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NEW HISTORICISM IN DARLYMPLE'S *WHITE MUGHAL*

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ABSTRACT

'New Historicism' is the new genre developed in literature. The traces of this concept can be identified in various works by critics published during 1970's. But the term 'New Historicism' is accurately coined by the American Critic Stephen Greeblatt in his book 'Renaissance Self – Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare'. He simply defined 'New Historicism' as a method based on the parallel reading of literary and non-literary texts usually of the same historical period. A few fiction writers used this concept in their works. One among the few is William Darlymple, a Scotland Writer. His approach towards history is different. He is basically a travel writer. He came up with the good exposure to new and innovative views. Most of his books centres round India, Afghanistan, the Middle East, Mughal rule in India, Terrorism in India etc. In all his writings, he touches the origins of history which is neglected and not cared by many historians.

*White Mughals*: It is a work of social history about the warm relations that existed between the British and some Indians in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Darlymple narrates the love story of James Achilles Kirkaptrick and Khair-Un-Nissa , an Indian Muslim lady. While narrating the story, he reveals the truth which is confined to the Indian archives.

**Key words:** New Historicism, travel works, literary and non – literary works.

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INTRODUCTION

New Historicism, a new theory was first quoted and published during the 1970. Later it was coined and developed by the American critic Stephen Greenblatt whose book *Renaissance Self-Fashioning from More to Shakespeare* and it is usually regarded as its beginning. A simple definition of the New Historicism is that it is a method based on the parallel reading of literary and non-literary texts usually of the same historical period. That is to say, New Historicism refused to privilege the literary text, envisages and practices a mode of study in which literary and non- literary texts are given equal weight and constantly inform or interrogate each other. This new historical perspective is effectively used by the new Scottish writer "William Darlymple".

New Historicism in the fiction 'White Mughals' : Darlymple's approach towards history is different. Basically, he is a travel writer who comes up with good exposure to new and innovative views. He brought history of different eras by juxtaposing literary and non- literary texts. His approach to history memorizes the words of Hutcheon –

To write history – or historical fiction – is equally to narrate, to reconstruct by means of selection and interpretation. History is made by its writer, even if events are made to seem to speak for themselves. (Hutcheon1985).

He reconstructed history with different interpretations. To make his literary project more effective, he travelled all over the country , spent four years with Indians, shared the tradition , culture , language and eventually turned himself semi – Indian. His meticulous utilization of resources can be identified in his fiction and non-fiction. One of his historic fictions is 'White Mughals'. He used the term "White Mughals" to refer to those British men whom he represents as embracing aspects of Mughal life & culture. 'White Mughals' is a fascinating and enthralling love story of James Achilles Kirkpatrick, an East India Company resident at the court of Nizam of Hyderabad and Khair-Un-Nissa, daughter of Hyderabad noble family. While narrating the story of their mutual love and respect against the odds, Darlymple covers the pitfalls of academic & traditional history and also the anecdotes of archival resources. It was said by many that to write 'White Mughals' Darlymple apparently adopted Hyderabadhi clothes and Hyderabad methods of living. The text relationship with history is deployed through a series of stories that Darlymple came across in his four years journey in Hyderabad. His ease in following every historical monuments, important figures and events make him an ideal guide to its past. If Hyderabad does not change, Darlymple can gain physical access to its past through his presence there and can set himself as a guide for the readers.

Darlymple's quest for deep-rooted history owes a debt to Hayden's White Meta History. White states "It is sometimes said that the aim of the historian is to explain the past by 'identifying' or 'uncovering' the 'stories' that lie buried in chronicles." He continued his assertion by emphasizing that "interpretation & explanation are central to the historians task. (White 1973)

The role of archival serendipity functions not only to reinforce the sense of a single possible narrative, but also work towards the representation of White Mughal 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" document to the positioning of White Mughals cannot be overstated – they "completely transformed" the text.

Darlymple highlighted the originality of his text in the preface of the text:

None of these (Persian & Urdu) sources had ever been translated into English, and so were virgin territory for those unfamiliar with either 19<sup>th</sup> century Deccani Urdu or the heavily Indianised Persian that the manuscripts were written in which meant virtually everyone bar a handful of elderly Hyderabad scholars. (Darlymple XXXIV2002)

He continued his words expressing his excitement and challenging methods in searching the tedious archival work:

The first real break came when I found that Kirkpatrick's correspondence with his brother William , preserved by the taller's descendants the Strachey family, had recently been bought by the India office library.(Darlymple: XXXV2002).

In the same text he said that he located the concept of White Mughals from an article "The Romantic Marriage of Major James Achilles Kirkpatrick, sometime British Resident at the court of Hyderabad" which was published in Black Wood Magazine. The article covers a brief, sentimental, amateur family history focusing the colonial rule. The story that was published in Black Wood Magazine became the backbone of Darlymple's novel. As part of his narration, Darlymple here and there in his fiction described carefully the material properties of his findings:

There were piles of letters books inscribed from my brother James A.K, 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. (Darlymple XXXV-XXXVI 2002).

Such passages in Darlymple's work create a sense of closeness between the reader, the author and his writing process. This meticulous portrayal of historical research emphasizes the beauty of Darlymple's findings. Though Darlymple has gone through many sources, he has not taken the choice of one over another, or any previous interpretations of the author. He created his own style in expressing his views and interpretations. He has faithfully transcribed of the already present but neglected story available in archives.

Duality in *White Mughals*: In 'White Mughals', he tries to show the involvement of East India Company in India as symbiotic and hybridized relationship contrary to the domination and cruelty. He takes dual role in agreeing the truth that the British occupied India and ruled us for two centuries. He precedes well-balanced version of the colonial rule in India. He names colonial rulers as White Mughals and tries to convince his readers that all colonial rulers were not negative, only a few were rude and treated Indians as slaves. He speaks about the different rulers who supported Indians and their tradition. He strongly believes that as long as the British maintained their relations with Indians and respected Indian religions and customs, there were no differences. When the British touched the aspect of racism, differences erupted like volcanic eruption. The last lines in 'White Mughals' reveal it clearly:

The White Mughals – with their unexpected mingling 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. .... only bigotry, prejudice, racism and fear drive them apart.(Darlymple 2002)

Darlymple's dual role is also visible from other corners. He feels that development in India started only because of the British rulers who ruled India. He uses every opportunity to emphasize his point. In the beginning of 'White mughals' he named some rulers like Ochertolony who adopted our culture and supported the Indian systems. Later when the Britishers stopped the earlier methods and adopted their western methods, Darlymple supported it as the development. Not only in *White Mughals*, but also in his other fictions, he writes that the parks, buildings, new designs, railway system, telegrams etc were developed by British. His self representation and his version of British imperials show nostalgia for his empire and for his men.

Indianism in Darlymple: By birth Darlymple is a Scotland citizen. He has good command over the language. He uses very simple language which makes the reader easy to follow. But here and there, he uses Indian words as it is without translating those words in English. This reveals his interest in Indian history and Indian methods. . While producing his texts, he mingled with Indians, used Indian words and eventually tried to change himself as Indian. The characters in his text are lively, unknown to many Indians and the essence he covers is hidden treasure of Indian history. Darlymple excelled in this aspect . The neglected characters of India are revealed to all Indians logically, smartly and sensibly. The meticulous information provided by him is unpointed.

Conclusion: Darlymple would have done little critical examination of the available things but he highlighted the importance of neglected, overlooked areas of Indian History. David Carter makes the point (in relation to fiction) that neither literary criticism nor cultural studies have had much to say about the broad domain of culture that is neither auritically high nor happily popular – the vast middle where high culture values are folded into the commodity for of quality entertainment of discerning life style. His deep and painstaking observation touching every literary and non-literary source is splendid and appreciable. Though not intentionally, but unknowingly he satisfied the basic ideas of New Historicism. So, there is no doubt to bring Dalrymple into the category of few writers who effectively used the principles of New Historicism.

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