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BETWEEN EMPIRE AND DOUBT: THE CONTRADICTIONARY LITERARY WORLD OF RUDYARD KIPLING

This article presents the results of a study analyzing the life and work of Rudyard Kipling, a prominent figure in 20th-century English literature. Various aspects of Kipling's literary legacy are examined, including imperial ideology, wartime discourse, and the artistic expression of cultural contradictions, as well as the influence of his Indian and American experiences on his work. This article examines the life and work of Rudyard Kipling, a prominent figure in 20th-century English literature. It identifies the artistic expression of imperial ideology, wartime discourse, and cultural contradictions in Kipling's literary legacy, as well as the influence of his Indian and American experiences on his work, as the subject of this study.

The article poses a number of significant objectives that reveal a key aspect of the writer's literary work. Specifically, it analyzes the main stages of Kipling's life and career, examining his attitude toward imperial ideology. The article also identifies the influence of the Indian and American experiences on the writer's work. The ideological and artistic features of his major works are established. The study substantiates contemporary critical approaches to Kipling's legacy. Historical-comparative, literary-critical, contextual, and textual-analytical methods were used. Kipling's works were examined against the backdrop of both the socio-political conditions of the period in which they were written and subsequent scholarly-critical approaches. It is established that examining Rudyard Kipling's work as a contradictory and multilayered phenomenon of imperial ideology constitutes the scientific novelty of the study. A number of aspects are observed here: a systematic study of the influence of Kipling's American period on his style and the development of his genre; an assessment of the novel "Who" as the original model of modern intelligence literature. The transformation of Kipling's attitude to the theme of war is demonstrated in the context of personal tragedy. This study explores Kipling's attitude toward imperial ideology and his personal approach to the topic of war, revealing the influence of contemporary literature and sociopolitical conditions. It also highlights the importance of Indian and American experiences in shaping Kipling's writing. The results can be used in scholarly studies of 20th-century English literature, colonial and postcolonial discourse, as well as in university lectures and seminars.

Keywords: *imperial ideology, English literature, colonialism, war discourse, literary contradiction, cultural identity, artistic thinking.*

Introduction. When Rudyard Kipling died on 18 January 1936, just three weeks after his 70th birthday, he had been one of Britain's most famous and influential writers for 47 years [7, p. 3]. For much of this long period, he also used his fame to intervene in political affairs, serving as a propagandist, a prophetic figure, and, at times, a pessimistic messenger [8, p. 98]. His position in Britain was exceptional: for almost his entire adult life, Kipling knew that when he wrote, he would be read, and when he spoke, he was confident that his words would be heard [2, p. 41]. His life's work was the preservation of the British Empire, but he did not stop there;

he spoke out on almost every social and political issue [12, p. 64]. Although he was a conservative by nature, his inner rebel made his views ambiguous and contradictory: sometimes he expressed the general opinion of the people, sometimes he took a harsh and militant position, and rarely put forward completely unique ideas without apologizing to anyone [14, p. 112]. In his biography, "The Long Recessional: The Imperial Life of Rudyard Kipling", David Gilmour presents Kipling with all these contradictions and gradually dispels the naive idea that he was simply a narrow-minded Victorian chauvinist [7, p. 9]. Instead of devoting much space to the



poems and novels that led to Kipling being awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1907, Gilmour focuses on the socio-political environment in which the writer was formed [7, p. 27].

Task statement. The aim of the study is to comprehensively examine Rudyard Kipling's work in historical, ideological, and literary contexts and to reveal the mechanisms of formation of his artistic worldview.

Analysis of recent research and publications. R.Kipling's works have been analyzed with various critical approaches within the framework of postcolonial theory. Postcolonial theories that criticize his imperialist position and East-West dialogue make Kipling's literature an important field of modern literary criticism. We primarily rely on researchers such as Lewis L., Fleming I., Carré J., Benfey C., Gilmour D., Orwell G. and etc.

The ideological and artistic features of Kipling's major works, such as *Who*, *The Jungle Book* and *If*, have been the subject of numerous studies. The novel *Who* is especially valued as one of the early forms of modern detective literature.

Much of Kipling's life, particularly his years in India, shaped his literary and ideological outlook. He is often framed as both a supporter of empire and a domestic rebel. Kipling's early life and his experiences in India strongly influenced the imperialist themes in his writings and works.

One of the most important examples of the ideology of the British Empire in Rudyard Kipling's work is the poem *The White Man's Burden*. In this poem, Kipling expresses his views as a supporter of imperialist ideas and the mission of "bringing civilization". However, he also exhibited critical approaches to empire, for example, in his poem *Recessional*, he predicted the decline of the empire.

Kipling's approach to the subject of war changed in the context of personal tragedy. The death of his son John in the First World War significantly shaped Kipling's thinking about war. The impact of war on his life and his views on war are topics that require further analysis, both literary and ideological.

Outline of the main material of the study. Kipling believed unwaveringly in the British Empire's mission to "civilize." This position is clearly expressed in his 1899 poem "The White Man's Burden," in which he called on Americans to share the responsibility for this mission [9, p. 321]. At the same time, Kipling was harshly critical of the way the empire was run by British governments and, in his 1897 poem "Recessional," he predicted the empire's decline [9, p. 287].

From the late 19th century, Kipling had focused his attention on the threat posed by German expansionism [13, p. 54]. The death of his son John in World War I in 1917 turned these fears into a personal tragedy [7, p. 201]. By the early 1930s, Kipling realized that this threat had resurfaced and that another war was inevitable [8, p. 211].

Kipling's early reputation was closely linked to his childhood and youth. Born in India in 1865, the writer was sent to England at the age of five and suffered severe psychological experiences in a boarding house in Southsea [7, p. 18]. Later, his education at a boarding school for imperial officials strengthened both his commitment to the idea of empire and his inner rebellion [2, p. 56].

Thus, Kipling's early life and rise laid the foundation for the formation of his later literary and political positions, making him both an influential and controversial figure in twentieth-century literature [1, p. 73]

Rudyard Kipling's Indian experience played a key role in the formation of his ideological worldview. Being born in India and spending a significant part of his youth there transformed his concept of empire into a practical and observational system of thought, not a theoretical one [7, p. 33]. For Kipling, empire was not an abstract political structure, but the sum of everyday life, administrative mechanisms, and social relations.

Kipling believed that the British Empire had brought order and stability to India. He considered British rule to be more rational and efficient than internal conflicts, and therefore considered attempts to give greater political power to the local population to be dangerous [3, p. 94]. In his opinion, the weakening of the empire could lead to deep conflicts between the Hindu and Muslim communities [12, p. 71].

This position is most clearly expressed ideologically in Kipling's poem "The White Man's Burden" written in 1899. The poem presents imperial power as a moral responsibility, even a "burden", and suggests that this mission should be shared not only by Britain, but also by America [9, p. 318]. Edward Said evaluates this work as one of the classic examples of imperialist discourse, but at the same time notes that there is a serious cultural anxiety behind it [12, p. 94].

At the same time, Kipling did not blindly defend the empire. He openly criticized the mistakes made by British governments in managing the empire. In his 1897 poem "Recessional," Kipling emphasized the fragility of imperial power, warning that arrogance would lead to its downfall [9, p. 287]. This poem clearly reveals the fundamental conflict in his

attitude towards empire - the tension between loyalty and fear.

The depth of Kipling's understanding of India is most clearly seen in the novel "Who." This work is not only a novel of adventure and espionage, but also a broad panorama of India's multifaceted social and cultural landscape [10, p. 5]. The novel presents a variety of religions, ethnic groups, and ways of life vividly and convincingly. As David Gilmour has noted, "Who is a novel that only a deep lover of India could write" [7, p. 145].

Kipling's short stories set in India have also helped him to be seen as a trusted voice of Anglo-Indian society. The stories published in the series "Plain Tales from the Hills" and the Indian Railway Library depict the daily life of the imperial bureaucracy in a realistic style [16, p. 62]. The poems "Departmental Ditties" criticize the British administrative class resting in Simla with subtle but merciless irony [9, p. 104].

Although Kipling's relationship with Indians was generally positive, he found it difficult to accept some features of Indian society, especially the social position of women [3, p. 101]. This fact confirms the Eurocentric nature of his worldview and shows that Kipling was torn between empathy and a sense of cultural superiority.

Consequently, Kipling's imperial ideology was not unambiguous and simple. He defended the empire, but at the same time he saw its weaknesses and the possibility of its collapse. The Indian experience gave Kipling's work both ideological sharpness and cultural depth, distinguishing him from the usual imperialist writers of his time [14, p. 119].

In Rudyard Kipling's work, the experience with the United States of America occupies a special place, and this stage played a decisive role in his literary formation. Kipling's first visit to the United States took place in 1889, and this journey became for him a source of both cultural discovery and profound contradictions [7, p. 158]. Although he sharply criticized the everyday behavior, social relations, and social freedom of Americans, it was impossible not to be impressed by the dynamism and energy of this society [8, p. 176].

Kipling criticized Americans for violence, greed, corruption, a weak table culture, and rudeness in social behavior. The behavior of women and young people in particular contradicted his Victorian values [7, p. 162]. At the same time, Kipling was fascinated by American nature and observed with admiration the influence of vast geographical spaces on human character [13, p. 91].

From a literary point of view, Kipling was inter-

ested in American writers from an early age. Kipling, who was acquainted with the works of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Bret Harte as a child, later showed great interest in the works of Walt Whitman, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and especially Mark Twain [6, p. 44]. Meeting Mark Twain was of both symbolic and professional importance for Kipling. As a young journalist, his two-hour interview with Twain had strengthened Kipling's self-confidence and literary ambition [6, p. 51]. In 1892, Kipling married the American Caroline Balestier. This marriage marked the beginning of a new creative phase in his life [7, p. 173]. Although Henry James described the marriage as a simple and unpretentious one, family life provided Kipling with a certain stability [8, p. 189]. The couple settled near Brattleboro, Vermont, where Kipling experienced one of his most productive periods. Financial difficulties prompted Kipling to intensive writing. During this period, he wrote *The Jungle Book*, the first examples of the *Just So Stories* series, as well as *Captain Courageous* [10, p. 12]. The years spent in Brattleboro gave Kipling's writing style a special agility and vitality. His language became simpler, more rhythmic, and more accessible to the reader, which is associated with the influence of American literature [6, p. 83].

Kipling's works from his American years are not only examples of children's literature, but also rich in cultural and ideological metaphors. In *The Jungle Book*, the concept of order and family in the wild questions the advantages claimed by civilization [12, p. 109]. The presentation of monsters as ideal parents, the idea of the existence of a moral order despite the strict rules of society, are noteworthy in this regard. Kipling also followed the attitude of American society towards indigenous peoples with serious concern. He assessed the fate of the American Indians as a destructive consequence of civilization and transferred these observations to his works in artistic symbolic language [7, p. 181]. This approach shows that Kipling was not only an imperialist, but also an observer concerned about cultural losses.

Thus, the American years are not an extraneous episode in Kipling's work, but one of the main stages that shaped his literary style and worldview. This experience made Kipling understandable and attractive not only to the British reader, but also to an international audience [14, p. 134].

Rudyard Kipling's public and literary position became more acute and complex against the backdrop of the wars that took place in the early 20th century. During the Boer War, Kipling accused British politicians and military leadership of incompetence,

and stated that the peace treaty signed after the war created the basis for future social and racial conflicts [7, p. 196]. This position shows that, despite his loyalty to the empire, he took a critical stance towards specific political decisions. When the First World War broke out, Kipling was actively involved in publicistic and literary activities in order to strengthen the spirit of patriotism. However, his attitude towards the war was not romantic or blind. Kipling considered the sending of British soldiers with old weapons against modern German military equipment as a senseless bloodshed [8, p. 223]. This concern was further deepened by a personal tragedy: the death of his son John at the front in 1917 had a serious impact on Kipling's worldview [7, p. 241]. After this event, the theme of war in Kipling's writings took on a more serious and tragic tone. The pathos of victory gave way to feelings of loss, responsibility, and guilt. Although his poems during this period were more ideologically harsh and polemical, his short stories retained their former artistic power [16, p. 143]. The poem "If" remains one of Kipling's most widely distributed and beloved works, expressing ideas of individual morality, restraint, and spiritual strength [9, p. 412].

Kipling's works for children, "Puck of Pook's Hill" and "Rewards and Fairies", also occupy a special place in his literary heritage. These books, combining the history of England with mythological and folklore elements, present it to the young reader and serve to form the concept of national identity [15, p. 88]. Interestingly, even after Kipling's death, these works have maintained their popularity and remained relevant for different generations. One of Kipling's most important literary achievements is that he laid the foundation for a new genre direction with the novel "Who". According to Christopher Benfey, this work can be considered the initial model of the modern detective novel [6, p. 211]. It is no coincidence that later it is possible to observe Kipling's influence in the work of authors such as Ian Fleming and John le Carré. Even the inclusion of the novel "Who" in the mid-twentieth century on the recommended reading list of American intelligence agencies indicates its potential for strategic thinking and political influence [6, p. 219]. At the same time, Kipling's legacy has always been a subject of controversy. In an article written in 1942, George Orwell emphasized that Kipling had not been erased from the reader's memory despite decades of ideological criticism [8, p. 267]. Kipling was neither fully accepted nor completely rejected; he was both loved and criticized, but he managed to remain at the center of literary discourse. In his last years, Kipling turned his attention back to political issues and urged

Britain to prepare for a new war with Germany, which he considered inevitable. Although he did not see the outbreak of the Second World War, he firmly believed that it would happen. He expressed this threat in symbolic language in his poem "Storm Cone" written in 1932 [9, p. 455]. This work can be seen as the artistic culmination of the warning stance that Kipling maintained until the end of his life.

Thus, Rudyard Kipling's work reflects a complex synthesis of themes of war, empire, and individual responsibility. He is neither a mere imperialist propagandist nor a mere children's writer; Kipling is a complex personality, constantly caught between two worlds, expressing global contradictions in artistic language at the beginning of the 20th century [14, p. 141].

Conclusions. The results of the research show that Rudyard Kipling acted in 20th century English literature not only as a bearer of the ideology of empire, but also as a complex and multi-layered writer who deeply analyzed the global political, cultural and moral contradictions of the time he lived in the level of artistic thinking. His creativity was formed against the background of the rise and parallel gradual weakening of the British Empire, and the ideological and human consequences of these historical changes were clearly and systematically reflected in Kipling's works.

The Indian experience transformed Kipling's concept of empire from abstract political thought to a system of vision based on concrete observations and everyday life realities. In the novel "Who", this experience is presented in the form of a multi-layered social and cultural panorama, and the religious, ethnic and cultural diversity of Indian society is artistically reflected. The American years played a complementary role in the writer's creativity, making his style more flexible and his language more universal. The creation of works such as "The Jungle Book" and "Captain Courageou" shows that Kipling has become an understandable and influential author for a global reader.

The theme of war occupies a special and central place in Kipling's work. The First World War and the death of his son at the front seriously undermined his previous romantic patriotic position, strengthening the motifs of loss, responsibility and tragedy in his writings. However, Kipling did not completely abandon the idea of empire, he both defended it and critically assessed it. It is this dual attitude that makes it impossible to place his work in unambiguous ideological frameworks and keeps Kipling as a controversial literary figure who remains relevant to modern readers and researchers today.

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Емінлі А. А. МІЖ ІМПЕРІЄЮ ТА СУМНІВАМИ: СУПЕРЕЧЛИВИЙ ЛІТЕРАТУРНИЙ СВІТ РЕДЬЯРДА КІПЛІНГА

У цій статті представлено результати дослідження, що аналізує життя та творчість Редьярда Кіплінга, видатної постаті англійської літератури 20-го століття. Розглядаються різні аспекти літературної спадщини Кіплінга, включаючи імперську ідеологію, дискурс воєнного часу та художнє вираження культурних суперечностей, а також вплив його індійського та американського досвіду на його творчість. У цій статті розглядається життя та творчість Редьярда Кіплінга, видатної постаті англійської літератури 20-го століття. У статті визначено художнє вираження імперської ідеології, дискурс воєнного часу та культурні суперечності в літературній спадщині Кіплінга, а також вплив його індійського та американського досвіду на його творчість.

У статті ставить низку важливих цілей, що розкривають ключовий аспект літературної творчості письменника. Зокрема, аналізуються основні етапи життя та кар'єри Кіплінга, досліджується його ставлення до імперської ідеології. У статті також визначено вплив індійського та американського досвіду на творчість письменника. Встановлено ідейно-художні особливості його основних творів. У дослідженні обґрунтовано сучасні критичні підходи до спадщини Кіплінга. Використано історико-порівняльний, літературно-критичний, контекстуальний та текстуально-аналітичний методи. Твори Кіплінга розглядалися на тлі як соціально-політичних умов періоду, в який вони були написані, так і наступних науково-критичних підходів. Встановлено, що розгляд творчості Редьярда Кіплінга як суперечливого та багатошарового явища імперської ідеології становить наукову новизну дослідження. Тут спостерігається низка аспектів: систематичне дослідження впливу американського періоду Кіплінга на його стиль та розвиток його жанру; оцінка роману «Хто» як оригінальної моделі сучасної розвідувальної літератури. Трансформацію ставлення Кіплінга до теми війни демонструється в контексті особистої трагедії. Це дослідження досліджує ставлення Кіплінга до імперської ідеології та його особистий підхід до теми війни, розкриваючи вплив сучасної літератури та соціально-політичних умов. Також підкреслюється важливість індійського та американського досвіду у формуванні творчості Кіплінга. Результати можуть бути використані в наукових дослідженнях англійської літератури 20-го століття, колоніального та постколоніального дискурсу, а також в університетських лекціях та семінарах.

Ключові слова: імперська ідеологія, англійська література, колоніалізм, воєнний дискурс, літературна суперечність, культурна ідентичність, художнє мислення.

Дата першого надходження статті до видання: 08.01.2026

Дата прийняття статті до друку після рецензування: 10.02.2026

Дата публікації (оприлюднення) статті: 24.04.2026