, this material has been used (though what Dalrymple's conception of "proper" use might be is unclear). As Ralph Crane and Anna Johnston note, Flora Annie Steel accessed, used and described the Mutiny Papers as early as 1894 (76). Dalrymple does modify this statement, although notably only in his endnotes, with the qualification that: "It is true that several scholars ... have already drawn glancingly on some of the material in the Mutiny Papers" (498).

Dalrymple highlights the authentic Indianness of his sources by emphasising their rarity and difficulties in translation, in an attempt to heighten the legitimacy of the text in which they are employed. The detailed description of the difficulties of reading these sources elides Dalrymple's debt to his

translator (which he elsewhere acknowledges):

Certainly the *shikastah* (literally “broken writing”) script of the manuscripts is often difficult to read, written as it is in an obscure form of late Mughal scribal notation with many of the diacritical marks missing, and at times faded and ambiguous enough to defy the most persistent of researchers. Moreover many of the fragments—especially the spies’ reports—are written in microscopic script on very small pieces of paper designed to be sewn into the clothing or even hidden within the person of the spy. (14)

Mention of spies and code lends a hint of drama and adventure to the tale, and simultaneously reinforces the sense that Dalrymple has made a greater effort than other historians to uncover the truth, given such challenging source material. Dalrymple’s description of the script in which these documents are written emphasises his deep knowledge of and engagement with his sources, despite his previously-mentioned reliance on his translator.

Dalrymple temporarily leaves aside the complexity of the dialect and script in which many of these documents are written, and the relatively few educated people who can read and translate it, instead blaming the sway of theory over contemporary Indian historians, and the influence of Edward Said and the Subaltern Studies group, for the lack of scholarly engagement with this “wonderful” material:

at a time when ten thousand dissertations and whole shelves of *Subaltern Studies* have carefully and ingeniously theorised about orientalism and colonialism and the imagining of the Other (all invariably given titles

with a present participle and a fashionable noun of obscure meaning—*Gendering the Colonial Paradigm, Constructing the Imagined Other, Othering the Imagined Construction*, and so on) not one PhD has ever been written from the Mutiny Papers, no major study has ever systematically explored its contents. (13-14)

In his use of the description “carefully and ingeniously theorise” Dalrymple manages to denigrate, in a kindly way, all of the *Subaltern Studies* publications to which he glibly refers. His jibe at the convoluted nature of his invented academic titles enables him to (again) invoke without engaging with a position against which he defines his own work. His argument is enabled by the highly qualified nature of this statement—that no “major study” has “systematically” engaged with this material.

In conversation with Christopher Kremmer at the 2007 Sydney Writers’ Festival, Dalrymple explicitly described his history as being written in opposition to both Said’s *Orientalism* and the Subaltern Studies group, describing them as an orthodoxy to be challenged, and *The Last Mughal* as part of that challenge. Thus, through both its intra- and extra-textual positioning, Dalrymple’s work takes a highly conservative stance, albeit one advanced in the language of hybridity and multiculturalism, that seeks to sidestep any “isms” and follow on from traditional British imperial narrative histories. This stance, and its carefully non-specific opposition to Said, is one constructed with a general, rather than an academic, readership in mind. It is a positioning statement to be reiterated at writers’ festivals and book tour events, for the purpose of appealing to a particular readership and to sell books.

Such positioning may explain the infrequent academic engagement with Dalrymple's works to this point. David Carter considers the resurgence of a middlebrow book culture, particularly in Australia, in "The Mystery of the Missing Middlebrow." Of most use to this consideration of Dalrymple's works is Carter's notion of texts calling into being a particular kind of readership. Carter notes that, for middlebrow texts, this is the "serious general reader," emphatically not the specialist (179). Some positive reviews echo Dalrymple's identification of a postcolonial hegemony which limits historical enquiry. Andrew Rutherford's review distances *White Mughals* from postcolonial theory in several, connected ways:

The White Mughals ...was not about the kind of Indophile philologist or antiquarian an Edward Said-inspired orthodoxy is too quick to find sinister, but about servants of Empire whom contemporaries readily identified as having gone native—they had the clothes, the hours, the wives and bibis. (Rutherford)

It provides an explanation of who the text is not about—"Indophile philologist[s] or antiquarian[s]"—and an affirmation of the British figures' "native" attributes. As well as this descriptive function, Rutherford's characterisation of an "Edward Said-inspired orthodoxy" that is hasty and harsh with its judgments manages to position manifestly conservative texts such as *White Mughals* and *The Last Mughal* as brave challenges to a restrictive, monolithic interpretation of imperial history.

In contrast to his portrayal of theory, Dalrymple's self-representation is that of archival researcher as empiricist explorer. Peter Hulme's description of

“the dream of empiricism”—where famous explorers are “fine examples of how to slough off the conventional wisdom of the ancients and encounter the natural world face to face unencumbered by theories of any kind” (“Subversive Archipelagos” 15)—highlights the lineage Dalrymple draws upon to effect his position. In her review of *The Last Mughal*, Rachel Aspden highlights the extent to which Dalrymple’s narratives carry a common argument: “For the last 17 years, William Dalrymple’s travel and history books have celebrated syncretism. Nothing pleases him more than the ‘fluidity’ and ‘tolerance’ displayed by such champion integrators as Sir David Ochterlony.” In her overwhelmingly positive review, Aspden nonetheless recognises the sometimes awkward position that such an argument necessitates, noting “the rhetoric of *The Last Mughal*, in which Zafar’s Delhi has to act as the type of every liberal golden age threatened by the forces of extremism.”

Dalrymple’s engagement with both the subject of the text and with ongoing debates about the writing of imperial history is evident in the introduction. Whilst detailing his shift of focus from the eighteenth-century context of his previous narrative history to the nineteenth-century world of the present text, Dalrymple argues that:

No longer were Indians seen as inheritors of a body of sublime and ancient wisdom as eighteenth-century luminaries such as Sir William Jones and Warren Hastings had once believed; but instead merely “poor benighted heathen”, or even “licentious pagans”, who, it was hoped, were eagerly awaiting conversion. There is an important point here. Many historians blithely use the word “colonialism” as if it has some kind of

clearly locatable meaning, yet it is increasingly apparent that at this period there were multiple modes and very distinct phases of colonialism. (10)

Here, Dalrymple begins by highlighting those whom he sees as positive representatives of the imperial British, and arguing for the fluidity and multiplicity of British identities in India. The text then moves to further ameliorate the reader's view of the British in India by shifting the blame for any imperial unpleasantness onto contained (and easy) targets, thus preserving the positive, hybrid facets of empire for the undifferentiated majority: "It was not the British per se, so much as specific groups with a specific imperial agenda—namely the Evangelicals and Utilitarians—who ushered in the most obnoxious phase of colonialism, a change which adversely affected the White Mughals as much as it did the Great Mughals" (*Last Mughal* 10). The statement that this shift in colonialist phases (from benign to "obnoxious") affects those British who had adopted certain aspects of Mughal custom (whom Dalrymple here identifies with the capitalised term "White Mughals") to the same extent as the Indian population is revealing and deeply problematic: at best it equates these British figures with the Mughal elites, and, at worst, trivialises the situation of those Indians who experienced the full extent of the British imperial presence.

Other generalisations within Dalrymple's argument offer problems too: Hastings, one of Dalrymple's "luminaries," was Governor of Bengal and "a prime specimen of the Orientalist in both the contemporary and the postcolonial senses of the term" (Jasanoff 64). He was the subject of a seven-

year-long impeachment trial, and his prolific translations of Sanskrit literary works (which Dalrymple, understandably, applauds) occurred alongside his project of translating and interpreting Hindu codes of law, in order to better enforce a British justice system, itself an explicitly imperial project. Maya Jasanoff highlights Hastings'

patronage of Nathaniel Halhed, whose *A Code of Gentoo Laws* (1776) came to serve as a foundation for Company-administered Hindu courts. The aim was to rule India by its own laws, but the effect was to impose a British interpretation of what those laws were, to split Bengal's (and later India's) population into rigid categories, to essentialize cultural difference, and to sow the seeds of religious communal division. (64-65)

Comparisons between Dalrymple's and Jasanoff's treatments of Warren Hastings provide a contained way to highlight the limitations of Dalrymple's approach. Both Jasanoff and Dalrymple advocate a nuanced view of empire, and an emphasis on the partiality and complexity of individuals and motivations in the imperial context. Jasanoff states of her project: "the history of collecting reveals the complexities of empire; it shows how power and culture intersected in tangled, contingent, sometimes self-contradictory ways" (6). The similarities between their work break down, however, in the arguments that they draw from this shared premise. Jasanoff refuses to resort to a sentimental, nostalgic representation of the British imperial presence. Dalrymple's work, by contrast, allows for the rehabilitation of the reputation of the British in India, with statements such as: "India in the 1840s and 1850s was slowly filling up with pious British Evangelicals who wanted not just to rule

and administer India, but also to redeem and improve it” (*Last Mughal* 61). Here, crucially, it is not the British that are designated as a threat, but rather the sub-group of “British Evangelicals” which is given the blame for what Dalrymple represents as the changing face of the British in India.

Dalrymple’s representation of the historiographic context in which *The Last Mughal* appears works towards a simple dismissal of academic history and postcolonial theory as staid, self-serving, irrelevant, and unwieldy institutions that produce unreadable works. In contrast, Dalrymple and *The Last Mughal* are dynamic, fresh and unconstrained by an overarching institutional paradigm. Dalrymple shares a disdain for theoretical approaches to imperial history with David Cannadine, who argues that: “those who address the empire from a post-modernist and post-colonial perspective ... in such tortured prose that it is often difficult to understand what they are saying, ... [have an] often sketchy ... knowledge [of history], and ... constantly overrat[e] the power and reach of the British” (xvi-vii). Similarly, Dalrymple writes in a review of *The Ordeal of Elizabeth Marsh* by Linda Colley: “In the academic study of the history of empire, where super-specialisation is the norm and postcolonial theory is usually preferred to elegant prose, Colley is not quite unique, but she is certainly an unusual figure.” Dalrymple takes the opportunity to simultaneously compliment Colley and attack “academic” “super-specialisation” and its inelegant “theory.” As Gyan Prakash notes, in the view of “revisionist” (25) scholars such as Cannadine and Dalrymple—who “dislike Edward Said and the postcolonial critics who cite French theory and argue that the British Empire established lasting Orient / Occident and East / West

oppositions in politics and knowledge” (25)—empire was motivated by “A human story of interest and immersion in other cultures, languages and artifacts—not mastery” (26).

Dalrymple and Cannadine also share similarities in their use of the first person and autobiographical elements in their texts. Cannadine states that he has been

reading about empire for as long as I can remember, and my first thanks must be to those many imperial actors, imperial biographers and imperial historians on whose voluminous recollections and writings this book is based, even as I must crave the indulgence of experts in particular fields who will feel (no doubt rightly) that I have oversimplified their scholarship, misunderstood their interpretations and misrepresented their views. (xxi)

The familiar tone and self-deprecating manner in which he constructs his relationship with other “experts” functions to bring him closer to his readership. Both Cannadine and Dalrymple work to reinforce the positive outcomes of the British presence in India. As Prakash reiterates, “Stroke by stroke, this ... historiography seeks to redraw the portrait of the British Empire” (26). For Dalrymple,

In the light of so much postcolonial disapproval, it is worth remembering the reputation Victorian rule in India once enjoyed, even from Britain’s fiercest critics. Theodore Roosevelt thought that Britain had done “such marvellous things in India” that they might “transform the Indian population ... in government and culture, and thus leave [their] impress as

Rome did hers on Europe.” (“Plain Tales” 48)

That “Britain’s fiercest critic” is represented by Dalrymple to be Theodore Roosevelt, as opposed to any of those individuals who directly experienced imperial rule, is revealing. The thrust of this statement is the overwhelmingly positive contribution of British rule to Indian “government and culture,” and the “disapproval” that postcolonial critics of empire voice is dismissed as unfounded. In response to Cannadine’s treatment of the imperial British in *Ornamentalism*, Sinha notes: “While the British imperial elite may appear justly quaint and ridiculous in Cannadine’s account of the empire, they are also credited with what turns out to be a rather valuable contribution to the vast interconnected world of Britain and the Empire” (para 17).

Graham Huggan chronicles the different responses to, and ways of dealing with, what he calls a “totemic critical work,” in his simply-titled “(Not) Reading *Orientalism*.” Huggan is interested in a common “tendency to bypass the text” (126). Huggan states of Cannadine’s *Ornamentalism* that it “grudgingly acknowledges Said’s work before proceeding studiously to ignore it” (133). Huggan concludes: “The most obvious thing to say here is that *Orientalism* and the postcolonial criticism with which it is associated are largely treated as straw categories” (134). *The Last Mughal* operates in a similar fashion—invoking Said as a metonym for a postcolonial approach that Dalrymple’s text defines itself against, but without acknowledging its (still pertinent) arguments about power and representation.

Cannadine’s *Ornamentalism* has provoked an array of responses, both positive and negative. Sinha highlights the importance of the theoretical shift

undertaken in Cannadine's work: "The assumptions that underlie *Ornamentalism* represent a subtle re-working of contemporary scholarship that points to a new direction for imperial history. The charming and often light-hearted tone of the book thus masks a sophisticated intervention with implications for the future of imperial studies" (para 3). Sinha states that the contribution of *Ornamentalism* "lies in the methodological assumptions, which help sustain an updated image of the British Empire as a bumbling and risible, and yet kindler [sic] and gentler enterprise, than scholars have hitherto assumed" (para 6). This image of the imperial British is also central to Dalrymple's writing.

In a rare critical review of *The Last Mughal*, Wilson concisely chronicles Dalrymple's modes of representing the British in India:

British actions both before and during the uprisings are attributed to the growing influence of evangelical Christianity, which allows the author to downplay other changes in the character of imperialism in this period and to romanticise an earlier era of British plunder under the East India Company from the mid-eighteenth century onwards. Dalrymple contrasts his apocalyptic, proto-9/11 view of 1857 with a previous golden age where British officers of the East India Company adopted Indian dress and "cohabited" with "Indian Bibis". Displaying a remarkable insensitivity to issues of power, race and gender, Dalrymple lovingly portrays these "white Mughals" with their "numerous" wives as "splendidly multicultural" and furthering an idyllic "fusion of civilisations". (107)

As Wilson argues, Dalrymple's focus on the evangelical movement enables a simplification of other complex imperial factors at work in India at this time. In turn, such simplifications work towards a more positive view of the British in India, particularly those in what Dalrymple represents as the benign, "pre-evangelical" phase. This sentimental representation of a valorised imperial setting is made possible through a concomitant denial of the inherent gendered and racial disparities of power.

The British in *The Last Mughal*

Much of the Mutiny coverage in *The Last Mughal* follows Brigadier General John Nicholson, and the majority of the descriptions of the Mutiny in progress are from the point of view of the British. Dalrymple represents Nicholson as violent, bordering on psychopathic, which provides a sense of Dalrymple as a fair, balanced interpreter of historical events and characters. This representation of Nicholson is tempered with the argument that his psychosis is necessary to the eventual British victory (199, 200, 306, 307). The amount of energy and space that the text devotes to anecdotes of his ruthless efficiency and short, stoic telegrams to his superiors highlights Nicholson's importance to the narrative's portrayal of the British presence. The Brigadier General is a breed apart from Dalrymple's "hybrid" white Mughals, and functions to represent the influence of religious fundamentalism on the Mutiny:

A taciturn and self-contained Ulster Protestant, it was said that while he was District Commissioner in Rawalpindi, Nicholson had personally decapitated a local robber chieftain, then kept the man's head on his desk

as a memento. He was, moreover, a man of few words; one typical note in the archives is a letter to [John] Lawrence which reads, in full: “Sir, I have the honour to inform you that I have just shot a man who came to kill me. Your Obedient Servant, John Nicholson.” (199)

Dalrymple’s text represents Nicholson as universally respected:

Nicholson inspired an entire religious sect, the *Nikal Seyn*, who apparently regarded him as an incarnation of Vishnu. Nicholson tolerated his devotees as long as they kept quiet; but if “they prostrated themselves or began chanting they were taken away and whipped”. The punishment never varied: “three dozen lashes with the cat-o’-nine-tails” (199)

Indian reverence for this figure works to counter the earlier representation of Nicholson as psychotic and potentially unbalanced, focusing instead on his charisma and leadership abilities. The relation of the story of his native worshippers braving whipping in order to bow before him, despite his central role in subduing the Mutiny, acts as an example of the rightness of British colonial rule.

The Last Mughal’s dramatic rehearsal of violence inflicted by and visited upon the British in India in 1857 functions as a cathartic form of textual penance for Dalrymple and his British readership. Dalrymple’s reiteration of this violence positions the author as someone unafraid to face the unpleasantness of history. The way in which this violence is narrated, however, still enables the overall representation of the British as an attractive group that contributed positively to Indian society, despite the unfortunate influence of the Evangelicals. As Gyan Prakash states, Dalrymple “assumes that but for the

nineteenth-century imperial foolhardiness, the imagined eighteenth-century empire might have remained intact” (29). In reference to realist fiction accounts of suffering, Pam Morris notes “the effect of surface verisimilitude of realist form is to naturalise such happenings as part of the inevitable condition of human existence” (37). *The Last Mughal*’s chronicle of suffering and violence reinforces the teleology of history. Roderick Strange shares his reactions to this violent rehearsal within *The Last Mughal*, in an article about Christianity and forgiveness: “It is a sickening episode, expertly narrated by Dalrymple, and we recoil from the savagery.” The reader, through this textually-mediated process, “experiences” and “recoil[s] from” the violence. Such a reaction can function as a kind of penance for imperial wrongs, working to absolve the contemporary Briton from associations of guilt at past atrocities.

Dalrymple narrates the motivations for British violence in Delhi: “Some of the most brutal killers were those who had lost friends or members of their own family at the outbreak ... [like John Clifford, who] blamed himself for [his sister’s] death, preceded—so British myth had it—by gang rape” (362). He highlights the religious aspect of the British response to the Mutiny, which supports his overriding argument about fundamentalism:

Over and over again, however, the British found it possible to justify such brutal war crimes with the quasi-religious reasoning that they were somehow handing out God’s justice on men who were not men, but were instead more like devils. In the eyes of Victorian Evangelicals, mass murder was no longer mass murder, but instead had become divine vengeance, and the troops were thus executors of divine justice. (363)

Once more, it is the Evangelicals in particular who take the blame for the negative aspects of colonialism. Dalrymple uses first-person accounts of violence to bring the reader closer to this cathartic experience. For instance, he quotes Edward Vibart at length:

the orders were to shoot every soul. I think I must have seen about 30 or 40 defenceless people shot down before me. It was literally murder and I was perfectly horrified. ... The town as you may imagine presents an awful spectacle now ... heaps of dead bodies scattered throughout the place and every house broken into and sacked. (385-86)

The contemporary reader can safely identify with Vibart's horror at these images.

Another, quite different, way in which Dalrymple's texts positively portrays those Britons who participated in the administration of India is by emphasising the bumbling, eccentric qualities of those who, Dalrymple argues, enthusiastically embraced aspects of the Mughal culture with which they interacted. In the case of Sir Thomas Theophilous Metcalf, he states: "Both Metcalfe's houses were surrounded by extensive estates, and were entered through colossal Georgian gateways; both were decorated with follies, and even, in the case of Dilkushe [translated as "Delighter of the Heart"], a lighthouse, a small fort, a pigeon house, a boating pond and an ornamental ziggurat" (53). The effect of such a list of architectural "follies" is to represent Metcalf as a preoccupied, essentially harmless, figure, more interested in building an "ornamental ziggurat" than colonial administration.

Dalrymple again advocates a vision of particular Britons in India as

hybrid figures, people who crossed cultural and linguistic divides with ease and pleasure. *The Last Mughal* makes this explicit: “The first East India Company officials who settled [in Delhi]... at the end of the eighteenth century were a series of sympathetic and notably eccentric figures who were deeply attracted to the high courtly culture which Delhi still represented” (9). Such a statement elides the commercial motivation for these “eccentric” characters’ presence in the high courtly culture of Delhi while highlighting their “deep” attraction to it. These figures are notably not “attracted” to India itself, but rather to its elite “courtly culture.” Further, the use of the word “settled” downplays the significant East India Company presence already established in India at the end of the eighteenth century. Elsewhere, Dalrymple glorifies the British East India Company rule of India as an oasis of tolerance and multiculturalism: “the India of the East India Company was an infinitely more culturally, racially and religiously chutnified place than the most mixed areas of London today” (Dalrymple, “Clash of Civilisations”). Dalrymple seeks parallels between eighteenth-century imperial India and contemporary London, in order to cement his arguments for the hybrid nature of this glorified period.

Dalrymple’s representation of the British in India in this book highlights his position within debates about the writing of imperial history. By emphasising the particularities and specificities of the British in India, he appears to be following the example of the exponents of “new imperial history,” such as Antoinette Burton, Catherine Hall, and many others. However, in Dalrymple’s hands such arguments work primarily to champion what he sees as the positive aspects and progressive figures within the British

Empire. Further, he elides the work of those who do not fit his thesis, playing on the differences in aim, opinion and policy between East India Company officials in London and those in India. Dalrymple's insistence on the "many different ways of inhabiting, performing and transgressing the still fluid notion of Britishness" (*Last Mughal* 10), recalls Cannadine's *Ornamentalism*, in which he asserts: "I am not sure there was ever such a thing as 'the imperial project': even at its apogee, the British Empire was far too ramshackle a thing ever to display such unanimity of action and consistency of purpose" (197-98). In such a context, words such as "eccentric" and "ramshackle" work towards a representation of the British as harmless, lovable and disorganised. Oriented in this way, an emphasis on mutability and specificity shifts to an invocation of eccentricity, implying an innocent, absent-minded approach to the imperial endeavour. In obvious ways, then, Cannadine and Dalrymple follow in the wake of J.R. Seeley's famous statement, first published in 1883, that "We seem, as it were, to have conquered and peopled half the world in a fit of absence of mind" (12).

The Last Mughal's frequent portrayal of the British as bumbling conveys the sense of the empire as kind-hearted and disorganised. As Dalrymple reiterates: "It was certainly true that the British community in Delhi were an eccentric lot, even by the standards of Victorian expats" (105). The British Resident in Delhi from 1851, Sir Thomas Theophilus Metcalf, is described as keeping a "friendly but nonetheless firm eye on Zafar's daily life" (37). More emphasis is given to Metcalf's interesting opinions than to his "firm" surveillance of Zafar, however. Dalrymple writes: "[he] was a notably

fastidious man, with feelings so refined that he could not bear to see women eat cheese. Moreover he believed that if the fair sex insisted on eating oranges or mangoes, they should at least do so in the privacy of their own bathrooms” (49). Dalrymple’s descriptions of Metcalf’s idiosyncratic views on the conduct of women imply a similarly outdated approach to governance. For Sinha, the effect of such characterisation is an image of “an empire that is at worst a baroque edifice designed, as with so many other quaint and harmlessly ineffectual creations of conservative Tories, ... [by] an amusingly out-of-touch British elite” (para 11). Here, Dalrymple’s affection and tolerance for conservatism is evident, and forms another in a series of representational links between Dalrymple and his historical British protagonists.

Narrative and history in *The Last Mughal*

Narrative history works in a very similar way to realist fiction in that both forms effect the illusion of transparency. Both deal with characters and events, with fiction having more scope for narrative innovation than history. Their similarities extend to the ways in which these forms are experienced by the reader, each entailing an investment in the text’s narrative world. As a consequence of these formal attributes, narrative history occludes other interpretations and historical perspectives to a greater level than history writing that does not employ narrative devices to the same extent. This is not to argue that academic history is devoid of this particular trait, but that the influence of narrative in histories such as Dalrymple’s functions to obscure the inevitably subjective nature of researching, interpreting and writing history. As Nicholas

Lemann states: “Narrative done with skill feels true in some strangely automatic way ... Therefore, it has enormous power to mislead” (797). This narrative drive, coupled with Dalrymple’s continually expressed distaste for (particularly postcolonial) theory, works to obscure the extent to which all history is constructed, and subject to theory and ideology, whether or not such influences are foregrounded.

In fact, Dalrymple places theory and engaging writing at opposite ends of the historical spectrum, arguing that “It seems to me that it’s perfectly possible to do your scholarship and your work as minutely and as thoroughly as any academic but to write it up not in the language of post-modernism and post-colonialism and in the jargon of academe but in the language of literature” (“Student Resource: William Dalrymple Talks”). He refers to Simon Schama’s *Citizens* and Antony Beevor’s *Stalingrad* as works which he considers to be written in a similar style (“Student Resource: William Dalrymple Talks”). However, Dalrymple still desires a considerable amount of control over the representation of his historical works, carefully regulating the terms with which they are described, as Christopher Kremmer notes when interviewing him: “When it comes to labelling his work, the author bristles at the term ‘popular history’, preferring ‘narrative history’, and says he kept Simon Schama’s history of the French Revolution, *Citizens*, by his desk as his [sic] wrote his recent book” (30). Such statements also function to enhance Dalrymple’s legitimacy by association—in this instance with well-known historian Schama.

Despite the many differences between Dalrymple’s two works of history, both share a delight in captivating stories of Britons taking on Mughal custom.

Several stories chronicled in *White Mughals* are continued (and compounded) in *The Last Mughal*, with Dalrymple repeating, for example, the narrative of Sir David Ochterlony and his thirteen wives' nightly promenade on their individual elephants. The convoluted approach to the referencing of this story is also imported from *White Mughals*: even the endnote text is unchanged between the two monographs (and not referenced to the earlier text). Such instances function to give *The Last Mughal* the feel of a familiar Dalrymple monograph, complete with entertaining and faintly titillating tales of the attractions of British / Indian relationships.

Further details of Ochterlony's documented mistress are present in the endnotes of *The Last Mughal*. In the body of the text Dalrymple advances a picture of Ochterlony and his "wife": "Ochterlony was reputed to have had thirteen wives, but one of these, a former Brahmin dancing girl from Pune ... took precedence over any others. Much younger than Ochterlony, she certainly appears to have had the upper hand in her relationship with the old general" (66). This jovial representation advances a feeling of equality and good will in the relationship between the "dancing girl" and the "old general." The endnote provides a rather different picture, with Dalrymple referring to the background of the "Begum" in more detail, relating that she was "brought from Poona in the Deckan by one Mosst. Chumpa, and presented or sold by the said Chumpa to Genl. Ochterlony when 12 years of age" (505). This discrepancy between the text and its references is significant. Ochterlony, the figure that Dalrymple uses as a metonymic representation of an Indian / British relationship that is characterised by hybridity and cultural fusion and understanding, is shown in

an entirely different light. Dalrymple's continuing fascination with Delhi's courtesans (though they are further removed from this text's chronology than from his previous works, given *The Last Mughal's* later setting) operates to brand the text as a Dalrymple production: "The beauty and coquettishness of Delhi's courtesans were famous: people still talked of the celebrated courtesan Ad Begum of a century earlier, who would famously turn up stark naked at parties..." (110-11). The presence of these narratives in *The Last Mughal* as well as his earlier texts highlights the extent to which this text conforms to Dalrymple's recognisable narrative history formula, despite its claims for heightened historical significance.

Sex is used throughout *The Last Mughal* in two distinct ways. One is in the predictable, Orientalist manner of depicting Indian rulers as dissolute and decadent. Dalrymple's description of the British annexation of Avadh, or Oudh, is an instance of this: "The excuse for this [annexation] was that its Nawab, the poet, dancer and epicure Wajid Ali Shah, was 'excessively debauched'" (126). This statement both puts forward and argues against such a stereotypical treatment of the Nawab. However, the accompanying footnote shifts the balance of this passage towards a British, Orientalist fascination with sex. Written in a conversational tone, it gives William an opportunity to represent his own enthusiastic interest to the reader:

Although it hardly justified annexing Avadh, it was certainly true that Wajid Ali Shah was no blushing violet. The Royal Library at Windsor Castle contains a large folio volume entitled the *Ishq Nama* (Love History) of Wajid Ali Shah, which contains several hundred portraits of

his different lovers, one to each page, and annotated with a short poem praising the qualities and amorous talents of each. (126)

This adds to the representation of the King of Avadh as debauched (and the British as correct in their assessment of him). The vagueness of the passage—it is unclear whether there are “several hundred” pages, portraits or lovers—amplifies this representation. This narratorial interjection continues the characterisation of William as the keen historian who simply cannot resist sharing such delightfully quirky tidbits of information with his readers.

The other way in which sex is used in *The Last Mughal* is, like its presence in *White Mughals*, as an untheorised shorthand for a state of mutual respect and understanding between British and Indian men: “the British officers, who once mixed with their men—and not infrequently cohabited with the men’s sisters—had become increasingly distant, rude and dismissive” (136). This easy equivalence between cross-cultural sexual relationships and increased understanding is represented here as part of an earlier golden time, and its decline (linked with Dalrymple’s representation of religious orthodoxy as the cause of conflict between the two groups) is seen as heralding an unfortunate rift.

Although *The Last Mughal*’s narrative structure differs substantially from that of *White Mughals*, some similarities remain. Dalrymple’s treatment of textual elements which lend romance and pathos to the narrative are an example of this link. At the beginning of *The Last Mughal*, he states: “In the words of the poem commonly attributed to Zafar, and said to have been written shortly after his imprisonment:

‘...Delhi was once a paradise,
Where Love held sway and reigned;
But its charm lies ravished now
And only ruins remain. ...’” (25)

The quotation is appended with an appropriate endnote number, signifying its reliable provenance for the educated general reader (who is interested but presumably unlikely to follow up each endnote reference). The information given in the accompanying endnote is not a record of the poem’s provenance, but a simple instruction: “See footnote on p. 473” (499). The related passage on page 473, in the last chapter of the lengthy work, is not an archival reference. It is instead a complex statement which simultaneously discounts and attempts to confirm Zafar’s authorship of the poems. Its context is Dalrymple’s description of Zafar’s life in exile:

[He] sat silently watching the passing shipping from his Rangoon balcony. He was allowed no pen and paper, so his own reaction to his isolation and exile can only be guessed at. Certainly it now seems as if the famous verses attributed to him in exile, expressing his sadness and bitterness, are not the product of his own hand, though William Howard Russell explicitly described him writing verses on the walls of his prison with a burned stick, and it is not completely impossible that these could somehow have been recorded and preserved. (473)

Even while acknowledging this point—that Zafar did not write the “famous verses”—the language used works to undermine it; instead of the poems being mistakenly attributed, it only “seems as if” he did not write them. After all,

William Howard Russell “explicitly described” Zafar writing verses, and “somehow” it is not a complete impossibility, they might have survived. Dalrymple evokes the apocryphal notion of the writing on the wall here.

The apposite nature of the poems appears simply too attractive to abandon. Indeed, a reading of these pieces was an integral part of the public events at the Sydney Writers’ festival in 2007 to promote *The Last Mughal*. The usefulness of these poems to the narrative (what better for a biographical project than poetry written by the central historical character?) is such that the unfortunate fact of their dubious authorship is hidden in a tangle of references. The footnote elaborates at length:

Two celebrated ghazals long attributed to Zafar—“*Lagtaa nahii hai dil meraa*” (Nothing brings happiness to my heart) and “*Naa kissii kii aankh kaa nuur huun*” (“I bring no solace to heart or eye”)—are popularly known in the subcontinent largely because of Mohammed Rafi, who sang them for the Bombay film *Lal Qila*. But before that they had already become popular in the late fifties thanks to the version sung by one Habeeb Wali Muhammad on Radio Ceylon’s talent show, *Ovaltine Amateur Hour*. In the sixties, the Rafi version then became a favourite on All India Radio. Recent research by the Lahore scholar Imran Khan, and backed by several other leading scholars of Urdu literature, has, however, cast doubt on Zafar’s authorship of both verses. Certainly the ghazals do not appear in any of Zafar’s four published divans, nor in the periodical *Hazoor-e Wala*, where Zafar also published poems. I would like to thank Professor Fran Pritchett and Sundeep Dougal for bringing these

developments to my attention, and also C.M. Naim, who, before becoming a distinguished scholar of Urdu literature, was an enthusiastic listener to *Ovaltine Amateur Hour*. (473)

This lengthy footnote achieves a number of varied outcomes, chief among these being deferring the readers' knowledge of the provenance of the poems until the text's final pages (unless, of course, the reader follows the three-step process—from text, to endnote, to footnote—in the initial instance). It also, through grateful reference to “Professor Fran Pritchett,” highlights the scholarly work behind *The Last Mughal*. Curiously, this is the same Pritchett that Dalrymple thanks in his acknowledgements for a “most thorough edit” (xxv) of the work's manuscript. If this information was part of the edit, then Dalrymple had ample time to make the appropriate changes and to omit the misleading references to these poems as written by Zafar at the text's beginning. Regardless, Dalrymple had the opportunity to change the original reference. The continued representation of Zafar as author of this sentimental poetry is another example of *The Last Mughal's* valuing of narrative power over historical accuracy. The reference to “*Ovaltine Amateur Hour*” as a source of scholarly information also adds a quirky and mildly amusing element to this footnote, continuing the characterisation of Dalrymple as the kind of historian who revels in the oddities of his research.

The narrative of Dalrymple's research, mirrored by the readers' experience of the text, is one that is endemic to realist fiction, as Morris states:

what is implicit in the opening pages of most realist fictions: questions are raised about characters and situations which will be resolved by fuller

knowledge gained during the course of the narrative. In this respect, the reader's epistemological progress through the novel imitates the way we acquire knowledge of the actual social and physical worlds by means of observation of factual details, behaviour and events. (11)

In this instance the reader is presented with the narrative of Zafar's authorship of the poems, which forms a central part of Zafar's characterisation as a physically feeble but romantic and self-aware figure. This image continues until the text's final chapter, when Dalrymple (and the reader) learn that its provenance is unclear.

Reception and contextualisation of *The Last Mughal*

The Last Mughal has attracted a more mixed response than any of Dalrymple's previous books. Like his earlier works, it received an array of positive reviews. Geoffrey Moorhouse, another historian who has written on India (see his work *India Britannica* [1983]), commented that:

He has vividly described the street life of the Mughal capital in the days before the catastrophe happened, he has put his finger deftly on every crucial point in the story, which earlier historians have sometimes missed, and he has supplied some of the most informative footnotes I have ever read. On top of that, he has splendidly conveyed the sheer joy of researching a piece of history, something every true historian knows, telling of his elation at discovering in Burma's national archives all Zafar's prison records, stored in Acrobat PDF files. ("Zafar the Ditherer")

In his overwhelmingly positive assessment of *The Last Mughal*, Moorhouse identifies Dalrymple's skill in his self-representation and overall narrative structure—the points that Moorhouse most praises are the autobiographical insights that Dalrymple supplies, through the text's overarching narrative of the author's research. The merits of Dalrymple as historian and *The Last Mughal* as history are also espoused by Nigel Collet who, while praising Dalrymple's hard work and resistance to “fashions” of theory, simultaneously denigrates much existing scholarship on 1857:

This lack of contemporary insight has been carried forward to our times by the generations of writers who have piled up tome after tome on the Mutiny and yet who have advanced historical knowledge by little more than gradual increments of fact or interpretation. This sweeping, but I believe justifiable, statement sadly also applies to the Indian historians who have written on the period, who, rather than spend hours in dusty archives pouring [sic] over obscure scripts, have preferred to follow their British colleagues and extemporise on the “isms” and “ologies” of the fashions of the moment. Their failure has given Dalrymple an opportunity he has seized with gusto.

As such sweeping statements are prone to do, Collet's and Dalrymple's representation of the state of the existing work on the Mutiny leaves little room for texts that even Dalrymple elsewhere applauds. Saul David's *The Indian Mutiny*, which he has praised as “scholarly, well researched, well paced, readable and comprehensive” (“Bloody Uprising”) is somewhat surprisingly dismissed here. Similarly, C.A. Bayly's *Empire and Information: Intelligence*

Gathering and Social Communication in India 1780-1870, which Dalrymple uses to buttress his arguments in *White Mughals* (512), is swept in with what is represented as an undifferentiated mass of unfortunately limited histories. The ways in which Dalrymple chooses to carve a niche for himself and his approach to history entail a sustained critique of existing (particularly postcolonial) approaches and practices. That Dalrymple's work which engages explicitly with historiography receives the most mixed response from other historians is therefore unsurprising.

The work that *The Last Mughal* does in order to position itself within the highly-delineated field of imperial history also provokes some less enthusiastic responses than those espoused by Collet and Moorhouse. Comments from Dalrymple add to the conflict: "Most of the time historians write for each other rather than for the reader. Seema Alvi and Sanjay Subramaniam are exceptions. Thankfully for me, Indian historians are gazing at there [sic] own navels, arguing at seminars but not writing anything" (Interview with Austa). Irfan Habib's article "Indian Historians Are Not Lazy," which he calls a response to "Dalrymple's criticisms of Indian historians for their apparent lethargy and obscurantism," is an example of the local resistance his self-positioning strategy can inspire. Dalrymple represents theory as an unnecessary, obfuscatory orthodoxy which prevents unbiased interactions with the historical record, and his reviewers take this on: "Why had historians not used these papers before? As Dalrymple explains, what really happened doesn't fit any fashionable academic dogmas" (Harshaw). Here the "fashions" of academia actively limit historians' engagement with the sources.

There are more sustained arguments against Dalrymple's representation of Indian imperial history. Gyan Prakash brings together a number of salient points, engaging with the autobiographically-inclined narrative of history writing that Dalrymple provides:

As globalization compresses space and time, those privileged and educated enough to travel between cultures find themselves increasingly impatient with the legacies of imperial racism and nationalist myths. This is understandable. But to retail the eighteenth century as a time when Europeans and non-Europeans overcame racial and religious boundaries is to fly in the face of historical evidence. To see the crossing of imperial borders in the lives of "White Mughals" is to misrepresent both the nature of interracial liaisons and imperial conquest. Empire made the Frasers and the Ochterlonys possible. It was because of empire, not despite it, that Europeans took an interest in non-European cultures. ... Astonishingly, Dalrymple fails to see the sense of imperial entitlement that permitted Company men to penetrate indigenous culture and become White Mughals. (Prakash 30)

Through Dalrymple's representation of himself as a belated white Mughal figure, the representation of his "original" white Mughal allies becomes a personal one. Both Dalrymple and his inspirations are portrayed as privileged enough to travel between cultures, and frustrated with imperialism and nationalism (and their legacies). The extent to which the characterisation of white Mughal figures is influenced by Dalrymple's self-representation is evident, as well as their (more overt) impact on the ways in which Dalrymple

undertakes his own self-fashioning.

Despite his extensive rehearsal of the bloody nature of the conflict, on both British and Indian sides, *The Last Mughal* concludes with a positive representation of British rule. Curiously, however, this portrayal requires a complete backflip from Dalrymple's previous representational strategies. As a rule, Dalrymple's works use the presence of the British East India Company to highlight hybridity, and to emphasise the "pre-colonial" nature of his white Mughal period. At the end of *The Last Mughal*, this representation shifts dramatically in order to continue a positive conception of the British state's control over India: "If Hindustan was to lose the Mughals, its rulers of nearly three hundred years' standing, it would at least now be ruled by a properly constituted colonial government rather than a rapacious multinational acting at least partly in the interest of its shareholders" (456). Leaving aside that the East India Company, established and run entirely as a profit-making venture, would be wholly acting in the interest of its shareholders, here Dalrymple takes on a strange, self-justifying rhetoric which draws upon the teleology of history to argue that, due to the laxity of the East India Company's administration, Crown rule is therefore good and appropriate. Any other possibility goes unmentioned.

Conclusion: *The Age of Kali and Nine Lives*

Dalrymple's participation in the public sphere is not limited to his books. As well as his regular monograph publications, he has also, over the course of his career, published a multitude of newspaper articles, reviews and commentaries, and hosted television and radio documentaries. He co-directs the DSC Jaipur Literary Festival, with Namita Gokhale ("Blatantly Racist"). He has also introduced a new edition of Fanny Parkes' *Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque* (1850; 2002), as well as a Lonely Planet coffee-table book entitled *Sacred India* (1999) and has become increasingly cited as an "expert" on India and Islam. For instance, when making an incidental point about increasing mobile phone traffic in an article about privacy and surveillance in *USA Today*, Richard Willing observes: "The number of cellphone users [in Pakistan] grew from fewer than 3 million in 2003 to nearly 50 million this year, historian and South Asia specialist William Dalrymple says." This choice of Dalrymple as the appropriate "specialist" authority here illuminates his shift in status from *In Xanadu*-style travel writer to wide-ranging South Asian expert, effected by his self-positioning across a number of media and publishing platforms.

This concluding chapter rounds out the examination of Dalrymple's works with a consideration of his journalism. Dalrymple's journalistic endeavours operate in parallel to his monograph writing, as seen in remarks which situate those monographs. For example, in the acknowledgements to *City of Djinnns*, Dalrymple attributes his presence in Delhi to his employment as

a “correspondent” (1). Of course, monographs and journalistic output can work together, informing and giving context to readers in complex, overlapping ways. This chapter looks at the ways in which the relationship between the monographs that originally confer Dalrymple’s authoritative position, and the numerous reviews and newspaper articles that Dalrymple writes, functions to construct and maintain his status. Dalrymple’s journalism is inevitably authorised by his position as a successful non-fiction writer (virtually all of his articles are prefixed or suffixed with a statement informing the reader of his latest monograph). However, the journalism brings to the fore the contemporary relevance of Dalrymple’s knowledge and keeps his name in the public consciousness. It acts as what Gerard Genette terms “*epitext*” (5)—“those messages that, at least originally, are located outside the book, generally with the help of the media” (5)—that works in the same way as paratexts that are attached to the text proper, in encouraging a more “pertinent” reading of the text (2). Dalrymple’s journalistic output works in service of the author and his oeuvre, as well as in service of a particular text. Each piece of journalism, regardless of its subject, has William firmly at its centre, enabling the reader to get to know him without necessarily having to read one of his books. For example, when writing about Baba, an Indian rap star, he explains Baba’s appeal in terms of how it is experienced by William:

My parsimonious Delhi landlady nearly went as far as reducing my rent when I told her Baba had granted me an audience; and while walking with Baba into a Bombay hotel I found myself in danger of being pawed

to death by a crowd of voracious Indian Lolitas rushing forward to embrace their hero. (*The Age of Kali* 139-40)

William's evident enjoyment of the star status that his association with Baba provides is the central point of this passage, rather than a reflection on Baba himself.

Dalrymple's regular contributions to publications such as the *Guardian* or the *New York Review of Books* make him a recurring, recognisable presence in the lives of the educated reading public. In this particular field, Dalrymple comes to assume a kind of celebrity status. Robert Clarke illustrates the affinities between travel writing and celebrity, and the ways in which this "celebritization" process occurs:

as a genre, travel writing encourages the kind of attention to the personality and public life of the traveller that is conducive to the mechanics of celebritization. The travel book, so often written in the first person, exploits the illusions of intimacy and parasociality that define the dynamics of contemporary celebrity. (147)

Dalrymple's first-person journalism also works in this manner, making use of the autobiographical authority of travel and the ways in which the "public life" of the traveller intersects with celebrity. The choice of quality newspaper publications (in contrast to larger circulation papers like *The Daily Mail*) is another way in which Dalrymple positions himself in relation to his audience, and, indeed, how he targets an audience. The familiarity of his regular presence in the papers may contribute to a receptive response to Dalrymple's monographs, arguments and self-positioning.

When discussing his publications from *In Xanadu* to *White Mughals* with Tim Youngs, Dalrymple reinforces the simultaneity of his roles as traveller / historian and journalist:

[WD:] There are many different styles of writing both within travel writing and within journalism. I don't see them as two different spheres. They overlap and interweave.

TY: Do you feel or do things differently when you're *travelling* as a travel writer rather than a journalist, as opposed to the writing?

WD: No, not much, actually. I was in Palestine last year doing two pieces for the *Guardian* and the sort of things I was doing there are exactly what I was doing with *Holy Mountain* ... So I suppose this is closer to first-person journalism. (59-60)

This consistent mode of operation, despite the genre / media in question, reinforces the autobiographical authority of Dalrymple's textual productions. This conclusion makes use of Dalrymple's designation of *The Age of Kali* as a "book of journalism" (Interview with Tim Youngs 37). Alongside his latest monograph, *Nine Lives*, it is taken as a representative sample of his prolific journalistic output. These texts anthologise, in revised form, much of Dalrymple's journalistic writing (however refined and expanded) over the two decades from 1989 to 2009.

The Age of Kali

The Age of Kali negotiates the sometimes competing conventions of travel writing and journalistic reporting. The work's subtitle, *Indian Travels and*

Encounters, elides this tension and positions the text as another of Dalrymple's travel books. *The Age of Kali*'s introduction does little to alter this perception, opening with a description of the work as "a collection of peripatetic essays, a distillation of ten years' travel around the Indian subcontinent" (xi). Dalrymple elaborates: "For six of those years I was based in Delhi working on my second book, *City of Djinnns*, while for the other four I wandered the region, on a more nomadic basis, for a few months each year" (xi). Both of these statements manifestly situate the author in the places about which he is writing and elide his activities for the remaining months. The success of the positioning of *The Age of Kali* as a travel text is evident in the 2005 edition of the Lonely Planet guide to India, which enthuses: "*The Age of Kali* by celebrated travel writer William Dalrymple is a superb compilation of insights gleaned from a decade of travelling the subcontinent" (24). Dalrymple's 1998 text has also been re-published by Lonely Planet in their "Lonely Planet Journeys" series. Other works in the series, which is a mixture of re-issues and original publications, include several works by Eric Newby, Thornton McCamish's *Supercargo: A Journey Among Ports* (2002), and Sean Condon's *Drive Thru America* (1998), among myriad others. For Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan, the presence of the Lonely Planet Journeys imprint highlights the connections between "high" and "low" forms of travel and writing:

The Lonely Planet imprint, among others, has begun to exploit this overlap by establishing a sister series, Lonely Planet Journeys, which converts the raw material of travel guides into more "literary" travel accounts. This travelogue series, like its guidebook counterpart, is clearly

aimed at the lifestyle and mindset of self-styled “offbeat” travelers and “irreverent” backpackers. (208)

While this styling of the Lonely Planet brand as catering to “offbeat” or “irreverent” travellers is still valid, the positioning of Lonely Planet Journeys is not quite as straightforward as Holland and Huggan suggest. The inclusion of reprints of travel “classics” such as Newby’s *A Short Walk in the Hindu Kush* alongside the first editions of new works such as *The Blue Man: Tales of Travel, Love and Coffee* (1999) by Larry Buttrose (also a Lonely Planet guidebook writer) complicates the “conversion” process from guidebook to travel literature that Holland and Huggan foreground. With the dual strategy of republishing seminal travel texts and fostering new travel writers, Lonely Planet creates their own, branded, travel writing canon, which embraces both their “offbeat” origins and their significant mainstream successes. In the case of the Lonely Planet Journeys reprint of *A Short Walk in the Hindu Kush*, the text is presented similarly to earlier printings (retaining the preface by Evelyn Waugh, for instance). One notable addition is the book’s final page, which tells the “Lonely Planet Story” in a jocular and conversational tone, ending with the sentences: “All you’ve got to do is decide to go [travelling], and the hardest part is over. So go!” The closing of the volume on this note, combined with the presence of the Lonely Planet logo, works to align the power of the brand with the cultural capital of the classic travel writer. The presence of *The Age of Kali* in the “Lonely Planet Journeys” series is curious, as Dalrymple neither fits neatly into the “classic” reprint category, nor is he a part of Lonely Planet’s

stable of authors. The Lonely Planet imprint further bolsters the text's positioning as a straightforward travel book.

Regardless of its successful reception as pure travel writing, *The Age of Kali* is primarily a collection of journalistic essays. The majority of these first appeared as articles in periodicals including: *Granta*, the *Spectator*, the *Sunday Times Magazine*, the *Observer*, the *Sunday Telegraph Magazine*, the *Independent Magazine*, *GQ*, *Islands Magazine*, the *Tatler* and *Condé Nast Traveller*. The mix of travel, "society," lifestyle and men's publications indicates the variety of ways in which Dalrymple approaches his material in this text. As Paul Fussell astutely notes, the trappings of travel writing enable the success of a form that otherwise would be seen as unviable:

A fact of modern publishing history is the virtual disappearance of the essay as a salable commodity ... the [travel] genre is a device for getting published the essays which, without the travel "menstruum" (as Coleridge would say), would appear too old-fashioned for generic credit.

(204)

An exception to Fussell's observation is Salman Rushdie, whose celebrity, and the high quality of his polemical writing, has contributed to the success of his essay publications (*Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991* [Granta, 1991]; *Step Across This Line: Collected Non-fiction 1992-2002* [Cape, 2002]). For Dalrymple, however, it is necessary to align this journalistic work with his travel oeuvre. Without the powerful generic associations of travel writing with adventure, individualism and with eye-witness description, his

essays on Indian cities, culture and personalities would look remarkably less marketable and exciting.

It is not until the next section of the introduction that the work's journalistic roots are made more evident. In the "Acknowledgements," Dalrymple thanks those who "commissioned articles from [him], and / or have generously given permission for them to be reproduced," (xv) and catalogues the origins of each section of the book. At the same time, however, he is careful to highlight the labour involved in adapting each element:

what is published here is in some cases very different from what appeared in the articles' first journalistic avatar: pieces have been edited, trimmed and rewritten; some have been wedged together; others, where appropriate, have been suffixed with a new postscript to bring them up to date. (xv)

It is their difference from their origins and their continued relevance that is emphasised here, in an effort to preempt criticism of the text as derivative or outdated.

The Age of Kali's contents page buttresses its positioning as another typical Dalrymple travel text, as it is laid out geographically, with essays arranged by location, under such headings as "The North," "In Rajasthan," and "On the Indian Ocean" (which incorporates such disparate subjects as Réunion, Sri Lanka and Goa). The only exception to this organisational principle is the short section called "The New India" which has as its subjects Shobha Dé (a popular romance novelist), Baba and multinational fast food companies. Through its revealing nomenclature, which appears to label the rest of the

essays as being about “old” India, this section makes obvious the ways in which the text divides the Indian subcontinent both temporally and geographically, typically emphasising the gaps between the “new” cities and the “old” countryside. This untheorised distinction between “new” and “old” or “timeless” Indias made in “The New India” section is problematic. It disavows the obvious fact of temporal equivalence in favour of the common, nostalgic, ethnographically-inspired conceit that travel to remote or rural or underdeveloped areas is essentially travelling into the past. Here, invariably, “new” is represented as capitalist, Western-influenced, urban and particular—the preserve of certain groups or individuals—as opposed to universalising statements about “old” or “timeless” Indian subjects such as religion.

Both *The Age of Kali* and *Nine Lives* are explicitly concerned with what is represented as the uneasy fit of India and modernity. This is evident in *The Age of Kali*'s title, explained with reference to Hindu cosmology:

that time is divided into four great epochs. Each age (or *yug*) is named after one of the four throws, from best to worst, in a traditional Indian game of dice. ... As I was told again and again on my travels around the subcontinent, India is now in the throes of the *Kali Yug*, the Age of Kali, the lowest possible throw, an epoch of strife, corruption, darkness, and disintegration. (xi)

This statement encapsulates Dalrymple's argument about the state of India, as well as both highlighting his knowledge of Hinduism, and exoticising a system

of belief that is represented as being based on a game of chance.⁴ By leaving unmentioned the extensive length of the *Kali Yug*, Dalrymple implies that its “darkness” and “disintegration” are products of modernity.

Throughout *The Age of Kali*, Dalrymple advances a comparison between the troubles of modern India (represented as stemming from partition, independence, and cultural issues such as caste) and the beauty and sophistication of its past (which is represented as somehow untroubled by caste and other inequalities). India under British rule also belongs to this reified historical representation. Dalrymple uses cities such as Lucknow and Hyderabad as examples of India’s past glories, in the essays “In the Kingdom of Avadh” and “Under the Char Minar.” He compares these cities, advancing a notion of universal decline:

It is often hard to believe this [past cultural importance] as you drive through Hyderabad today. For while the city is still fairly prosperous—certainly a far cry from the urban death rattle that is modern Lucknow—fifty years on it is a pretty unprepossessing place, ugly, polluted, and undistinguished, all seventies office blocks and bustling new shopping centres. (199)

It seems almost as if it is the city’s prosperity (and therefore its degree of Westernisation) to which Dalrymple objects. Any departure from an idealised,

⁴ According to the *Encyclopædia Britannica* entry for “yuga”: “in Hindu cosmology, an age of mankind. Each yuga is progressively shorter than the preceding one, corresponding to a decline in the moral and physical state of humanity. Four such yugas (called Krta, Treta, Dvapara, and Kali after throws of an Indian game of dice) make up the mahayuga (‘great yuga’), and 2,000 mahayugas make up the basic cosmic cycle, the kalpa. The first yuga (Krta) was an age of perfection, lasting 1,728,000 years. The fourth and most degenerate yuga (Kali) began in 3102 BC and will last 432,000 years. At the close of the Kali yuga, the world will be destroyed, to be re-created after a period of quiescence as the cycle resumes again.”

Orientalist past attracts epithets such as “unprepossessing” or “undistinguished” and therefore “declining.” This pessimism about the state of contemporary India is, perhaps unsurprisingly, more obvious in the pieces in *The Age of Kali* which are more firmly set in the present.

Nowhere in *The Age of Kali* is the end of British rule in India represented as a positive event for India or Indians. On the contrary, it is seen as the point at which Indian society’s degeneration accelerated. Those (represented as expatriates and left-wing Britons) who celebrate the anniversary of the end of the British imperial presence are designated as mistaken and out of touch by Dalrymple: “In Britain there may have been widespread celebrations marking fifty years of Indian Independence, but in India there has been much less rejoicing” (83). Jenny Sharpe describes the “raj revival” impulse towards a “representation of decolonization as the moment of ruin,” an argument which “preserves a foundational moment of pomp and splendor as a monument to imperial greatness” (143). This tendency towards a “raj revivalist” representation is evident in *The Age of Kali*.

This gloomy outlook on contemporary India can be read as an expression or symptom of a colonial nostalgia that contrasts a seemingly chaotic present with a more ordered, graceful and civilised past. A focus on contemporary issues can function to construct the past as a simpler, better version of India. Such nostalgia is more obvious in some sections of *The Age of Kali* than others, however the accompanying sense of pessimism about contemporary Indian society makes its way into the majority of chapters in Dalrymple’s text.

Modern India is portrayed as an unstable, unsettling, disturbing place. Throughout the various essays in *The Age of Kali*, this instability is seen to stem from the dislocations produced when “traditional” India comes into contact with “new” Western ideas. An illustrative example of this begins the text, describing the political situation in the province of Bihar. Although Dalrymple stresses that this is an extreme case, the choice of this story as his opening view of the subcontinent is nonetheless significant. Further, this essay is also entitled “The Age of Kali,” and so comes to represent the text as a whole. He dramatises the death of G. Krishnaiah, newly-appointed District Magistrate of Golpalganj at the hands of a crowd, allegedly encouraged by MP Anand Mohan Singh. Rather than being simply a disturbing, isolated, example of corruption, the actions of Anand Mohan Singh are taken as representative of “quite how bad things have become in Indian politics in recent years” (5). Dalrymple goes on to explain that “Singh was arrested, but from his prison cell he contested and retained his seat in the 1996 general election, later securing bail to attend parliament” (5). Vague accompanying statements advocate a disparaging view of Indian process: “Justice in India being what it is, few believe that the police now have much chance of bringing a successful prosecution” (5). Here Dalrymple is able to criticise the Indian legal system without having to specify what it is that “justice in India” is, and who constitutes the “few” that do believe that the police have a chance of success, much less the majority represented as sceptical.

In Dalrymple's argument, this failure of judicial and political systems stems from the endemically Indian (and particularly Hindu) "problem" of caste:

The closer you look, the clearer it becomes that caste hatred and, increasingly, caste warfare lie at the bottom of most of Bihar's problems. The lower castes, so long oppressed, have now begun to assert themselves, while the higher castes have begun to fight back in an attempt to hold on to their ground. Moreover, job reservations for the lower castes have begun to be fitfully introduced around the country, reawakening an acute awareness of caste at every level of society. (22)

Despite the universal reality of money eroding class or caste position, for Dalrymple the caste system is represented as static, divisive and inherently problematic. In his description, caste is seen to impact on Indian society only after the departure of the British. Of course, this is a partial representation. Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* chronicles the complexities of caste from the dalit perspective. Dalrymple portrays post-independence India as a chronicle of caste-related inequality (in contrast to a more positive reading such as a nationalist narrative of democracy or "progress"):

Brahmins had ruled India for forty-four of fifty years of independence. Kshatriyas (the second rung in the caste pyramid) ruled for two more years, in the persons of V.P. Singh (1989-90) and Chandra Shekhar (1990-91). Lower- or intermediate-caste Prime Ministers had been in power for fewer than four years of the half-century since the British left India. (9-10)

The statement beginning this passage is particularly misleading—there is a manifest difference between Brahmins ruling the country and individual Prime Ministers being Brahmins. Dalrymple dismisses the importance or relevance of factors such as which political party was in government in favour of a caste-based representation of post-independence Indian political life. The end result appears to be an essentialist argument that India and Western ideas do not mix, that chaos and violence are the price that modern India pays for its attempts at what are represented as essentially Western precepts such as equal opportunity politics.

Despite the disparate subjects and necessarily fractured nature of the text, the uniting feature is the presence of William, the narrator. The topics addressed here include sati, widowhood, “blood” sacrifice to the goddess Kali, caste “warfare,” and the extreme Hindu nationalist movement. Sections of *The Age of Kali* vividly recall the preoccupations of the Raj (and, subsequently, much Victorian fiction written or set in India) with sati and thuggee, including, notably, Flora Annie Steel’s *On the Face of the Waters* (1896) and *Confessions of a Thug* by Philip Meadows Taylor (1839). Despite Dalrymple’s different approaches to each subject, their presence and treatment is telling. Dalrymple’s inclusion of his (very carefully-argued) piece on sati is notable, and the sensationalism of his description of the devotions paid to the goddess Kali refuses to be dampened by the (brief) mention of their substitution of the blood sacrifice for a non-violent alternative. Dalrymple shares the Raj’s preoccupation with sati: a topic in which British interest was disproportionate to its regularity and spread, and which was used as a justification for the British

imperial intervention in India. Rajeswari Sunder Rajan argues that “The abolition of sati in 1829 was the first major legislation of the East India Company’s administration in India ... [which] served as the moral pretext for intervention and the major justification for colonial rule” (42). Jenny Sharpe foregrounds the different ways in which women are used rhetorically in imperial arguments: “When articulated through images of violence against women, a resistance to British rule does not look like the struggle for emancipation but rather an uncivilized eruption that must be contained” (7). For Gayatri Spivak, “The protection of women by men” is often an occasion for the birth of “not only a civil but a good society” (298). Dalrymple’s juxtaposition of India under the British and declining independent India through stories of female vulnerability (the plight of dalit women, prostitutes and Hindu widows as well as participants in sati) highlights the goodness and rectitude of the British.

The Age of Kali was published in India as *At the Court of the Fish-Eyed Goddess: Travels in the Indian Subcontinent* (1998). This title, also the name of one of the essays within the text, refers to the Hindu fertility goddess Meenakshi. *The Age of Kali*’s subtitle, *Indian Travels and Encounters*, suggests an easy intimacy of Dalrymple with India and its people. With the shift from a Western to an Indian audience, the word “encounters” is no longer present, removing this suggestion of Dalrymple’s status as expert participant-observer. Apart from the title, changes occasioned by the Indian audience include a different introduction and a re-ordering of some of the chapters. The Indian introduction addresses the reader more directly than that of *The Age of*

Kali, beginning: “There are very few sensations more annoying than being told what to think about one’s own country by some foreigner who rolls in, makes a few perfunctory interviews, then writes some ignorant rubbish in a paper at the other end of the world” (xiii). As well as developing an identification with the Indian reader, this version of the introduction immediately refers to the text’s origins in newspaper articles. Dalrymple then proceeds to distance himself from this caricature of journalistic insensitivity: “I would hope that I don’t fall into that category; but it is nevertheless with some nervousness that I accepted an offer from HarperCollins India to publish *At the Court of the Fish-Eyed Goddess* in South Asia in a separate *desi* edition” (xiii). This admission of anxiety works to position William as courting the reader’s approval, while carefully failing to mention the text’s original title, and the fact that the *desi* edition is itself an effort to gain a more positive reception. The *desi* edition should therefore lessen rather than precipitate Dalrymple’s anxiety, by providing an opportunity to curtail the negative emphasis present in *The Age of Kali*.

This text illustrates the multiple uses of journalism for a figure like Dalrymple. He incorporates himself in each piece that he writes, each article acting not only to tell its individual story but also to take ownership of that story. This firmly first-person approach also works to unite the disparate subjects brought under the umbrella of the text. Both *The Age of Kali* and *Nine Lives* feature an emphasis on the time William has spent with the subjects of the text, and on their recorded speech. Dalrymple emphasises his “personal experience and direct observation” (*Age of Kali* xi) and the strength of his

subjects' "stories and voices" (*Nine Lives* xiv). *The Age of Kali* covers Dalrymple's journalistic exploits of the early to mid 1990s, working alongside his travel texts; *Nine Lives* forms a similar counterpoint to the period in which his narrative histories were written.

Nine Lives

Dalrymple's latest publication is even more firmly positioned as a travel text than *The Age of Kali*. Hailed as the author's exciting return to the travel genre after a hiatus of ten years, *Nine Lives* was invariably treated as "proof" of the health and vitality of the travel book. In a review naming it his "travel book of the year" for 2009, Rory MacLean begins: "Back in the 1940s, Evelyn Waugh predicted the death of travel writing." After a glowing review, he finishes: "As Dalrymple's title suggests, travel writing itself seems to have nine lives." Similarly, Anthony Sattin begins his round-up review of the best travel writing of 2009 with the statement:

The prophets of doom should fall silent: this has been an excellent year for new travel writing, including books by authors who made their name with travel, then moved to other genres. William Dalrymple hasn't written a travel book in a decade, but *Nine Lives* (Bloomsbury £20) sees him in India, following pilgrims and searchers of spiritual enlightenment.

Despite this enthusiastic trumpeting of Dalrymple's long-awaited return to travel writing, *Nine Lives* remains close to *The Age of Kali* in the way in which it is constructed. Given the growth of Dalrymple's celebrity, and his positioning as an expert and an author of weighty histories, it is unsurprising

that *Nine Lives* is represented as more serious than *The Age of Kali*. In contrast to his earlier journalistic text, *Nine Lives*' focus is solely on religious faith, albeit encompassing many varying manifestations. The construction of the text—essays framed and enabled by travel writing tropes and discourses—is the same as that of *The Age of Kali*. As well as the travel genre providing a structural framework for the text, it also heightens Dalrymple's authority through its valuing of the author / protagonist's presence as eyewitness and participant-observer.

In a flurry of pre-release publicity, Dalrymple wrote about travel writing and *Nine Lives* in the *Guardian*, and gave interviews to the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Courier Mail* (Brisbane), *Outlook India* and the *Telegraph India*, among many others. In these articles and interviews Dalrymple emphasises what he represents as his changed approach to travel writing, in particular his efforts to foreground his interviewees. Writing in the *Guardian*, he asserts:

I decided to adopt a quite different form. When *In Xanadu* was published at the end of the 80s, travel writing tended to highlight the narrator: his adventures were the subject; the people he met were often reduced to objects in the background. I have tried to invert this, and keep the narrator in the shadows, so bringing the lives of the people I have met to the fore and placing their stories centre stage.

This passage, through its rejection of the narcissism of the 1980s, attempts to harness the authority of ethnographic-style direct reportage, and the illusion of truth and transparency that realism brings. At the same time, through the use of words such as “background” and “centre stage,” Dalrymple almost avoids

referring to the writing process altogether, in favour of theatre-based metaphors which play down the creative, authorial process inherent in the production of a book. The wording and argument of this article is very similar to his introduction to *Nine Lives* (xiv).

Nine Lives is a collection of essays, each focused on an Indian individual and their different connections with religion. The text's subtitle, *In Search of the Sacred in Modern India*, foregrounds this focus (while simultaneously highlighting the centrality of William to the endeavour, through the word "search"). Although celebrated as a "return," there is little resemblance between *Nine Lives* and the knock-about, jocular, self-deprecating narrator of *In Xanadu*, or even William's earnestness throughout *From the Holy Mountain*. In contrast, William spends much of his time as narrator in *Nine Lives* (particularly in the introduction) emphasising that this text seeks to move away from the use of the narrator figure. The ironic, and rather self-reflexive, nature of the narrator being employed to persuade the reader of the text's resistance to the centrality of the narrator is evident. Of course, in a text based upon first-person observation, this move is impossible. Instead what eventuates is a narrative structured around William's interviews with the subjects of each chapter, combined with an ethnographic-style description of the people, the situation and William's interactions with them, in a tone reminiscent of television documentary.

Dalrymple's essays each focus on a discrete Indian religion (or manifestation of belief), ranging through Jainism, Tibetan Buddhism, Sufism, various facets of Hinduism and others. Mainstream Islam and Hinduism and all

of Christianity are left aside in favour of more esoteric and exotic beliefs and practices. Each essay typically begins with a description of William's travel to the place in which a particular belief is practiced, and then moves to an interview with a person Dalrymple has chosen to represent the particular community of belief. Like *The Age of Kali*, *Nine Lives* is ultimately concerned with the spectre of modernity: one of the key words of its subtitle *In Search of the Sacred in Modern India* is "modern." Dalrymple's title prefigures an essential conflict between religiosity and modernity—in modern India, the sacred is something for which a search is required.

Less apocalyptic than Dalrymple's earlier text, *Nine Lives* documents less violence and chaos than *The Age of Kali*. Its more personal narratives of modernity's impact on "the sacred" record a slow "dying out" of the practices that William documents. This is seen in his conversation with Srikanda, a sculptor of god-figures: "'I don't know,' said Srikanda, shrugging his shoulders. 'It's all part of the world opening up. After all, as my son says, this is the age of computers. And as much as I might want otherwise, I can hardly tell him this is the age of the bronze caster'" (204). Here Dalrymple silently emphasises the importance of his work as what might be the last record of a vanishing practice. In this way, *Nine Lives* forms what Patrick Brantlinger calls a "proleptic elegy" (3) for such practices—a lament for something not yet gone, which functions to hasten its demise. Sallie Tisdale, in her amusing, though nonetheless forcefully-argued, review article on travel writing for *Harper's*, skewers the desire of contemporary travellers to be the last to document places or practices: "He [the travel writer] wanders the back roads,

then writes his book so that everyone will know what matters most: not to be the first to see remote lands but to be the last to see the land remote.” The concern in *Nine Lives* about the encroachment of “modernity” (read “development”) on rural spaces and foundering religious traditions conforms to Tisdale’s description of the importance of the travel writer being last as well as first. Such visions of faltering practices are carefully balanced, however, by Dalrymple’s descriptions of renewals of faith.

The “sacred” in *Nine Lives* is found in an emphatic renunciation of modernity, exemplified by Ajay Kumar Jha, a Sadhu (wandering holy man) who turned his back on his former life as a sales manager for Kelvinator in Bombay (x). Dalrymple represents Ajay Kumar Jha’s story as the inspiration for his text: “The idea for this book was born sixteen years ago, on a high, clear, Himalayan morning in the summer of 1993,” when William meets his subject (ix). In a manner typical of Dalrymple’s texts, the exotic geographical details of this moment of inspiration are foregrounded. He conveys his desire to investigate “The sort of world where a committed, naked sadhu could also be an MBA” (xi). In the end, the juxtaposition of these narratives—one in which young men embrace (Westernised) modernity, and one in which it is rejected and a “sacred” existence is pursued—is used to argue for a more peaceful reality than *The Age of Kali*. The pervading sense remains of India as a timeless repository of sacredness that will continue in much the same manner as it “always has”:

for all the development that has taken place, many of the issues that I found my holy men discussing and agonising about remained the same

eternal quandaries that absorbed the holy men of classical India, thousands of years ago. ...The water moves on, a little faster than before, yet still the great river flows. It is as fluid and unpredictable in its moods as it has ever been, but it meanders within familiar banks. (xv)

For all of the commentary about Dalrymple relegating the narrator to the background, he here claims ownership of the people whose stories he relates with his use of the word “my.” And in spite of his assertions of the decline of the practices that he documents in particular chapters (which also implicitly work to emphasise the importance of Dalrymple’s work), the overall conclusion of the text is curiously anti-climactic. Despite dramatic differences in their depiction of Indian society, *The Age of Kali* and *Nine Lives* both arrive at the same point: that the essential Indianness of India remains unaffected by Western intrusions. Debbie Lisle notes the romantic formulation of difference as “an expression of ancient wisdom that has been lost in the modern world... others should be valued because they are closer to the mysteries of nature, spirituality and the universe” (85-86). The consequence of such a representation of India’s sacred resilience is the removal of any need for Western guilt about or responsibility for any legacy of imperialism. The difference between the two texts is, of course, that in *The Age of Kali* this conclusion consigns the country to political chaos, while in *Nine Lives* it gives the nation a steady, unwavering sense of the sacred.

The Dalrymple effect

William Dalrymple is now more than a simple author: he is a multi-media figure who makes use of television, radio, newspapers, magazines and public appearances to great effect. He has achieved a particular kind of literary travelling celebrity status. Clarke's succinct recapitulation of scholarly approaches to travel and to celebrity highlights the similarities between the fields.

In recent scholarship, travel has been figured either as oppressive and colonizing, or as a force for disruption, hybridity and liberation. Likewise, celebrity has been represented ambiguously as either emblematic of the degeneration in public tastes, authority and authenticity, or as a vector through which alternative and anti-hegemonic politics and identities may be embodied and emboldened. (145)

In a distinctly untheorised way, Dalrymple's authorial persona works with the liberated, hybridised ways in which travel is conceived, and the individualistic notion of celebrity as a vehicle for alternative views. This can be seen in his self-positioning against academic, postcolonial "orthodoxy"—instead championing his individualist views. Clarke also highlights the "complicated set of mediated relations [celebrity travellers and travel celebrities have] with their readerships, and the ways they are read and received—the uses to which their 'lives' and their texts are employed" (146). Comprehensively, reviewers have taken on Dalrymple's self-representation without questioning it, continuing his portrayal of William the travel writer / historian as an individualistic, passionate but also detached commentator.

Clarke highlights the potential for celebrity travellers to become metonymic of “their culture’s attempt to manage the privileged status it enjoys in those [colonial and postcolonial] travel spaces” (146). Dalrymple’s nostalgia for simpler, cosmopolitan, imperial British / Indian relations (chiefly advanced through a highly gendered, exoticised and sexualised argument for hybridity and cross-cultural relationships) can be read as a metonym (or at least as a pervasive symptom) of a more widespread British imperial nostalgia. Renato Rosaldo defines such nostalgia as a “paradox” (69): “someone deliberately alters a form of life, and then regrets that things have not remained as they were prior to the intervention. ... In any of its versions, imperialist nostalgia uses a pose of ‘innocent yearning’ both to capture people’s imaginations and to conceal its complicity with often brutal domination” (70). Dalrymple’s “innocent yearning” for an imperial past is embodied in his authorial self-representation.

Clarke asks the question: “How does the celebrity of a traveller influence the production, circulation, reception and re-packaging of travel texts?” (148). The kind of celebrity expert status that Dalrymple cultivates, and the authority that it brings, have the potential to limit a critical approach to his texts and, simultaneously, to encourage readers and reviewers to accept his arguments at face value.

Joe Moran usefully distinguishes from studies of celebrity in general the category of “celebrity author.” For Moran, celebrity authors are “usually ‘crossover’ successes who emphasise both marketability and traditional cultural hierarchies” (6). Moran sees literary celebrity as a negotiated process,

involving the authors who “actively negotiate their own celebrity rather than having it simply imposed on them” (10). This is certainly true of Dalrymple. This examination of Dalrymple’s self-positioning uses James English and John Frow’s analysis of literary authorship and celebrity culture. Although English and Frow’s author figure is clearly an author of fiction, their statement that “The model of the author as brand name is ... a matter of the careful management of a persona” (52) informs my consideration of Dalrymple. English and Frow highlight the importance of the study of literary celebrity, given its impact on what they call the “economics of literature” and the “accumulation of literary capital (or power), and its convertibility into or out of other kinds of capital (or power)” (55).

The events surrounding the publication of *Nine Lives* serve as further examples of the ways in which Dalrymple transcends textual boundaries and negotiates his celebrity status. To celebrate the publication of *Nine Lives*, Dalrymple went on the sort of publicity tour that he has undertaken for his later books, encompassing a global itinerary of lectures and writers’ festival events. Dalrymple also engineered a touring stage-show, featuring two of the more musical / theatrical figures in *Nine Lives* and other artists collected for the occasion. The program for the 2010 Sydney Writers’ Festival claims: “Dalrymple weaves the story of his latest book *Nine Lives* through a rich variety of South Asian devotional music and spiritual transformation. ... Curated and narrated by Dalrymple, each element of this concert represents a spiritual tradition from his book.” This depicts the event as a direct transposition from book to performance, reinforcing the experiential version of

authority on which travel writing relies. The show purports to engage the audience with the characters within the text, although without removing the figure of William the “narrator.”

Dalrymple was featured in a number of events for the Sydney Writers’ Festival. “What’s on Sydney” informs readers that the:

Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation in partnership with Sydney Writers’ Festival is honoured to present Internationally [sic] acclaimed writer and historian William Dalrymple discussing *In Xanadu*—His [sic] epic journey in the footsteps of Marco Polo. William will be signing copies of his bestseller, *In Xanadu*, and his latest book, *Nine Lives*, which will be available for purchase on the night.

At Adelaide Writers’ Week, Dalrymple continued the theme of actively comparing his works, particularly his travel texts, with a “Meet the Author” session that comprised readings from *In Xanadu* through to *Nine Lives* (with the exception of *White Mughals*). He repeatedly stressed the “silliness” of *In Xanadu* and his young age at the time of writing, representing his later works as more mature and serious. The reading of *Nine Lives* was characterised by a much more sombre tone so that his latest work was represented as a nuanced, ethnographic study of religion in India. He also took the opportunity to promote his upcoming show at the Sydney Opera House. The online program for the Sydney Writers’ Festival describes the performers in the Opera House show and provides brief biographies:

Paban Das Baul has been a singer since childhood. Born in 1961 in Murshidabad, he incarnates the synergy of his place of origin....

Susheela Raman is an acclaimed British Tamil musician. ... Her work combines South Indian classical music with funk, jazz, soul and blues....The Bauls of Bengal are a group of itinerant mystic minstrels whose beliefs draw on Vaishnavite Hindu and Sufi Muslim thought....Hari Das, a Dalit well-digger and prison warder (and a character in William Dalrymple's book *Nine Lives*) is a practitioner of theyyam, the possession dance of northern Kerala.

The links of some of the performers to nations and cultures other than South Asia hinted at here (especially Susheela Raman's British links and contemporary influences) are never explicitly mentioned by Dalrymple. For example, when writing about the touring show for *The Daily Beast*, Dalrymple (somewhat disingenuously) represents her simply as "a smoky-voiced Tamil diva who is struggling to keep alive a dying sacred song tradition from the temples of Tamil Nadu on the southern tip of India." He also argues for a direct link between the show and the stories in the book, although only two of the many performers appear in the text, stating that he wanted "to let the people featured in the book share the stage, and to illuminate the text by performing their different sacred arts." MacLean endorses Dalrymple's show with the explanation that "With his *Nine Lives* concert tour, Dalrymple recognised that the old formulas have lost their appeal. Today, travel writers who want to reach audiences beyond their immediate family need to find a different way of delivering their books, and not simply by creating a fan group on Facebook." Represented as reaching for a "new" way of presenting travel writing for a world changed by Google and YouTube, this curious variety show (which

recalls the figure of P.T. Barnum) differs from other international touring exports in that it is Dalrymple who remains the drawcard and mediator. Whether the tour eventually serves to sell more copies of *Nine Lives* is irrelevant. Its main function is to maintain and increase Dalrymple's profile and status as an entertaining interpreter of all things Indian for a Western audience.

Another way in which Dalrymple moves beyond the position of author to that of "expert" is through his reviews. The assumption implicit in the genre is that the reviewer has a level of knowledge at least equivalent to or higher than than the author of the book that is being reviewed, and is certainly more knowledgeable than the general reader. Dalrymple uses his numerous reviews to position himself and maintain the arguments developed in his monographs. For example, many of Dalrymple's reviews share the anti-academic sentiment of *The Last Mughal*. In his appraisal of Nicholas Dirks' *The Scandal of Empire*, published in the *New York Review of Books*, Dalrymple states: "the references point toward research based largely on secondary published material, with an emphasis on the theoretical work of Dirks's academic friends and colleagues in postcolonial studies" ("Plain Tales"). He argues that the work was produced in an academic atmosphere that is necessarily closed and self-referential. The ways in which Dalrymple responds to the texts he reviews, particularly those directly in his field such as Dirks', help to reveal the mechanics of his own self-construction. This emphasis on primary sources (placed in direct opposition to academic, theoretical and postcolonial work) shows Dalrymple's continuing reliance on his status as travel writer,

privileging first-hand, experiential, eye-witness accounts over a more scholarly approach: “My principal objection was that Dirks ... seems to have accessed surprisingly few primary sources in the course of his research, and certainly no primary source in any Indian language” (“Scandal of Empire”).

Tony Ballantyne’s scholarly review of *The Scandal of Empire* forms a contrast to Dalrymple’s responses to Dirks’ work, although both express similar reservations about the text. Where Dalrymple focuses on Dirks’ academic connections and the downfalls of theory, Ballantyne provides a more engaged analysis, with statements such as:

[Dirks’] use of scandal as an analytical lens lacks precision and is unconvincing: although he frequently asserts the centrality of scandal in the operation of the empire, he does not effectively demonstrate the ways in which scandal actually drove wars of conquest or enabled the extension of colonial authority on the ground. (430)

Ballantyne concludes that, due to Dirks’ comparisons of “George W. Bush’s America and Edmund Burke’s Britain” (430): “Ultimately, *The Scandal of Empire* will be primarily of value to future historians of American intellectual life who want to assess the debates around the American invasion of Iraq, but this is not a work that really pushes the historiography of colonial India or the British empire in any new directions” (431). In contrast, Dalrymple, less interested in “new directions” for imperial historiography, objects to Dirks “roundly criticizing the work of those historians of the [East India] company who have gone before him.” The gulf between these responses to the same work highlights the ways in which reviews function beyond their capacity for

evaluating the text in question. Dalrymple employs reviews of histories as platforms to advance his own arguments about imperial historiography, which inevitably value experiential forms of authority.

His journalism betrays this tendency, too, as seen when denouncing those capitalising on the events of 11 September 2001: “in the past few months there has been a stream of ‘instant books’ on September 11, as self-appointed experts on ‘Islamic terrorism’ have popped up to offer their musings on a religion that—judging by their work—few seem to have encountered in person” (“Islam’s Outcasts”). Such statements highlight the centrality of Dalrymple’s self-positioning as a cosmopolitan figure whose authority is derived from personal encounters with his subjects. This self-construction exists in tandem with the character of the historian as passionate traveller and researcher, boldly presenting his forays into what is represented as “virgin” archival territory (as opposed to sullied and derivative scholarship).

Dalrymple writes and reviews regularly, and is published in high profile and popular newspapers and periodicals, including, but not limited to, the *Times*, the *New Statesman*, the *Guardian*, the *Independent*, the *New York Review of Books* and the *Washington Post*. Thus, through his articles and reviews, in combination with his monographs, Dalrymple functions as a gatekeeper figure, mediating both popular and academic texts, debates and scholarship. Dalrymple possesses the power of a celebrity as one who is, by virtue of their fame, given “greater presence and a wider scope of activity and agency than are those who make up the rest of the population” (Marshall ix).

Dalrymple's journalism—essays, reviews, and articles—works to broaden and maintain his status as an authority on Indian history, politics and culture. The value of his particular, ethnographically-inspired invocation of experiential authority, combined with his move into the archives in his narrative history works, is extensive.

The heady combination of Dalrymple's travel and accumulated experience of India, alongside his successful forays into the archives, has enabled this elevation in his status. The two elements combine to advance the representation of Dalrymple as simultaneously knowledgeable about historical and contemporary India. The immediacy of travel negates the suggestion of irrelevance which can (however unfairly) beset even "celebrity" historians, and the weight of history counters the potential frivolity of the traveller. Dalrymple also appears to relish the necessary publicity, which Aviva Tuffield documents in the course of an interview about *White Mughals*: "When I suggest that he might resent this extended promotional work, Dalrymple quickly interjects: 'Not at all. I enjoy it. Writing is a grind and this is the reward. I'm a terrible show-off and love performing.'" The combination of all of these elements with Dalrymple's clever self-fashioning contributes to his undiminished popularity.

In an analysis of Dalrymple's self-representation in the fields of travel and history, the figure of V.S. Naipaul is an appropriate parallel. As Rob Nixon's carefully argued *London Calling: V.S. Naipaul, Postcolonial Mandarin* shows, Naipaul is a master of the strategic characterisation of the author. Nixon describes *London Calling* as "working through the consequences of the rhetorical ambience of exile and detachment that surrounds Naipaul's

nonfictional persona” (19). Both Naipaul and Dalrymple work at increasing and maintaining their authority by the means of their self-positioning through their works of non-fiction (and, simultaneously, through their presence in the public sphere).

Travel writing has often been perceived as the poor cousin of fiction (which is seen as “real” literature), and a common defence of the travel genre is that it possesses the same recourse to invention and imagination as fiction. Fussell works hard to defend what he sees as Robert Byron’s “masterpiece” (79) *The Road to Oxiana* by highlighting the efforts that the author went to and the literary conventions that he followed, stating: “it seems not to be a fiction. But it is. It is an artfully constructed quest myth in the form of an apparently spontaneous travel diary” (95-96). Nixon shows that, in an entirely opposite way, travel writing’s non-fictional nature can provide more cultural capital than fiction. He notes that:

[Naipaul’s] prestige as a novelist has surely assisted him in sustaining his high profile as an interpreter of the postcolonial world. However, by venturing into travel writing and journalism he has garnered a reputation of a different order, one that goes beyond the conventionally literary to the point where—in those border regions where British and American belles-lettres meet popularized political thought—he is treated as a mandarin possessing a penetrating, analytic understanding of Third World societies. In short, he has grown into an “expert.” (4)

Nixon’s description of Naipaul’s use of the modes of authority supplied by travel writing has significant resonances with Dalrymple and his work: “travel

literature, as a hybrid genre, places two quite different styles of authority at Naipaul's disposal: a semiethnographic, distanced, analytic mode and an autobiographical, subjective, emotionally entangled mode. Naipaul maximizes his discursive power by alternating between these forms of authority" (15). Both Naipaul and Dalrymple are inherently conservative in their arguments, despite their self-positioning as individuals with the courage to stand up to orthodoxy. They affect, albeit in different and nuanced ways, the persona of the nineteenth-century British gentleman. Naipaul is represented as an "expert" in a wide, third world, field whereas Dalrymple becomes an authority on India and Islam. This is due in significant part to their use of self-positioning as, simultaneously, outside, inside and between the cultures they are writing about and those that they are writing for:

The empirical and even moral authority of his travel writing has been tied to an interpretation of Naipaul as truly uncompromised by national and political attachments. According to this reading, he possesses a singular capacity to marry the roles of insider and outsider, thereby ostensibly achieving an impartial style of apprehension. (Nixon 18)

Notions of diaspora and marginality are central here, despite the strange nature of such labels for Dalrymple, given his privileged, upper-class position. Naipaul achieves this "marriage" of the personal and the marginal to a greater degree than Dalrymple. However, Dalrymple's case is important because he manages to reach a comparable style of self-positioning without Naipaul's brown skin, and the constant reminder of otherness (for a white, Western audience) that this visual marker brings.

Dalrymple works to project this image of nomadic otherness onto / over his white, privileged subjectivity through regular emphasis on the time that he has spent away from the United Kingdom. He emphasises his disconnectedness through statements such as:

this is not unique to the travel writer or traveller: any diaspora feels the same. You talk to any Indian kid brought up here [in the UK] but sent back to the Punjab for school holidays with all their cousins in the Punjab. ...there is a bit of them that can never be entirely English and there is a bit of them which is always English when they go to the Punjab. Travellers have the same dilemma if they spend enough time away. (Interview with Tim Youngs 46)

Dalrymple compounds this self-representation as a cosmopolitan, travelling figure through his wardrobe, which features a combination of Indian kurtas and a particular style of travel-inflected clothes. These take their tone from what has become costume shorthand for the quintessential (moneyed, male) traveller: the rumpled linen shirt, well-made, well-scuffed brown leather shoes and so on. The aesthetic achieved is certainly wilfully anachronistic in the age of microfibre materials and drip-dry travel-wear. In an interview with Dalrymple for *The Age*, Tuffield notes: “His enthusiasm is one of the first things I notice about him—along with the ‘seasoned traveller’ look that he has got down pat, wearing a crumpled collarless blue shirt and creased cream linen pants.” Dalrymple’s wardrobe choices advance connections with India and also with those inter-war British travellers like Byron and Waugh that Fussell

eulogises in *Abroad*. For Fussell, Waugh is “a hero of British skepticism and empiricism” (202). Of Byron, he enthuses:

Deeply infused with his humanistic curiosity, the travel book in his hands becomes a vehicle of scholarship, but without forfeiting outrage and humour, and without forgoing a generous comic embrace of all the anomalies and dislocations synonymous with travel. (79)

His material construction, through its anachronistic nature, casts him as somewhat removed from contemporary British society, without compromising his overall Britishness. What emerges is a slightly eccentric figure who appears more at home travelling, or in the archives, than within a particular nation or national identity.

Dalrymple’s self-representation is not static. It changes in nuance according to the situation (and which of his texts are under discussion). For example, when undertaking interviews and other publicity events surrounding the publication of *White Mughals*, he cuts a much more Orientalist figure (as opposed to the travel-inflected persona attached to *Nine Lives*). Jackie Kemp describes Dalrymple, his home and family in the course of her interview with him at the time of the publication of *Nine Lives*: “Dressed in a flowing kurta, eating weetabix under a sunshade on the verandah of his Delhi home, he demonstrates in his own life a supreme ability to reconcile the cultural collisions that make up this complex continent.” Here Dalrymple directly embodies his work and his arguments. The most obvious instance of Dalrymple’s self-fashioning is in relation to the publication of *White Mughals*. Natasha Mann describes visiting his home in the United Kingdom in order to

interview the author: “The house is all pretty England outside, but full of possessions from Dalrymple’s Indian life inside: Indian music is playing when I arrive, and there’s a pungent aroma of burning incense.” This self-representation is heightened by Dalrymple’s emphasis on his attachment to the central female character in *White Mughals*, Khair un-Nissa. In an interview with Tuffield, he relates the story of “catching his eight-year-old daughter showing a friend that [paperback edition] cover picture and saying something about ‘Daddy’s girlfriend’!”

Due to the sheer number of interviews and publicity events that Dalrymple undertakes alongside the release of each of his monographs, there arises an inevitable amount of repetition. The same anecdotes are shared, the same description of how each text functions is given, and the ways in which Dalrymple represents himself are consistent, though they shift in nuance with each text. The extent to which the answers to similar interview questions quickly take on a rehearsed quality is important. Such a recognition is not intended as a criticism, rather as a means of highlighting the structured nature of the book tour. That Dalrymple’s press engagements generally repeat themselves works against an argument for a dismissal of his interview comments or writers’ festival reading choices as “off-the-cuff” or “random” and therefore deserving of less analysis. The uniformity of his publicity appearances shows the extent to which each element is part of Dalrymple’s performance and persona. Particularly resonating examples in this context are the extracts and anecdotes chosen to illustrate Dalrymple’s texts. Stephen Greenblatt enumerates the power of the anecdote as representative—it is

“significant in terms of a larger progress or pattern” (3). His image of anecdotes being “seized in passing from the swirl of experiences and given some shape,” highlights the anecdote’s character as simultaneously casual and representative of a larger truth (3).

In Dalrymple’s promotion of *White Mughals* the anecdote chosen is invariably the tale of Sir David Ochterlony and his thirteen wives parading nightly around Delhi on their individual elephants. This story, in the text’s endnotes, turns out to be “folklore” (514). The excerpts chosen to represent *The Last Mughal* always include a reading of what Dalrymple introduces as Zafar’s “final” poetry, lamenting the fall of Delhi. The endnotes of *The Last Mughal* reveal that the poetry recited is not written by Zafar (473). These mitigating sources behind the fragments that Dalrymple repeatedly chooses to represent his texts are not mentioned in his readings, interviews or public events. This is particularly important given the aura of “truth” that surrounds Dalrymple’s works of history, and which is bound up in his arguments for the value of narrative history and its ability to entertain as well as inform the reader. Likewise, in the case of his *Nine Lives* concert tour, Dalrymple represents the performances as a simple translation from text to stage. This representation does not appear to be limited by the (much subsumed) fact that only two of the performers feature in Dalrymple’s text.

Dalrymple’s self-fashioning is effected through his journalism, monographs, reviews, public appearances and, lately, stage-shows. His growing celebrity and expert status highlights the success of this self-positioning in relation to the modes of authority available to the travel writer

and narrative historian: the uncontested truth of autobiographical assertions; the detached, objective findings of the ethnographically-inclined participant observer; and, crucially, the continual shifting between the two. Analysis of *The Age of Kali* and *Nine Lives* illustrates the ways in which Dalrymple's travel, history and journalistic writing work together to reinforce his self-fashioning as an authority and to carry his arguments about past and contemporary relationships between India and Britain into the public sphere. That both Dalrymple's self-representation and his version of Britain's imperial past are suffused with nostalgia for a particular idealised, sentimental vision of empire as a place of hybridity and symbiotic relationships is significant.

Writers such as Dalrymple, who fall somewhere in between the "literary" high-brow and the popular, best-selling types of contemporary travel writing, have received little in the way of critical examination. This thesis, through its focus on the popular works of Dalrymple, highlights the importance of this overlooked area. David Carter makes the point (in relation to fiction) that "neither literary criticism nor cultural studies have had much to say about that broad domain of culture that is neither auratically high nor happily popular—the vast middle where high culture values are folded into the commodity form of quality entertainment or discerning lifestyle choice" (174). The self-improvement or self-educational aspect of middlebrow reading is integral: "Reading is being deployed for exercises in 'self-fashioning' in which class privilege is rendered as a form of social conscience" (Carter 198). This aspect of the author / reader relationship further cements Dalrymple's position as "expert," as his work is situated as educational and improving for the reader.

Dalrymple's combination of autobiographical and archival authorities and his positioning of his later texts as strictly non-fiction, satisfy the self-educational impulse of middlebrow readership.

English and Frow enumerate the difficulties encountered relating the subject of the (fiction) writer's texts to their authorial persona: "books are not performances of a persona in the way that a film or a song can be taken to be: the figure of the writer does not occupy the stage as that of the performer does" (English and Frow 52). When considering works such as Dalrymple's first-person, heavily autobiographical travel and history texts, however, the subject and the figure of the author are blurred in the eyes of readers and stage show audiences.

Dalrymple's autobiographical presence is the central thread that runs through all of his works. Also common to Dalrymple's monographs is a continually positive representation of the British imperial past. He nostalgically portrays British colonial relations in India (and the Middle East) as a syncretic, hybrid model to be admired, emulated and cherished for its attractive idiosyncrasies. This enables a representation of empire as an early version of a sentimentally characterised globalisation. While an attractive notion, such an investment in a vision of a global, humanist cosmopolitanism is necessarily achieved through a denial or elision of the violence and power disparities inherent in imperialism.

Dalrymple's growing celebrity, and his spread over multiple genres and various media platforms, is significant. The expert status with which he is conferred, in combination with this media saturation, could see Dalrymple's

version of India (past and present) becoming the popularly accepted norm. That such a nostalgic, anachronistic, Orientalist interpretation of India achieves this level of popularity is perhaps unsurprising—the vision of cross-cultural cosmopolitanism that it advocates is an attractive one—however, such an overwhelmingly positive representation of empire requires appropriate balances.

Stephen Greenblatt's succinct assessment that "Representational practices are ideologically significant" (4) is particularly resonant with texts as popular as Dalrymple's. Lisle recounts the travel genre's importance in the colonial era for spreading Orientalist tropes throughout the wider population: "unlike academic texts, travelogues were able to disseminate the power relations of Empire to a much wider audience" (28). This popular range applies equally today, enabled by new, multi-media strategies for audience engagement.

Dalrymple's frequent collapsing of the temporal boundaries between past and contemporary India means that his representation of the past impacts on readers' conceptions of the present. Dalrymple's oeuvre does not challenge longstanding Orientalist representations of India (or the East, or Islam). Instead, it reinforces them. The evident popularity of these views might be expected, given their symbolic power yet it is crucial to question these comfortable, Orientalist representations in order to move beyond inherited imperial attitudes and narratives.

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