

## Postmodern Doubleness of ‘Fact’ and ‘Fiction’ in Meta – History: The White Mughals as a Historiographic Metafiction

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**Abstract:** *The postmodern school of New Historicism with its critical and dialogical reasoning highlights the silencing of the untold. The present study delineates how the White Mughals is beautifully reflecting the postmodern tendencies of writing Meta- history. The theoretical framework of the study is based on the postmodern notion of Historiographic Metafiction to analyse the text of William Dalrymple’s The White Mughals as this work deals with the rewriting of Anglo-Indian history of two faded glories during the late Eighteenth century. To analyze the text, this study has drawn out the theoretical stance as advocated by Linda Hutcheon as her postmodernist approach deal with a range of theoretical methodologies including postmodern debates on the construction of history and cultural concern relating to the representation of ‘truth’ and ‘meaning’ in human archeology. This research is significant for its postmodern perspective to ‘defamiliarize’ the canonical aspects of the text. It deconstructs the existing ideology of writing traditional histories and it encapsulates all the forms of ‘defferance’ and ‘deviance’. This research paper investigates that how the postmodern discourse of Dalrymple blurs the ideological notion of “Fact and Fiction” in the White Mughals- a fragmentary note of Indian social history of unplanned intermingling of cultures that led towards ‘Chutnification’.*

**Key Words:** *New Historicism, Meta-history, Historiographic Re-presentation, Duplicity.*

### 1. Introduction

The discipline of History has been thought to be objective and Truth –eye of history is the very claim of Greco- Roman philosopher Polybius. This research paper focuses on how postmodern philosophy of historiography “refiguring the socio-cultural field” (Montrose, ‘Professing the Renaissance’, as cited in New Historicism by Vaseer, 1989, p.17) of studies and how historical narratives can work within the realms of “truth” and “fiction”. In this age of relativity, the notion of “truth” has become a volatile concept where the reader appreciates the writer’s play or the act of manipulation in the textuality of history. The postmodern historiography not only challenged the objectivity of historical writing as ‘truth’; but also in these empirically validated facts and events the historian required

the imaginative links to put them in a coherent and compact whole of the past historical facts.

The researcher investigates through the textual analysis of 'The White Mughals' that history does not only serve as a 'mirror' rather it becomes a paradigmatic approach to realize the voices of lost social and cultural turns of histories. This research paper also focuses that how a postmodern consciousness marks the end of Eurocentric claim of 'primacy of origin' and leads towards the plurality of cultures. It also investigates that how the 'White Mughals' is the deconstruction of the existing ideology that history is separated from literature. This postmodern technique of meta-narrative is used by Dalrymple in 'THE WHITE MUGHALS' –an icon of global and cultural history. Dalrymple tries to search surprising patterns, twists and variations in his experiences of India. He successfully re-invents the state of Hyderabad with its beautiful landscape as well as a beautiful story of love that focuses a particular period in the history of Hyderabad Deccan. "They are true places, they depict strange marriage between history and fiction, and because there is no single truth, no single India" (Crane 1987, p. 2). It was a beautiful combination of the eastern and the western duplicity/doubleness that gives the White Mughals a universal appeal.

## 2. Analytic Framework

The Postmodern technique of Historiographic Meta-fiction reflects its own cultural rationale, conceptual framing and usage. This textual investigation of The White Mughals is based on the analytical framework as devised by Linda Hutcheon. In the Meta-narratives, "History is not made obsolete; it is being rethought as a human construct" (Hutcheon, 2004). The 'past' exists only through its "textualize accessibility". This takes historical narrative towards a poststructuralist tendency of intertextuality. This textualized history leads towards the loss of referent and this textualized historical text leads towards the "indeterminacy of signifying process" (Montrose, 'Professing the Renaissance', as cited by Vaseer, 1989, p. 23). Textuality of history links it with that of imaginative fiction that forces the reader "suspension of belief as well as disbelief" in words of (MacHall as cited by Malpes 2005, p.24). So history becomes a fictional act to describe events through the medium of language that in turn becomes a world of reality.

So the Historiographic Metafiction constructs a "narrative history that is based on facts" (Hutcheon, 2004, p. 122). The distinction between 'facts' and 'events' are maintained by many historians but the postmodern debate on historicity is above this distinction of 'facts' and 'events', both are merged in one factual truth "as if facts are events to which we have given meaning" (Hutcheon 2004, p. 57). According to Hutcheon, the biographical memoir has a long history in fiction, to take an individual past event and to make it a public history, "if the personal

is the political than the traditional separation between private and public history must be rethought” (Hutcheon, 2004, p.160-161). Therefore, Historiographic Meta-fiction is a form of literary technique that takes into account the duplicity of ‘fact’ and ‘fiction’. Dalrymple reconstructs a biographical hi/story of Kirkpatrick’s life who as a young Captain intending to share the Whiteman’s burden to conquer India but in turn enmeshes into the web of seductive beauty of Khair-u-Nisa. This research paper investigates that how Dalrymple successfully deconstructs a macro- historical event into a micro- historical segment in order to “substitute the diachronic text of autonomous history to the synchronic text of a cultural system” (Montrose, ‘Professing the Renaissance’ as cited by Vaseer, 1989, p. 17). He gives it a form of public history.

The researcher explores the text of *The White Mughals* as an ambivalence of ‘fact’ and ‘fiction’ and it justifies itself as a Historiographic Metafiction.

### **Analysis & Discussion**

This research paper searches a deep structural change from the political history of Empire towards the cultural dimensions of Anglo- Indian history. The change was there, and the Indo-Islamic Civilization was fading and it gave birth to another more powerful and influential Anglo-Indian civilization. The hybrid civilization of Deccan was more ‘eclectic and open’ like its contemporary Renaissance Italy to the outsiders. It had a strange ability to seduce and assimilate those who entered into its premises. Dalrymple asserted, “India had a strange ways with her conquerors. In defeat, she beckons them then slowly seduces, assimilates and transforms them” (Dalrymple, 2002, p. 11).

The author of the study investigates that how the Indian sub-continent was presented as the most feminized existence and this phallogocentric discourse of *The White Mughals* provided a rationale for the European Colonization. Where the title of the book with half faced portrait of Khair reflected the half existence of the Indian lands and it must be completed with the union or the liaison with the west. As it was maintained by Said justified ‘the Whiteman’s burden’ that was based on a self-serving history in which the West constructed the East and sort out areas of hybridity and cultural assimilation that led towards Chutnification.

According to Hutcheon, Historiographic Metafiction asserts the specificity and particularity of an individual past event. *The White Mughals* presents the cross-cultural saga of love between the British Resident and the Indian noble lady of Hyderabad. Dalrymple’s knowledge of history is based on his extensive four year research in order to ‘fill in’ what the state historians ignored as something very much personal. Dalrymple deconstructed Scott’s ideology “Historian will have little toleration for a romance founded upon history” (Peveril of the Peak, 1823) as postmodern historiographer duplicity of fact and fiction was successfully

manipulated by Dalrymple. Hutcheon's claim of historical and fictional existed within this historical narrative as complementary links and Dalrymple as a deconstructionist successfully fabricated the threads of "private" and "public" history. According to the Poetics of Postmodernism, "if the personal is the political then the traditional separation between private and public history must be rethought" (Hutcheon, 2004, p. 160-161). So *The White Mughals* became a biographical reconstruct as history was not obsolete, it was an interaction of textual production and reception. Dalrymple found Kirkpatrick's letter in Indian office library that how a letter from Indian office Library that stimulated Dalrymple to write about Kirkpatrick and Khair was "the reality of the past but a textualized accessibility to us today" (Hutcheon, 2004, p. 114). Here in this textual study, 'Meta fictionally' investigates its status as fiction and its relation to truth- as a reality. *The White Mughals*- the very title raised question who were these White Mughals. The Mughal's influence eclipsed after 1707 with the death of Aurangzeb. Kirkpatrick-the Manipulating Machiavelli (*The White Mughals*- 2002) entered into its realm in 1795 as 'cocky young imperialist to conquer it'. He had his own European existence. The Nizam' belonged to some Afaghani tribe; Shushattri's belonged to some Iranian origin. Nobody was directly or indirectly belonged to the Mughal Dynasty. The Mughals were the celebrity of the Sub-continent, the dreamy world of the orient, intoxicated landscape and a bewitching beauty of Khair on the title page produce a 'complex system of star icon' emergence as a product in this consumer society that generates 'Simulacra'. This created;

The whole culture of the image or the simulacrum; a consequent weakening of historicity both in our relationship to public history and in the new forms of our private temporality (Jameson, 1997, p. 1)

Dalrymple according to Holland and Huggan 'trade on' and played on what was termed by Rento Ronaldo "Imperialist Nostalgia" as discussed by (Monika, 2014). He tries to mythicize history that actually represents the modified past. According to Lukacs the historical narrative was "the organic genealogy of the bourgeois collective project". In this postmodern era, this redemptive historiography constructed; "For the resurrection of the dead of anonymous and silenced generations, the retrospective dimension indispensable to any vital reorientation of our collective future (Jameson, 1997).

This study focuses on the strategies of writing which is the outcome of the writer's self-reflexivity. *The White Mughals* was a first person narrative "I" who in search of truth passed through different archives- textualized entities to reach what was said by Hyden White "a product of his own choice, emphasis and interpretation". Historiographic Metafiction is not the question of the 'epistemological' and 'ontological' status of historical facts. It is the acceptance of the notion that history endowed not only with 'truth' but also with 'meaning'. It is an acknowledgment of the meaning making function of human construction that this personal event

of Kirkpatrick life gave an access to those voices that were rarely heard in the analytic or scientific histories of the past.

According to Hutcheon, the narrative historiography is entangled by nostalgia in its critical, dialogical reviewing of the forms, contents and value of the past (Hutcheon, 2004, p.88, 89). The researcher investigates that Dalrymple gives a very much Eurocentric turn to the liaison between Kirkpatrick and Khair, no doubt, in this cross cultural saga, Dalrymple presented the picture of perceived reality but whose 'reality' it is? Though the picture created in the *White Mughals* deals with a very 'locale' culture that is opposite to the imperially colored history of the British Raj in India, but here, history does not serve as a replica rather it was an attempt to revive the voices and perceptions of lost social and cultural version of history.

Historiographic Metafiction develops a close association between Marxism, Feminism, etc as presented by Hutcheon. In the *White Mughals*, it moves beyond Marxist to Post Marxist world, a world where power circulates everywhere in the form of an unending proliferation of exchange' (Foucault, 1988). When Kirkpatrick entered into the Dynasty of Nizam of Hyderabad, India was beginning to change; the Britisher's land became more and more 'un-Indianised'. In this narrative memoir, the process of exchange has gone beyond the exchange of goods and money. Here it moves beyond that state where people are exchanged through the institutions as religions and marriages. Even ideologies are exchanged through different 'discourses' of cultural representation. This 'decentring' of totality of history negates the single explanation of historical past because absolute certainty was a mere illusion. As an anti-historian, Foucault gives new economy of power relations that "is everywhere; and it comes from everywhere; so it is not an agency or structure" (Foucault, 1977, p. 63).

The researcher observes how this Post-Marxism involves in the form of strategies, conspiracies and tactics. "Meticulous ritual of Power" operates and how it is localized and 'how knowledge is entangled in the pity politics of domination' in Foucault's perspective. The State of Hyderabad had become a vital strategic asset of the Eighteenth century 'cold war without whose friendship and support no 'Power' could gain dominance in India. It was a world of Power that became a beautiful combination of Power and Knowledge. Kirkpatrick was one of "those Victorian Racial Theorists who were richly embedded with "colonial desire--- an obsession with sexuality, fertility and hybridity" (Young, p, 1). The 17<sup>th</sup> century Europeans;

Intend on making their fortunes and quite prepared to change and change again their clothes, their political alliance and their religion or even ready to circumcise (The *White Mughals*, 2002, p. 15).

Kirkpatrick was one of those who passed through the same process in the Dynasty of Nizam Ali Khan. He described as a Musselman who wore dress of the finest texture. He smoked

hookah, wore Indian style mustachios, his hair cropped very short and his fingers dyed with henna. The British Residency of Kirkpatrick was a good example of what was said by Kipling 'a monstrous hybridism'. This 'creolization' is a powerful tool to deal with the existing cultural differences in this state of Hyderabad. He was a successful manipulator of the game. This blending and crossing is not something new but it got political significance in this postmodern drama of the White Mughals. That was beautifully depicted the colonial history of Indian past and multicultural drama of the present.

For Foucault, "Power is productive, and it produces the domain of reality". Kirkpatrick successfully mastered the manners of the Nizam's court with his gift of gab. This linguistic capability along his acquaintance with the manners, customs and laws of India became an escape route from the drudgery of military services. The Hybrid Machiavelli was successfully manipulated Foucault's theory of exclusion; he became the 'beloved son' or the 'Hushmat Jung' and the French were exited from the stage of Hyderabad as prisoners of war. This inside/ outside dichotomy were changed into a new representation of center/ margins. It was the very first step of becoming Nawab to Sahib and this hybridity was led towards the process of colonization. The manipulator of the game enjoyed the position of the Resident formally. Power was correlated with resistance; without resistance there were no power relations. Kirkpatrick in his elation had little idea that how he was caught in a trap set by Aristu Jah to revenging on Mir Alam Shushattri.

Kirkpatrick's libido was endangering everything. For Young, "Colonial desire constituted by a dialectic of attraction and repulsion" (Young, p. 166). This liaison between Kirkpatrick and Khair-u-Nisa became the most scandalous subject. This romantic love was the outcome, as maintained by Foucault; of reciprocal relation with its economic edge. Seducing Mir Alams' cousin had clear political implications. Kirkpatrick as a colonial agent played a role for the specificity of competing histories forced together in unnatural unions by Colonialism. For Young, no culture was presented itself completely away from the center. It would be resulted into the 'Patch work of identities'. This ambivalent desire of 'Capital Machine' was

the obsessional tale of disjunctive connections between territories and bodies caught up in a process of breaks and flows, coupling and uncoupling , crossing, mixing, overturning structures and orders" (Young 1995, p.165).

Colonial desire was constituted by dialectic of attraction and repulsion (Young1995, p. 166). He was attracted as well as repelled by this ambivalent desire of Capitalistic Machine. Overtly he did not oppose of his children being brought up as Muslim. He felt comfortable in his Hyderabad dress but he did not discard the demands of his deeply ingrained white blood. He had one thing quite clear, both in his letter to his father and in his will that his children should be baptized after their arrival in England. For Young, "Exotic Romance is one thing and its dusky

human consequences are another". He replicated in himself the behavior, attitude, and attire and built for his Khair 'Eden like Idyll of Magnificent New Residency' (Dalrymple 2002, p. 378).

Still, there always lay a great unspoken sadness; the knowledge of the egg-shell fragility of this creation. He was paranoid (meant a total engulfment by somebody else's system) with this Anglo-Indian dilemma of existence. He felt "a dread that someone else is patterning your life that there are all sorts of plots afoot to rob you of your autonomy of thought and action" (Tanner, *City Of Words* as cited by Sim, 2001, p. 129). He felt comforted that his children were as white as the member of his family. The resemblance of his children with Handsome Colonel was a token of their survival in this racially prejudice world of the western discourse. Without a stamp from England his children were turned to sink to the margins.

The British imperial history was written with the sole aim of highlighting the existing binaristic approach of equally mythical Whiteness 'no sun can tan them' and equally subaltern blackness of the Indians. A very Eurocentric dichotomy of self/ other- Britishness/otherness, when these two signifiers combine, here is 'the third space of Bhabha' the hybrid 'The White Mughals' in words of Derrida become 'the hybrid of inside and outside'(Derrida1987, p. 63). This mythical representation of the European Bourgeois was dynamically represented itself into the discourse of Power and privilege by the writer.

The distinctive feature of postmodernism according to Linda was encapsulated in a "whole sale commitment to doubleness" such doubleness acknowledged in an ambivalence or duplicity of meanings. It was prevailed throughout this narrative as a nation, gender, class and as an individual.

In this state of Hyderabad, we have the black colonized and the White settlers, the East India Company Capitalists and the rule of Nizam of Hyderabad, it became a hub of margins and centers; these margins and centers fuse, fracture and intersect in this historical narrative. The rewriting of history played 'duplicity' of its existence in a duality of 'factual' and 'fictional'. The power discourse of a white man can be identified as postmodern in form and postcolonial in its context as Mukherjee claimed that Historiographic Re-presentation was basically a combination of postmodernism and post colonialism by including both of the discourses to highlight the stories of the unexplored truths.

Cultural hybridity leads towards cultural assimilation- a process whereby individuals or groups of different ethnic identities absorbed in the dominant culture. According to Linda, rewriting of history in this postmodern era is not only for its 'pastness' but for its 'presentness'. The doubleness of Fact and Fiction that has become the part of the historical narrative is not a postmodern discovery rather it is the acceptance of the fact that history is endowed with 'truth' and 'meaning'. Both history and fiction are discourses and both make a system of signification

(Hutcheon, 2004, p. 88) by which we perceive the presentness of the past. Dalrymple's 'I' of the historian of all totalizing power invoked the Cartesian Subject as the originator of meaning set a discourse of a Whiteman. Where one culture tried to present another culture, the power function of discourse was intensified because he was trying to depict 'the ontological othering' in this postmodern era.

Dalrymple gave a very much Eurocentric discourse or a myopic conclusion to the story to revise the stereotypes of the Victorian and Edwardian behavior and attitudes' a world where it was possible for Kipling to write East is East, West is West and never twain shall meet (Dalrymple, 2002, p. xlviii). Like Kirkpatrick, he himself belonged to the third generation of a similar interracial liaison from this period. The researcher finds a reconciliatory note of Dalrymple; "The East and the West are not irreconcilable. They meet and mingle and are assimilated in the past, and will in the Future". The daughter of Khair was a product of forced assimilation. Noor-u-Nisa (Kitty Aurora) was baptized in 1806 at St Marry's Church. She still had a link with the past- a yearning to have a lock of her mother and a warm hug of her grandmother. She was totally absorbed into the upper echelon of the Victorian Society. Carlyle was increasingly fascinated with this lovely person this fascination formed the basis for the heroine Blumine 'a many tinted radiant Aroure- the finest of oriental light bringers in Carlyle's novel "Sartor Resartus". This forced assimilation of the indigenous people was a common phenomenon of European Colonization.

This chunk of Indian socio-cultural History of unplanned mixing of culture led towards 'Chutnification' as said by Salman in *Midnight Children*, 1981 "I reconcile myself to inevitable distortions of the pickling processes". According to Deluze, deterritorialization refers to the weakening of ties between the cultures. It is a process where one culture is changing and it is reinserted into a different and the more powerful culture. This 'dialectic of repulsion and attraction' of the Whiteman's invasion shuffled the existent order of the Hind-Islamic Civilization. It set a discourse for the coming more influential Anglo-Indian civilization.

This process of deterritorialization is still going on in this globalized world, here like Kirkpatrick; Dalrymple becomes an agent of this deterritorialization in this capitalistic society. He is claiming to negate what was asserted by Huntington 'the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not primarily ideological or economical, the dominating sources of conflict will be cultural' (1996, p. 22). He promotes a cultural feature developed by the 'meditization' and 'commodification' to generate new markets for the salability of his product. Fredric Jameson's *Comodified Knowledge* focused not only for its truth value but for its salability value. This effacement of the real by the 'commodification of objects' has played rampant the entire culture. For Jameson, loss of reality had now become a 'field of stylistic and discursive heterogeneity without norm'. This commodified truth of *The White Mughals* leads towards multinational diversification or Globalization.

#### 4. Conclusion

Dalrymple as a postmodern historiographer successfully deconstructs a least known fragment of Anglo-Indian history in the *White Mughals* like a Romantic historiographer. He reconstructs a beautiful saga of the life of Kirkpatrick and Khair-u-Nisa with a tinge of love that is totally absent in the histories of the annalist and the positivist. This historical narrative becomes 'a purely verbal artifact' (White) of 'fact' and 'fiction' and justifies itself as Historiographic Metafiction. Historiographic Metafiction is a postmodern technique of writing in which fact and fiction combine together as yoke into whitening. This postmodern tendency of writing history not only focuses the presentation of reality rather it emphasizes on the events through which reality can be perceived. The personal event of Kirkpatrick's life that becomes political beautifully re-created by Dalrymple into a narrative that offers 'the true historical sense that confirms our existence among countless lost events without a land mark' (Foucault, 1970, p. 155). Here historicity and fictionality blur at many places- is Kirkpatrick really circumcised or not? Is he really converted to Islam or not? If he is not converted to Islam then Khair-un- Nisa really be 'a wife or a Mistress' because it is the truth of that particular society where Keeps become the accepted norm of the day.

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