



Urban Landscapes - Indian Case Studies

William Dalrymple
Delhi-The City of Djinns

Monday 25th June 2012
18.00 Lecture by William Dalrymple
Introduced by Silvia Ronchey

The British School at Rome, Via Gramsci 61

Press Release

William Dalrymple's lecture **Delhi-The City of Djinns** is the second event in our programme **Urban Landscapes-Indian Case Studies**. Dalrymple is one of the West's most successful travel and historical writers and is a leading authority on Indian culture. His highly entertaining books elegantly combine a unique blend of scholarship and story-telling and trans-cultural investigations and have won a large number of international awards.

The Scottish writer's best selling first book, **In Xandu: A Quest**, (1989) was based on notes and diaries he kept while exploring the route through Asia of Marco Polo's journey to the court of Kubla Kahn. Dalrymple then moved to Delhi, where he continues to live, publishing his second book **City of Djinns** in 1993. Toward the end of the 1990s, he changed genres and after four books of travel, concentrated on the writing of history publishing the highly acclaimed **White Mughals** (2003) and **The Last Mughal: The Fall of a Dynasty, Delhi, 1857** (2006). Dalrymple is currently at work on **The First Anglo-Afghan War and the Birth of the Great Game**, due to be published this year.

Dalrymple's lecture at the British School at Rome will focus on his second book **City of Djinns** (1993), the first product of the writer's love affair with India, centering on Delhi, a city with "a bottomless seam of stories". Shaped more like a novel than a travel book, he and his wife encounter a teeming cast of characters: his Sikh landlady, taxi drivers, customs officials, and British survivors of the Raj, as well as whirling dervishes and eunuch dancers," a strange mix of piety and bawdiness". Dalrymple describes ancient ruins and the experience of living in the modern city: he goes in search of the history behind the epic stories of the Mahabharata. Still more seriously, he finds evidence of the city's violent past and present day-the 1857 mutiny against British rule -the Partition massacres in 1947; and the riots after the assassination of Mrs Gandhi in 1984. In his lecture, the author will also discuss the radical changes in Delhi since the publication of this book nearly twenty years ago.

On June 26th at 16.00, the Keats-Shelley House will host a reading by Dalrymple from his book **The Last Mughal: The Fall of a Dynasty, Delhi 1857**. The event is open to the public, though advance booking is recommended at: info@keats-shelley-house.org.

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