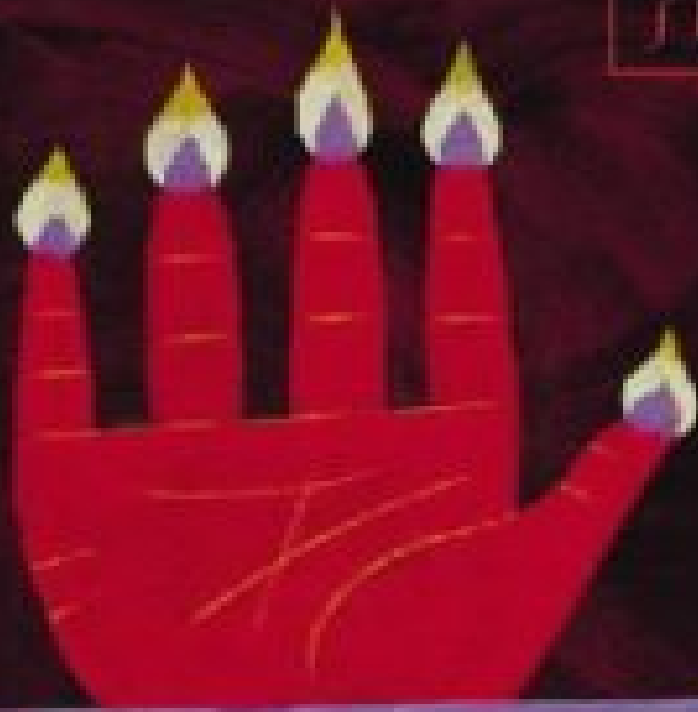


flamingo



WILLIAM
DALRYMPLE

From
the
Holy
Mountain



'WITTY, LEARNED AND VERY FUNNY' *Eric Newby*

William Dalrymple

was born in Scotland and brought up on the shores of the Firth of Forth. He wrote the highly acclaimed bestseller *In Xanadu* when he was twenty-two. The book won the 1990 *Yorkshire Post* Best First Work Award and a Scottish Arts Council Spring Book Award; it was also shortlisted for the John Llewelyn Rhys Memorial Prize. In 1989 Dalrymple moved to Delhi where he lived for four years researching his second book, *City of Djinn*s, which won the 1994 Thomas Cook Travel Book Award and the *Sunday Times* Young British Writer of the Year Award. *From the Holy Mountain* was short-listed for the Duff Cooper Award and received the Scottish Arts Council Autumn Book Award for 1997. *The Age of Kali*, a collection of his pieces about the Indian subcontinent, was published in 1998.

In 1997 William Dalrymple wrote and presented the Channel 4 series *Stones of the Raj*. He is married to the artist Olivia Fraser, and they have a baby son and a daughter. Dalrymple was recently elected the youngest Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature.

From the reviews of *From the Holy Mountain*:

'*From the Holy Mountain* is a further landmark in a writing career unblemished by failure and enlightened by an erudition worn as lightly as a cloak. Dalrymple's lucidity and learning are woven into a writing style which is never pompous or smug ... This is a brave book, intellectually, spiritually and physically. In a missive which brims with intelligence and a voracious appetite for knowledge, Dalrymple paints wonderful sketches of a twentieth-century landscape bedevilled by the conflicts of the past... a book which provokes thought as often as it entertains and beguiles'

hugh macdonald, Glasgow Herald

'William Dalrymple has effortlessly assumed the mantle of Robert Byron and Patrick Leigh Fermor . . . *From the Holy Mountain* is destined to be this year's big book ... an impressive achievement'

lucreti a stewart, Guardian Books of the Year

'In his third book William Dalrymple has dug deep to present the case of the Middle East's downtrodden Christians. More hard-hitting than either of his previous books, *From the Holy Mountain* is driven by indignation. While leavened with his characteristic jauntiness and humour, it is also profoundly shocking. Time and time again in the details of Dalrymple's discoveries I found myself asking: why do we not know this? The sense of unsung tragedy accumulates throughout the chapters of this book ... *From the Holy Mountain* is the most rewarding sort of travel book, combining flashes of lightly-worn scholarship with a powerful sense of place and the immediacy of the best journalism. But more than that it is a passionate *cri de coeur* for a forgotten people which few readers will be able to resist'

philip marsden, Spectator

'Dalrymple brings the past alive wonderfully and is a brilliant communicator. If *In Xanadu* was reminiscent of early Evelyn Waugh or the devil-may-care Peter Fleming, *From the Holy Mountain* evokes Robert Byron and Bruce Chatwin. It is a more poetic and disturbing book and all the better for that. It marks the maturing of a very fine writer'

alex forsyth, Scotland on Sunday

'William Dalrymple has earned a rapid reputation as a brilliant young travel writer and *From the Holy Mountain* is a splendid, effective and impressive book' **j.d.f. jones**, *Financial Times*

'Since his magnificent *In Xanadu*, William Dalrymple has been generally acclaimed as one of our best contemporary travel writers. In *From the Holy Mountain* he travels the Silk Route of ancient Byzantium through the present-day Middle East tracing the **ad** 578 journey of John Moschos, the great Byzantine monk, traveller and oral historian *avant la lettre*. His aim is to uncover the human archaeology of Eastern Christianity. It is realised in meditative, sensuous prose' *Independent on Sunday*

'Utterly compelling: a meaty, intriguing volume and a worthy successor to *In Xanadu* and *City of Djinns*'
tom fort, *Financial Times* Books of the Year

'A huge, breathtaking book about a colossal journey. The writing is by turns learned and lyrical... a magnificent achievement'
Publishing News

'Any travel writer who is so good at his job as to be brilliant, applauded, loved and needed has to have an unusual list of qual-ities, and William Dalrymple has them all in aces. The most important is curiosity and the intrepidity it generates. Then there has to be the feeling that there never has been such a book as this, and never will be again. He must be enough of a scholar, and it helps if his jokes are really funny, and if he discovers something and goes to unexpected places. Dalrymple scores high on all these points. He knows more than Robert Byron, is less of a mythomane than Bruce Chatwin and not so dotty as Robert Fisk. He does not go slumming or patronise, but his ear for conversation - or can it be his talent for impersonation? - is as good as Alan Bennett's. The book is a good, long read, like the works of Gibbon ... The best and most unexpected book I have read since I forget when' **peter levi**, *The Oldie*

'Terrorists, devil-worshippers, nights spent in monastery cells ... Dalrymple didn't have to search out troubles during his intrepid, five-month trek through the Levant. His mentor and guide for the journey was John Moschos, a monk who travelled the same route in the sixth century **ad** and described the final flourish of Eastern Christianity. Dalrymple now bears witness to the almost-defunct Christian monasteries and sects of the Middle East, while also managing to recreate the world Moschos knew. It's a wonderfully evocative book' **harry ritchie**, *Mail on Sunday*

'Because he has the interests and enthusiasms of a scholar Dalrymple, with his magnificent zest, inspires the reader. We relish the tense air of south-east Turkey, the threat of Lebanon, the menace of Upper Egypt; and so does Dalrymple, at least in the vigorous telling of it. Massacres without number, enforced migrations, local wars: the effect of these events on human beings is burned into the pages of this excellent book. Yet Dalrymple is a delightful companion for the reader: a sunny equanimity shines around him. The self-portrait which emerges from these pages shows us a Renaissance head, not swollen but large with knowledge, painted like that of the Duke of Urbino by Piero della Francesca, in profile, against a library window through which may be discerned the delectable landscape of adventure' **philip glazebrook**, *Literary Review*

'His biggest book yet: a large, scholarly, funny, meandering and passionate tome . . . Dalrymple's enthusiasm is infectious, and his gentle osmotic supply of theological and historical background to Byzantine culture means that by the end any reader feels half expert'

nigel spivey, *Business Weekly*

'*From the Holy Mountain* is a remarkable travel book, beautifully written, alive to the politics of the day, and informed on the history and theology of the region'

adam ford, *Church Times*

'Neither the panache of William Dalrymple, nor the allure of the places he describes - Mount Athos, Damascus, the Egyptian desert - are what makes *From the Holy Mountain* so compelling. Its secret is the sense of history derived from the author's decision to base his journey on *The Spiritual Meadow*, a guide to the monasteries and holy men of the eastern Roman Empire, written in the sixth century by the monk John Moschos.

Following in his tracks, often to the same churches, the author travels through the Levant, listening to the prayers and fears of

the region's Christians . . . Dalrymple describes his encounters with monks and murderers with a combination of humour and scholarship'

philip mansel, *Country Life*

'An eloquent, poignant and courageous account of a journey that pits the idealism of the past against the hatred, dispossession and denial of the present'

karen Armstrong

'Fascinating, compelling and deeply moving'

william barlow, *Catholic Herald*

'Memorable ... William Dalrymple's raw and direct approach is something new, and despite its author's eye for humour and irony, Dalrymple's West Asian travelogue is harder, bleaker and expressed with an equality of spirit absent from the accounts of typical English romantics. As a result, *From the Holy Mountain* makes a profound impression'

Christopher walker, *Times Literary Supplement*

'An assured blend of travelogue and history . . . Dalrymple is a born travel writer, with a nose for adventure and a reporter's healthy scepticism. His quirky, exhilarating mosaic will appeal to readers of all faiths'

Publishers Weekly

'Outstanding ... To be a good writer takes courage. To be a good travel writer may take more. Dalrymple is a good writer in an absolutely unpretentious way. The trouble with many good modern minds is that they ignore the past. Dalrymple does not, and by telling us of the past as it is enveloped by the present he is also telling of the future. He is not a prophet, simply one of the very few good, honest writers left'

dom moraes, *Outlook*

Also by William Dalrymple

in xanadu: a quest

city of djinns: a year in delhi

the age of kali

Indian travels & encounters

From the Holy Mountain

A JOURNEY IN THE SHADOW OF BYZANTIUM

WILLIAM DALRYMPLE

Flamingo

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An Imprint of HarperCollinsPublishers 77-85 Fulham Palace Road, Hammersmith, London w6 8b
www.fireandwater.com

Published by Flamingo 1998 9

First published in Great Britain by HarperCollinsPufcfo/iers 1997

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Author photograph © Giovanni Giovannetti

isbn 0 00 654774 5

Set in Postscript Linotype Minion with Photina display

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd St Ives plc

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ILLUSTRATIONS

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A flock of sheep in the wilderness of Judaea.
The ancient fortress, Monastery of St Antony, Egypt.
The necropolis of Bagawat, the Great Kharga Oasis.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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. 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.

A great many people have helped me during the four years this book took to write. I would particularly like to thank the following, without whom it could not have come into being: Abbas, Mohammed Sid Ahmed, Canon Nairn Ateek, Abdullah and Noah Awad, Leila Badr, David Barchard, Andrew Berton, Robert Betts, Gaby Bostros, Dr Sebastian Brock, Derek and Eileen Brown, Yvonne Lady Cochrane, Con Coughlin, Alkis Courcolas, Hew Dalrymple, Fr. Jock Dalrymple, His Beatitude Diodoros I Patriarch of Jerusalem, Abouna Dioscuros of the Monastery of St Antony, Alistair Duncan, Eustathios Matta Rouhm Metropolitan of the Jazira and Euphrates, Mike Fishwick, Robert Fisk, Kadreya Foda, Robert Franjeh, Archie Fraser, Jenny Fraser, John Freely, Patrick French, Dr Nicholas Gendle, Sami Gerai, David Gilmour, Charlie Glass, Philip Glazebrook, Giles Gordon, Juan Carlos Gumucio, Malfono Isa Gulden, Harry Hagopian, Roy Hange, Milad Hanna, Richard Harper, Bernard Haykel, Sarah Helm, Dr Isabel Henderson, George Hintlian, Jill Hughes, Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim Metropolitan of Aleppo, His Holiness Mar Ignatius Zaki Iwas Patriarch of Antioch, Fr. Jeremias of the Monastery of Iviron, Walid Jumblatt, Mansour Khaddosh, Nora Kort, Robert Lacey, Fr. Emmanuel Lanne, Dominic Lawson, Tony Mango, Dr Philip Mansel, Peter Mansfield, Philip Marsden, Sally Mazlounian, Dr Otto Meinardus, Sam Miller, Bishop Mesrob Mutafian,

Mark Nicholson, Maggie Noach, John Julius Norwich, Anthony O'Mahony, Dr Andrew Palmer, Dr Philip Pattendon, Fr. Michele Piccirillo, Hugh Pope, Rebecca Porteous, Tom Porteous, Annie Robertson, Max Rodenbek, Sir Steven Runciman, Dr Bernard Sabella, Assem Salam, Dalia Salam, Archbishop Georges Saliba, Professor Kamal Salibi, Victor Samaika, Anthony Sattin, Neville Shack, His Holiness Pope Shenoudah III, Antoun Sidhom, Fania Stoney, Jane Taylor, Fr. Theophanes of the Monastery of Mar Saba, Timotheos Metropolitan of Lydda, Tony Touma, Christopher J. Walker, Bishop Kallistos Ware, John Warrack, Zhogbi Zhogbi.

I would particularly like to thank Alan and Brigid Waddams, who not only looked after me in Damascus but also lent their house in Somerset, where much of this book was written and edited.

I am also very grateful to Cistercian Publications (Kalamazoo, Michigan and Spencer, Massachusetts) for kind permission to quote from *John Moschos: The Spiritual Meadow*, translated by John Wortley, © Cistercian Publications, 1992.

My greatest thanks are, however, reserved for Olivia, friend, lover, adviser, illustrator, editor-in-chief, occasional travelling companion and beloved wife.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the unique contribution of my daughter Ibbey, born soon after the return from this journey, who provided a many-splendoured distraction throughout its writing, but for which this book would certainly have seen the light of day at least six months earlier.

william dalrymple

Provis, Somerset, November 1996

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: Sabeel UK, 46 Timms Lane, Liverpool L37 7nd, or to PO Box 1248 Jerusalem, or e-mail Sabeel@planet.edu.

I

The Monastery of Iviron, Mount Athos, Greece 29 June 1994. The Feast of SS. Peter and Paul

My cell is bare and austere. It has white walls and a flagstone floor. Only two pieces of furniture break the severity of its emptiness: in one corner stands an olive-wood writing desk, in the other an iron bedstead. The latter is covered with a single white sheet, starched as stiff as a nun's wimple.

Through the open window I can see a line of black habits: the monks at work in the vegetable garden, a monastic chain-gang hoeing the cabbage patch before the sun sets and the wooden *simandron* calls them in for compline. Beyond the garden is a vineyard, silhouetted against the bleak black pyramid of the Holy Mountain.

All is quiet now but for the distant breaking of surf on the jetty and the faint echo and clatter of metal plates in the monastery kitchens. The silence and solemnity of the place is hardly designed to raise the spirits, but you could hardly find a better place to order your mind. There are no distractions, and the monastic silence imposes its own brittle clarity.

It's now nine o'clock. The time has finally 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.