

CALL FOR PAPERS

Kipling in the News

Journalism, Empire, and Decolonisation

17-18 April 2020

City, University of London

Supported by the Kipling Society

Returning to the imperial metropolis as a young writer recently graduated from his apprenticeship on Indian newspapers, Rudyard Kipling began to consolidate his literary career in London as a late Victorian man of letters. As he wrote his verses and stories, he did so 'with a daily paper under my right elbow', wielding this symbol of journalism as a talisman of his writerly authority. And understandably so; Kipling owed much to his years on the Lahore *Civil and Military Gazette* and the Allahabad *Pioneer*, where he had documented the daily routines, social stratifications, and political tensions of colonial India under the rule of the Raj. His experience as a journalist and colonial correspondent honed his distinctive, concise prose style, and it is this pithiness that accounts for his enduring legacy in the twenty-first century as a writer often in support of – but also sometimes critical of – first British and then US Empires.

This conference sets out to explore the importance of journalism to Kipling's literary life and, in so doing, to ask larger questions about the relationship between journalism, empire, and decolonisation. It also invites meditations on the continued relevance of these questions in the 'post-truth' era of the twenty-first century.

If the cramped newspaper spaces trained Kipling to write words that 'tell, carry, weigh, taste and, if need were, smell' of British India, what does it mean for ex-foreign secretary Boris Johnson to recite Kipling's nostalgic colonial words while on an official state visit

to Myanmar in 2017? And if Kipling's journalism ranged from undoubtedly orientalisating 'colour' pieces, to variously crude though sometimes profound meditations on whiteness and imperialism, to crucial investigations into the links between milk production and typhoid, what does it mean for University of Manchester students to graffiti over his words and replace them with those of Maya Angelou on the wall of their student union in 2018? How did Kipling, a man whose literary career began in and with the news, come to be such a frequent feature of it, both at the end of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twenty-first?

The post-Brexit resurgence of imperial nostalgia, along with recent movements to decolonise university and curricula, are no doubt in part responsible for dragging Kipling back into the headlines, and we especially welcome papers exploring these issues.



Kipling and John Bull, *Westminster Gazette*, 30 July 1900

But Kipling's writing also probed other very contemporary debates about the blurring of fact and fiction, questions that have come not only to problematise journalistic practice, but also – as the recent rise of the creative or literary non-fiction genre suggests – to ensure its survival. If, as Graham Greene, another late colonial writer-journalist, once commented, 'novelists are trying to write the truth and journalists are trying to write fiction', what is the significance of this bleed between fictional and non-fictional writing in the globalised context of (memories of) Empire and decolonisation?

We welcome **paper abstracts of no more than 250 words for 20 minute papers** that respond broadly to some of these questions. Papers might offer specific research and readings of Kipling as a journalist and writer; they might offer accounts of wider methodological and historical contexts; or they might explore Kipling's continued legacy in the present.

Suggested topics to be addressed might include, but are not limited to:

- Kipling's journalism and influence on journalistic practice
- Kipling, the press barons, and the broadsheets
- Bleeds between journalistic and literary writing
- Kipling's literary writing produced while a journalist
- Journalism and empire: methodologies and contexts
- Kipling and celebrity culture
- Kipling and the rise of mass circulation
- 19th and 20th Century newspapers, particularly from the Indian subcontinent, the UK and US
- Kipling, South Africa and *The Friend*
- Serial fiction in newspapers
- Kipling, journalism and war propaganda
- Writing against Kipling and Empire
- Kipling and Brexit
- Kipling and Decolonisation
- Decolonising Kipling
- Kipling, monuments and #Fallism
- Kipling and feminist critique

Please send abstracts, along with a short bio, **to Dr Sarah Lonsdale and Dr Dominic Davies** at sarah.lonsdale.1@city.ac.uk and dominic.davies@city.ac.uk by **19 September 2019**. We will aim to inform applicants of their acceptance by 10 December 2019.

Keynote speakers will include **Professor Janet Montefiore** (Editor of the *Kipling Journal*), historian of media and empire **Dr Chandrika Kaul** (University of St Andrews), Kipling scholar **Professor Harry Ricketts** (Victoria University, author of *The Unforgiving Minute: A Life of Rudyard Kipling*), and the novelist and postcolonial critic **Professor Elleke Boehmer** (University of Oxford). Conference registration will be available at a rate of £20.00 for waged and £10.00 for unwaged scholars. Modest travel bursaries for those attending from outside of London will be available. Please indicate in your abstract submission if you would like to be considered for one of these bursaries.