

'The Anarchy -rise of the East India Company', by William Dalrymple

"One of the very first Indian words to enter the English language was the Hindustani slang for plunder: *loot*." So begins Dalrymple's account of how a simple business operation, based in a London office, managed to replace the mighty Mughal Empire; a supreme act of corporate violence, as he describes it, and sadly not the last such activity in global history. Dalrymple's strengths as a writer lie in his ability to address the complexities of this story using historical sources from Britain and the sub-continent to tell a coherent, if at times depressing, but thoroughly engaging tale of how business traders transformed themselves into an organisation with a private army larger than the British State. Dalrymple provides a well-researched antidote to those politicians who urge us to focus solely on the positives of Britain's imperial past; the reputations of Clive of India and the Duke of Wellington will never be the same again.