CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

*We need to interpret interpretations more than to interpret things*

*Michel Eyquem de Montaigne.*

*But in this interpretation, let not Catachresis occur.*

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The Archives have the records and the records have the past. But the past cannot be conquered by anybody — not as a political moment or as any economic process or as an event of a past occurrence. And because we cannot directly encounter the dead and the buried, we therefore employ a narrative fulfilling a twofold function wherein the past acts like a surrogate to the present and in this way it also acts like an informative medium of exchange which in a manner imparts definitive status to us as
individuals and carriers of the past. The material which is used in order to validate the lost and found pieces of memory is sometimes the documentary evidence. This evidence can be partially reliable and partially unreliable. In the dust of the archive past is hidden and covered from our eyes until we get after it with a forensic lens. And in the process even if we strive going deep in our research, then also we will never be able to peel off all the layers of the past.

As critical analysts and as readers of history, we shall always remember that accounts of the past times in the form of testimonies or documentary evidence on archival shelves are accounts which are heavily laden with cultural meanings. The documentation that exists in the archives is evidence that is processed by the creators of such documents as per the political and social needs of their time. Thus, the very act of creation of archives and the matter which it encapsulates becomes catachrestic in nature. History and historiography thus becomes a catachrestic act which is born out of ideologically constructed constructions. As it becomes ideologically laden and freighted with biases, the narrative with the historical explanations projected on to the pages of the historical text too becomes inadequate and fallacious in character. This in turn can serve to empower the mechanizations that are in force to exercise power directly or indirectly even in the contemporary times. Thus the writing of history is open to catachresis as it involves interpretation of the lost and found sources of the past.
Fig 5.2 The past as it lies on the archival shelves (source: Google)

Today, what exists as history is not real history or reality of history but a fragmented history. It is distorted history. It is manipulated and convoluted history. Past is never full and so it cannot even fulfill the function of making us or the historian familiar with the lost and dead. This kind of approach is that of the deconstructive consciousness. “Deconstructionist history” which is one of the major approaches to study history treats the past as a text to be examined (I too have looked at Dalrymple’s texts with the same approach). According to this approach, history and the past, should be examined for its possibilities and probabilities of meanings and not for the illusions of truthful reality. Living in a post modern world we just cannot overlook history sans its culturally determined power structures.

According to deconstructionist’s, all the content that is based on evidence is textualized and assigned a particular narrative structure. This is the approach which is mostly followed by the modernist historians also to put forward their respective
claims related to their truthful findings. But the ultimate visibility of the correspondence of all such claims that are driven by evidentiary corroboration is what the post modernists question. Therefore the aim of this historical approach (the approach with which this thesis moves forward in dissecting the work of this writer/historian/ethnographer/archival researcher) is to expose the methodological assumptions and claims put forward by all such decoders and encoders of history and historiography.

Through this thesis, I have tried to put forth the case of pragmatic and fallacious nature of the resource banks on which sometimes history depends- the illusionary truth pacts in the archives and in the record files. Firstly, the problematic status of archives being in possession of the ultimate truth about the past is what is looked at (as is done in the Introduction of the thesis). Secondly, I debate that truth claims put forth is not the output of just one supreme claim but it is the result of the historian’s effort v/s the critical analysts dissecting endeavour. It is the Clash of Titians (the historian v/s the critical analyst) who closely and clearly observes the modes of enquiry and the temporal spatial gradient (wherein taking up different texts we critically analyze the same). Thirdly, the contact effect resulting into the contract effect (historians contact with the records, with the people in the records and outside the records results in catachresis which in turn results in conversion of contact into contract or business).

History is not just the outcome of contact zones that transformed the white into native culture or vice versa. It is but about ‘the contact’ that is established between the historian researcher archivist with the data in the archives. It is ‘the contact’ of the ethnographer historian, journeying and journaling in the whole process of uncovering truth and memories which otherwise stand lost and hidden under the
sand-dunes of time, of the dust of the archive. It is ‘the contact’ that is made between
the historian, his story and his reader which is surrogate in form and in character. The
reader should never forget in the process of this contact that the historians contact
with the archives and with history from the archives is a farrago of his contact
transforming into contract. The point here is not that we as readers focus on content of
the historical resource and truth they hold or tell. The point is rather to dissect the
narrative coming to us from the dust of the archive with a critical bent of observative
mind; which decipher well between that what is being ‘told’ and that which is being
‘implied’ otherwise to the readership at large. The observatory demands its reader to
decipher these narratives closely for they are not laden with a difference of content as
the individual author/historian/archivist researcher claims might offer, but on the
contrary plane they are laden with a difference of purpose – heavily packed with
cultural and personal biases.

By using the word biases, this project aspires to pull the attention of any
critical analyst or the reader’s attention to the evidence- informational, documentary,
the proof which themselves are the result of such biases of the past ideologies. This
bias is powerful owing to the hegemonic strings that control them. Histories have ever
been ruled not just by the despot rulers but by such despotic biases which ruled the
head and heart of all such rulers. It was these controllers of power who made up the
power structures and decided its course - of its body, its function and the entire action.
Therefore history which is derived from such structures can never be free from biases,
as it is dominated in principality and functionality by the creators (writers/archivists)
selective approach and then by the historian’s selective hunting.

There are ways in which history and historical writings stand biased in order.
Throwing light on them for the reader, the first is the historians misinterpreting the
evidence found by them as the evidence in any archival organization. If the so called
discovery made by the decoders here is misrepresented or misconstrued by them, then what is the viability of whether their accounts are any bit related to truth or do they stand falsified. Secondly, when the compilers and the projectors of history put forward their versions of the past (a person, institution, event), what they put forward might as well be supported by their justifications around the matter or the content being true to its core. But can the reader or the critical analyst blindly believe all such claims? If they have chosen something there might as well be some omissions driven by deliberate and intentional negations on their part. As a result the histories which reach us might be unbalanced and lopsided.

Thus history can be a biased account of the historians self projection. Based on his interests driven by his cultural and personal leanings the historian presents history that best suit his creative interests and justifies his act of re-codification. For instance if one is writing of a history that is throwing much light on his cultural roots, he/she will therefore pick up threads and colours that would project a good picture of the same. Thus sometimes there is drawing of some unjustified favourable inferences and references to suit one’s motives of re-codifying that which one specifically aims to re-create. Biased history thus becomes an attribute of one’s class and personal biases. It entails a desire to reach an outcome of a certain magnitude which may suit one’s own interests. This leads to catachresis!

In William Dalrymple this catachresis is evident on the very title pages of the three texts. The first book is titled as City Of Djinns – why the city of Delhi on which this travel history book is written is termed as the city of Djinns which literally means ‘class of magical spirits lower than angels’. Nowhere in the book it is explicitly mentioned as to what made William Dalrymple choose this title. ‘Djinns’ whenever are referred to is in relation to bizarre superstitions which the Indian mentality heavily
relies on. The second book is titled as *White Mughals* – which ‘White Mughals’ does Dalrymple wish to portray by putting up a picture of an era that was hybrid in form and spirit puts the reader in dilemma. On one hand it seems to be a celebration of crossing over the cultural boundaries and amalgamation of cultures on the other it becomes a text that talks about the disappearing Christians and their betrayal to their own loyalties. The third is *The Last Mughal*. Dalrymple’s work is less about the lost subject who was the last ruler of the Moghul era and more about the British and their balancing approach in governing a nation that was in dire need of good governance. It is less about why the last was the last and lost ruler. Studying the three texts selected for research here, we as readers and critical dissectors see that the historians are never innocent when they enter the door of the archives. They will enter there with a picture in the back of their mind. An already drawn picture of the land they wish to explore, of the body they wish to exploit and of the subject they wish to explain. In the process of the same what they present is a catachrestic version which best suits their own self interests.

Historians are themselves responsible for biases to affect them and to affect their works. All the critical thinkers of History like Hayden White, R.G.Collingwood, E.H. Carr, F.R. Ankersmit, Keith Jenkins, Verne Harris and Paul Ricoeur have explored in detail the literary and subjective sources of historical interpretation through their critical enquiry tools. Their studies of history lead to the impression that, although historians can infer the so called ‘particular’ from the past as the evidence which is available to them, then also the way meaning will be imparted to all such findings will be less of their ‘creative version’ and more of their ‘created versions’ of the past – which they impose both on the past and the reader of history. Edward Hallet Carr too in his book *What is History? (1961)* writes that history is a corpus of all unascertained facts which are ascertained by the historian. These facts, he says, are
available to this historian as documents and inscriptions just like “the fish on the fish mongers slab” (Carr 24). Thus the historian is free from any burden of thought and he is free to collect them, take them home, and cook and serve them to his reader in whatever manner appeals to his taste buds. History and history writing thus becomes the historian’s personal act. Here he is the director, the producer and the actor who is free to say cut on any take (as he picks records too as per his choice).

Paul Ricoeur too in his book Memory History and Forgetting (2006), is of the opinion that everything starts not from the archival shelves but is the outcome and result of what is called testimony. Historian’s work with their findings in the archives not realizing that the document found by them is already a rupture- a rupture with memory. The voices they hear are voices that are devoid of speech and are in the form of partially and impartially driven speech structures. Thus , there is a large gap in the lost and found which exists in memory, in archive, and in history which is derived out from the former and latter entities.

Fig 5.3. Archives as the storehouse of memories (source: Google)
The sea flow movement of testimony to archives is devoid of an interested audience. There is no anchor, no anchorage and no interlocutor. The stacks of files on the archival shelves are orphaned and turned into dust once they are detached from the creator. Unlike Barthes proposition of the author being dead, in the archives with the death of the author the truth also dies and whatever remains are found in the dust of the archives are in a fallible state /convoluted form. The falsification of truth status of archives or of history itself owes to myriad reasons. It can be owing to the intentional fabrication as a result of the conscious or unconscious biases which can result into catachresis in history and history writing.

Testimonies that are laden with any kind of biases – be it cultural or personal can pose a serious threat to the sanctity of the documentary evidence. Paul Ricoeur is of the opinion that such documentary proof poses an important problematic. These documents, he says, will never be able to speak for themselves. They will be anchored and verified only when the indirect speaker will pick them up, verify the same as per his biases and will then put forth his hypothesis driven and supported by the same biases. Ricoeur points to this validation issue by cautioning us in our role to be able to shield ourselves from all such illusions. One should never forget that the truth pact doesn’t put forth the complete truth/ event/episode of history in its entirety. The recognition of the archive being a product of dialogic colonial encounter raises fundamental questions speculating the very status of history and historical scholarship.

Through this study, I have tried to put forth the crisis of catachresis – the misuse and the misapplication of the found and lost in archive and in history. Also I have looked at the technique of the encoder archivist (the real archivists ) and the
decoder archivist (the historian) who plays the hide and seek game within archives and within history – for what is always sought by the two is the hidden, the lost. Like the judge is in search of truth being in order to be put forth the masses, similar is the function of the historian. But if records are reinterpreted in this process of finding the truth and manipulated thereafter then what occurs is ‘catachresis of order’ (mine emphasis). And if catachresis of order happens to take place then many narratives and many histories of the past goes unheard and are never rightfully transmitted across time. There will be stories that will never find their stories written thus leading them to disappear altogether from memory and from discourse.

Dalrymple’s writing of Indian History in the form of historical non-fiction is a politically driven act which is implicated in the very production and his representation of identity and culture in his books. It is at once a process of cultural domination through representation, discourse and heavy documentation. Through this thesis, I, have tried to look into the intrinsic power relations that exists in the compiling, writing and reporting of such accounts through the archives. Thus archive and archives acts as spaces of power rule. And through them rules the writer; who presents the Orient East to the West in ingestion form (Freuds ingestion images) to be consumed by the readers in home and away from home thus leading to catachresis in land of both body and its subject which it decides to play with.

The project of study here has tried to explore the role of the archive and archives in building up all such historical narratives based on partial truth pacts. Also through a critical study of the writer/historian’s texts, the thesis have aimed to present to the reader/researcher the archives being a storehouse of power and of hegemony. The ruler subject rules in the archives and the ruled subject stands unarchived in the process of production and re-production both. Archives never did and never can
provide us with a transparent lens with which we may look at the happenings of the past. There is no such transparent access to the past where we may dwell in archives to make novel discoveries and assign patent rights to such findings found by us in this dust!

Archive is the panopticon! The structure when looked from outside is huge but with not so porous boundaries. The historian acts like the controller (living in illusion even when he is not the real controller) and the records become the prisoners of fate (which were so designed by the selector who decided what goes where) being observed by the latter who then call on them and cull them out as per his choice. The not so porous boundaries of the archive are then given their windows and doors by the historian’s selection process. The records are free and put on paper but in this freedom what occurs therein is the ‘catachresis of conflict’ (mine emphasis); as the records are in conflict with the historian and when put on paper they are in conflict with the reader.

William Dalrymple is a prolific writer who chooses India and Indians as his subject of scrutiny. In writing history in the form of non-fiction and in relying on the archives and the records therein, in his narratives, this writer/historian/ethnographer/archival researcher ends putting up and showcasing archive not as a space of the ordinary, but of the elite and ruled, who even after their demise continue to be the real rulers. In the course of my research in the National Archive of India, as a naïve researcher whatever records I came upon in relation to the texts which I have taken up for critical scrutiny in my thesis were mostly creations – creations that were the outcome of power and hegemony. Whatever communications we witness in these records are those that take place from Esquires to Residents and from Residents to the Governor Generals. The following record pulls our attention to the role of the
powerful in society. This is a communication that happens to take place among the high British Residents and Esquires. In the archives and in archival records what surfaces in the files is all such communication of the foreign, political and the home department. The non significant entities if occur, occur on the margins. If they manage to find a place in all such records, it is only when there is communication from one high official to another.
Sir,

In obedience to the Command of his Excellency the most noble the Governor General conveyed to me in a copy of a Letter of the 30th May 1807, I have the Honour to transmit to you for his Information a Draft of a Code of Standing Orders for the Regulation of the Subsidy Force.

I have the Honour to be,
Your obedient Servant,

[Signature]

[Note: The text is partially covered by a watermark or stamp at the bottom of the page.]
In obedience also to his Excellency's Command, I shall immediately transmit a copy of the enclosed Code of the Standing Orders for the Regulation of the Troops on Duty in the City together with a copy of this letter to his Excellency the Commandant at Fort St. George and to Major General the Hon. Sir Arthur Wellesley, but as no Standing Orders exist to the Preface to be formed for the regulation of the Subsidiary Forces, it is
unavoidable to comply with the injunction contained in the 3d Paragraph of your Letter.

Hyderabad,
27th February 1803

Your most obedient servant

[Signature]
Draft of

Standing Orders and Regulations for the Subsidiary Force.

1st. The Commanding Officer of the Subsidiary Force will, on all occasions, make a rigid and exacting compliance with every Order or Regulation that he may receive from the Resident.

2nd. If the Resident should require the services of any officer of any Subsidiary Officer of the Subsidiary Force, the latter is to report the fact immediately, communicate his wishes to the Commanding Officer, and, in the communication of such wish, be entitled to as much detail as the case may appear to demand to require.

3rd. All officers detached from the Head Quarters of the Force, are to be considered immediately under the authority of the Resident, and will on all occasions, communicate directly with him.
for the Conduct and Regulation of his
Business.

The Commanding Officer will
adopt such measures of precaution to
prevent quarrels and disputes between any
Officers or Men under his Command and
the Inhabitants of the Country; and in
the event of any complaint being made
by either party, the circumstances must
be inquired into at once by the Incident.

When any complaint shall
be preferred to the Incident respecting
any of the Officers or Men of the Subsidiary
Force, the Incident will, if he deems it
necessary, direct an Investigation to be
made, and the Result of such Investigation
shall be immediately reported to him.

By the Commanding Officer.

*(The nature of certain complaints
which arise in the Durban area are frequently such
as can only be duly investigated and decided
by the Incident himself. In such
case)*
ence, the justice complained of, whether officers or others, or even friendly, must be directed to attend the examination of the witness, accompanied by such evidence as they are likely to have to produce, in order that he may be thus enabled to form a true judgment of the nature of the case, and all known or circumstances may seem to bear to require, either by officers, in further proceedings of the case, to whose hands it may be known to belong, or unfruitful, by giving satisfaction himself or requesting to be given by the commanding officer of the troops to the accused party, or by a judgment in the matter of an act, judicial or important nature, to his Excellency the Governor General.

10th.

All public correspondence between the commanding officer and any public authority Subordinate to either of the Provinces, existing or subjects, immediately.
immediately connected with the details of the Military Command, must be transmitted through the medium of the Resident.

17th. Every message of importance not subject to be sent to all officers, by the Resident, to the Secretary to the State, the State, the Family, and Principal Ministers.

19th. An intercourse to be carried on directly or indirectly, with either the
Resident, the State, any of the members of the State, or any officer of the Government, by any of the officers or Men of the Subsidiary Force, without the express permission of the Resident, previously applied for, and obtained in writing.

13th. Whenever any intercourse may be such as to take place between any of the Officers or Men of the Subsidiary Force and any Public Servants, Dependants,
subjects of this Government and Subjects whose personal
concern will be conducted with the utmost attention to the rules of礼貌 and
Usanet.

If, whenever the Resident visits
the British cantonments in his official
capacity, he is to be moved under a Salute
of 21 guns, an enormous expense consisting of
an expensive Officers and a company of soldiers
in front to prevent over-haste; and all guards
and movements of the usual description
brought and made at, and under his orders, for
the cantonments.

No. 19. For the Regulation of
the people on duty in the City, is the
appropriate instrument.

[Signature]
In a letter from
the Resident at
Hyderabad Nadir
27th February
Col. Cornwallis

Cons. 18th May.
No. 90

From the

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of India, Govt. of India
In these letters and communications we see that the ‘other’ is othered here altogether, thus making history and archives a site of suspicion and biases. This kind of history in its most accepted state is also not free from scepticism. Looking at all such communications, we are at once made to realize and question these sources which sometimes become crucial to support ones historical claims. As a result of the murky and hazy picture that one is confronted with, the interpretations, re-interpretations and projection of the same too become defunct in order – but still being played with. History thus becomes a reality that is unclear for it is never a firsthand account of the original order. What comes to us as readers is the blurred vision/version; which is wholly and solely derided of its true meaning. All in all, it is but an act of decoding and recoding altogether. And something that is decoded and then re-coded can never be called a true picture of the past but a collation of researcher’s thinkable creative imagination. It is but a process of historian’s self-interpretation that mostly is of catachrestic foul play.

Catachresis in historical representation of the land, body and subject opens up all the cultural spaces where debate and dialogue becomes the need of the hour. There have often occurred debates among the historians and critical thinkers of history regarding the misguided status of such interpretative biased accounts. Sometimes unfair accounts of the past are the result of historian’s baggage of personally and culturally driven biases. It is important not just for the researcher but also for the reader to distinguish history that is misleading by accident from one which is misleading owing to one’s personal drives. A bias where the historical inference or explanation is later found to be a mismatch can be termed as cultural bias owing to his culture wide interests in giving importance to one record or material of information over the other. As is contended by many debates and critical thinkers, history has been
a cultural makeover of the intelligent whites’, for they have ever dominated the space of history and they continue to be considered as the real great godfathers of the past and its remains. Such are culturally driven presuppositions resulting in cultural catachresis in history formation and in history writing both. Cultural minded scholars make it pretty convincing to their pack of readers to savour the fact that it was only the superior agents and the superior agency that led to stability and success (as is in the case of India and as Dalrymple projects).

Dalrymple in all the texts that are taken up in the project is seen taking up Indian locales like Hyderabad and Delhi as his study locales. In the process of journeying through these chosen locales he is seen culturally journaling and probing deep into both the found and the unfound. The archival ocean gives him an opportunity to dive in and explore the most hidden, the most novel happenings of the past. But in all this process we see Dalrymple putting up a different picture altogether – a picture which is the result of the cultural nostalgia for his lost roots.

Truth in history writing can be intentional in character. As a result, what becomes a matter of concern is that how the reader /receiver succumbs to such catachrestic truth claims. The truth pact with the past will always be in need of guarantors in the form of historians, who validate the truth behind them and present stories of times buried beneath them. Traditionally, truth of historian’s statements has been likened to their correspondence to historical reality (like in the archives /museums/paintings/monuments) but the pragmatic viewpoint questions all such claims. All such correspondence is the result of ‘self claims’ and not of any ‘provable fact’ and if at all some facts are drawn out there might as well be some which the writer/ historian papers over and ends up in presenting an all inclusive picture of the reel real. Those who believe in the possibility of an accurate understanding of the past
that flows from its techniques in dealing with the traces of the past, describe historical knowledge as a derivative of historical digging of such traces. The question which my study raises here for all the readers and bearer’s of history is that: What is the point of origin of these traces and what is the character of historical evidence and what function does it perform when it comes to answering certain questions revolving around history, historian or historiography (art of history writing).

History is gone. It happened once and what remains of it to the historian is ‘the trace’ – the leftover remains (which may be complete or incomplete in form). The historians trace their events from these ‘traces’. By traces I am referring to the records that exist as documentary evidence in archival walls. I call these records ‘traces’ because if there is something present there might as well be something hidden. If something reached the shelf of the archive, there might as well have been happenings which did not find any path to the doors of the archival institutions. If there is the archived there definitely is what is the non-archive or the unarchived. These non archived and un-archived records are those which could not and did not find their course from their point of origin – from the desk of the originator (of the primary producer who wrote them) to the shelf – of the archive (selection process is a result of power play and hegemony) and finally to print – archived histories/narratives (another selection made by the historian to present his version of his-story). This points to the probability of their course being a less determined one- from desk, to shelf to print form, or plausibly it has rather been much determined and dictated as a result of power structures that determine and dominate their presence.

Jacques Derrida, pointing to such dominating structures emphasize in his *Archive Fever* (1996) on the political power entailing control of the archive and hence also of the mind and memory. Mind is like tabula rasa which acts as an active site of recollection through memory. The play of memory also can be internal and external
both just like the play of traces is (the physical, the cerebral). Where it is internal the individual psyche acts as an active/passive site of recollection but when external there is often participation of third party that picks up and performs the role of analyst and also the catalyst both, thus, manipulating memories and manipulating traces of memories that exist in the archives.

Catalysis of memory and traces of memory that results in production of manipulated memory takes place on three different levels: distortion of reality; legitimization of power, and the presentation of the world by means of symbols that are ruled and overruled by the inextricable character of ideology, which itself revolves around the dynamics of power and hegemonic structures. We should never forget that history can never come to us in totality, no matter how much the historian or researcher researching in the archive might come up with novel evidences related to the past occurrences, for the past that is left is a trace which has undertones of fallibilism – the evidence is temporal by nature and will always stand overshadowed and over-ruled once a new evidence will eventually makes its way through/to the traces.

To know about the past in complete clear form is virtually impossible, were it possible for one to know about the past in totality once and for all, there would be no need of writing history altogether. It is impossible to dig the grave for what we get after digging is either the skeletal remains or the body transformed into nothingness. Therefore, the guiding principle and motive of writing history should be to bring those probabilities and possibilities to the readers’ plates which were unknown to one and all. Portrayal of self through one’s writing itself becomes catachrestic in character. If the ‘I’ language predominates entire text one is left with accusing the writer of self
glorification and self – advertisement. The focus on one’s struggles in the dust of the archives is an act of distortion in the search of the truth. Defining history in such terms wherein one’s own interests are showcased becomes an act of trivial order on the part of writer/historian/archival researcher. It is trivializing because whatever meaning the historian puts forth is his meaning that would glorify him more than his patent discovery. The moment a writer portrays the ‘I’ in his- story and in history in particular, that very moment results into catachresis – the catachresis of his findings (mine emphasis).

We cannot ignore the fact that the Archive is seductive and the historian is easily seduced by its hidden charms. What we find in the archival seduction are the layers of clothing that is stitched from here and there and then is put on paper as a truth pact of the past. In the process, we should not forget that this stitching is fragmentary in nature. Every historian writing about the past from the archives draws his conclusions based largely upon all such fragmentary patchwork. They do not realize in their search for truth about the past, that the evidence which they heavily rely on is but incomplete- if something was there, something was missed as well owing to power politics. This means history can never come to the reader as it was and what comes to the reader is the version of the historians haggling with the past and its remains – as in the archival institutions.

The historians encounter , analyze and revise the interpretations of their predecessors which build up like layers of sediment : The Present- Counter – revisionist interpretations , and traditional orthodox interpretations strive to give falsified , partial accounts and we should not forget that they are interpretation- a result of decoding and encoding by the catalyst who here acts like the interpreter of
past. The past in which we represent them—literally, re-creates and recodes them in narrative form, using our faculty of historical imagination. Thus history is a result of catachresis—it is a distorted, dissected version of the past. It is a hybrid creation of speculation on one’s part, evidence is found in the archive on land or elsewhere and this invention is then given form and structure which is a result of bias—the cultural and the personal/intentional one.

The archive is large and there is no such individual, historian, researcher who can devour and absorb it completely. Even if we access relatively comprehensive sources, we bring to the process the cultural, ideological, national, personal biases which we often carry in our heads. Thus the veracity of the histories of all times has suffered largely owing to these distortions which we as cultural beings/readers heavily rely upon and this results in catachresis of reading on our parts as readers of history. In the domain of my research in the archive I realized that the past is a playfield—where we play with memory, we play with forgetting, with traces, with half truths. It can never be an even playfield. In the process of conquering the past the historian ends up con-curing it for it doesn’t stand conquered but con-cured (where the historian acted like a con man at the same time proclaiming that he had cure for the hidden and lost).

(mine emphasis)

Past and its traces will not give us reality but just raw material to manufacture that reality hidden under the sands of time. But we should never forget as readers that even when this reality reaches us from the dust, it is still having dust on it—the dust of cultural meanings, for evidence is heavily freighted with the cultural biases of the historian and his research. Because historians will be the products of their culture, language, concepts, beliefs and attitudes so the possibility of impartial
and non-biased accounts will as well remain largely unattainable. It is therefore useful to differentiate history that may lead us to catachresis - of order, of conflict, of findings and of reading. It becomes imperative for us as readers to decode the deductive rationality of the author which is coded heavily with his self driven belief systems and which in turn leave imprints on his linguistic expressions.

All of the texts taken up by me in this thesis have taken up the problem of reference to be studied in a serious order with their ideological and political undertones which have their own repercussions. When diving into the sources of the past we will realize two things: at times these references will refuse to deny the fundamental possibility of seeing the real within, and at another go they precisely owing to their political tint beneath their discourse will eventually present a biased and catachrestic version of reality.

In the process of analyzing all such writers like William Dalrymple it becomes imperative for the reader to analyze the ‘nexus of meaning’ (Dilthey). Truth is often conceptualized as the accurate depiction of this nexus of meaning and decoding of this truth through catachrestic interpretation. Decoding of history of the colonial or the postcolonial space and its subjects in the archives and through the archives can sometimes be detrimental, for history produced as a result will not be free from ‘inscriptions’ which will be culturally dictated and driven as per one’s personal take on history and his-story.

Thus to conclude my thesis, I would like to bring the attention of the reader /writer historian to avoid catachresis in writing. Archival paradigm and the operations of power therein will always control the past and the present. The problematic which is posed to us as intellectuals, artists and researchers is to understand that we are
living on the periphery and not the centre of this global system of power that in some or the other way allure every individual entity. We should view the act of biased codification as a process of catachresis. Through the practice of remedial hermeneutics as a technological principle and by using tools like Deconstruction and post modern theory such catachrestic dangers can be averted and also their false codifications can be decoded by the reader in general, and of history in particular.

*Being the brilliant decoder of history which Dalrymple is, in the whole process of critical study of his work I saw a different Dalrymple.*

*I saw a Dalrymple who stands allured by the dangers of the Archive being a fetish, who willingly danced in the ‘dust’ of the ‘archives’ and devoured its content and painted its ‘catachrestic’ picture.*