

Maurice Hungiville

A CHOICE OF CRITICS: T. S. ELIOT'S EDITION OF KIPLING'S POETRY

T. S. Eliot's 1941 edition, *A Choice of Kipling's Verse*, was a balanced representative selection which defiantly included such notorious *causes celebres* as "Recessional", "The White Man's Burden", and "The Absent-Minded Beggar", along with such recognized favorites as "The Mary Gloster" and "Mandalay". In addition to these famous poems, there were many unfamiliar verses drawn from Kipling's more reflective and philosophical later period.

Eliot's long critical introduction to the anthology was a modest and thoughtful invitation to review Kipling's special achievements in verse and to suggest "several reasons for our not knowing Kipling's poems so well as we think we do". Eliot, as a writer and promoter of modern poetry, was aware that the defense of Kipling involved unique problems and paradoxes. "The task", he wrote,

is the opposite of that with which we are ordinarily faced when attempting to defend contemporary verse. We expect to have to defend a poet against the charge of obscurity: we have to defend Kipling against the charge of excessive lucidity. We expect a poet to be reproached for lack of respect for the intelligence of the common man, or even for deliberately flouting the intelligence of the common man: we have to defend Kipling against the charge of being a 'journalist' appealing only to the commonest collective emotions. We expect a poet to be ridiculed because his verse does not appear to scan: we must defend Kipling against the charge of writing jingles. (p. 6)

Eliot could remove the label "journalist" from Kipling by recalling that Kipling had often worked against the grain of collective emotions by promoting unpopular causes such as the Boer War in tones which were frequently "more admonitory than laudatory". Kipling's "lucidity" was less easily de-

fended, and the attempt led Eliot into the construction of elaborate new definitions that could contain and properly limit Kipling's unique achievements. The problem here, Eliot recognized, was "to help keep him out of the wrong pigeon holes". One such pigeon hole, in which Kipling's special achievements were often dwarfed, was the lofty, Arnoldian concept of poetry, and Eliot insisted from the outset that Kipling was a writer of verse who "was not trying to write poetry at all". It was true, of course, that Kipling's verse sometimes reached "the intensity of poetry", but the absence of intensity was the result not of any defect or deficiency, but of conscious design. Kipling's verses were designed along the lines of the traditional ballad. Like the Border Ballads, Kipling's verse was designed to do what poetry could not do. Kipling proceeded, Eliot observed, "from the motive of the ballad maker" and wrote with "a singleness of intention in attempting to convey no more to the simpleminded than can be taken in at one reading or hearing". (pp. 10-12)

Yet, in Kipling's verse simplicity of intention was combined with a remarkable subtlety of execution, so that his poems often satisfied an attention which readers rarely focused on ballads. In part, this extra element, "something above and beyond the bargain", was the result of Kipling's "consummate gift of word, phrase, and rhythm". These gifts, Eliot suggested, often transformed Kipling's verse into poetry. The presence of poetry was also related, more mysteriously, to Kipling's impersonality. Kipling excelled in objective, public poetry, but his achievements in impersonal forms such as the hymn and epigram seemed to be related to an accidental intrusion of the personal. As Eliot put it, "something breaks through from a deeper level than that of the mind of the conscious observer of political and social affairs". (p. 16)

Eliot's distinctions between verse and poetry were not value judgments, but suggestions for the recognition of a new category, a special sub-genre which could more accurately describe Kipling's intentions and performance. It was a category which might, indeed, be useful in evaluating Eliot's own intentions, particularly in the poetic drama. Eliot, educating an audience for his own as well as Kipling's verse, seemed to claim for Kipling the same kind of tolerance which he had nine years before demanded for John Dryden.¹ Dryden and Kipling, Eliot perceived, had much in common. "Both", he wrote,

were masters of phrase, both employed rather simple rhythms with adroit variations; and by both the medium was employed to convey a simple forceful statement, rather than a musical pattern of emotional overtones. And (if it is possible to use these terms without confusion) they were both classical rather

than romantic poets. They arrive at poetry through eloquence; for both, wisdom has the primacy over inspiration; and both are more concerned with the world about them than with their own joys and sorrows, and concerned with their own feelings in their likeness to those of other men rather than in their particularity. (p. 26)

Beyond this, Kipling and Dryden were both masters of versatility. Kipling's versatility was noted in a variety of forms, hymns, epigrams, and, above all, in prose and poetry. This mastery made Kipling "an inventor of mixed forms". He was, Eliot insisted, "truly ambidextrous" and his verse and poetry were inseparable. (p. 5)

Although Eliot rested his defense of Kipling primarily on his verse, he did not neglect to defend Kipling's ideas as well. In 1919 Eliot had expressed dissatisfaction with Kipling as a poet who "had only a few simple ideas" and indicated his preference for poets who had comprehensive systems of ideas, "points of view", or "worlds".² Now twenty-three years later, in the midst of another World War, Eliot found Kipling's ideas, particularly his imperialism, far more complex, subtle, and congenial. Kipling, in Eliot's view, was neither a true believer nor a predictable producer of political propaganda. He was, like all artists, a man attempting to realize his sensations, to articulate an awareness, and to find a form for his feelings. Comparing Kipling with H. G. Wells, Eliot concluded that Kipling was not a thinker at all, for he promoted moods and feelings rather than ideas and political systems. Kipling's imperialism was a case in point. His empire, Eliot wrote,

was not merely an idea, a good idea or a bad one; it was something the reality of which he felt. And in his expression of his feeling he was certainly not aiming at flattery of national, racial or imperial vanity, or attempting to propagate a political programme; he was aiming to communicate the awareness of something in existence of which he felt that most people were very imperfectly aware. It was an awareness of grandeur, certainly, but it was much more an awareness of responsibility. (p. 25)

Kipling's vision of Empire was not, then, political. Kipling's Empire had a universality which made it "almost that of an Empire laid up in heaven". This vision of Empire was, moreover, far more complex than most critics had realized. His "Sussex" poems suggested an historically grounded patriotism, and Eliot noted that in these poems Kipling, who had originally explored the far-flung fringes of Empire, now explored its core. The "Sussex" poems demonstrated, in Eliot's terms, "the development of the imperial imagination

into the historical imagination". (p. 27)

Eliot's comments on Kipling's imperialism were hardly more than a postscript in an essay primarily concerned with poetry. Had they been written by anyone but Eliot they might well have been ignored. But Eliot's sponsorship of Kipling increased the likelihood that Kipling would be evaluated in political rather than poetic terms. The animosity that many critics felt for Eliot was transferred to Kipling. Kipling's political views, already controversial, were now associated with the equally controversial, far more contemporary conservatism of T. S. Eliot. Eliot's conservatism had been widely publicized since he had announced in the preface to *For Lancelot Andrews* (1928) that he was "classical in literature, royalist in politics, anglo-catholic in religion". Since then, his conservatism had become tainted with anti-Semitism. In his poetry, Eliot had made frequent use of the Jew as a convenient symbol of modern rootlessness, and his essays and lectures had expressed an even more explicit anti-Semitism. In 1933, Eliot addressing a Virginia audience on the merits of tradition, remarked:

What is still more important is unity of religious background, and reasons of race and religion combine to make any large number of free-thinking Jews undesirable. There must be a proper balance between urban and rural, industrial and agricultural development. And a spirit of excessive tolerance is to be deprecated.³

The politics and the personality of T. S. Eliot combined with a new and distorted interest in Kipling's personality to deflect the critics' attention from the substantive issues raised by *A Choice of Kipling's Verse*. Eliot's introductory essay, moreover, was designed to defend Kipling against the present. In defending Kipling as a poet, Eliot had neglected to defend him as a personality, and it was Kipling's personality which now exercised a morbid fascination for most critics. The posthumous publication in 1937 of Kipling's autobiography, *Something of Myself*, had revived interest in Kipling's personality, but at the expense of his poetry. Kipling, in this retrospective and extremely reticent review of his career, wrote as a public figure concerned largely with the surface of his life. Poetry was evidently a minor interest, and Kipling said little to encourage anyone to take him seriously as an artist. *Something of Myself* did, however, provide abundant information concerning Kipling the man, and this information came at a time when popularized psychology could best turn it to account. The result was an immediate spate of biographical assessments which often took the form of post-mortem psychological studies.

The most famous—and the most destructive—of these biographical essays was Edmund Wilson's "The Kipling That Nobody Read", which appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1941 and later in *The Wound and The Bow*. Wilson's combined exercise in psychology and literary criticism was primarily concerned with the experiences that had decisively determined Kipling's development as a man and artist. Drawing on Kipling's autobiography, as well as the recently published biographical sketches of G. C. Beresford and Frederick F. Van de Water, Wilson singled out the experiences that had, he believed, prevented Kipling from fully realizing his potential as an artist. Wilson's thesis was that the persecution Kipling underwent as a child, first at the hands of a brutal aunt in Southsea and later at the hands of schoolmasters at Westward Ho, had left him "with a fundamental submissiveness to authority". This submissiveness, Wilson argued, was given additional aggravation by Kipling's bitter and menacing feud with his American brother-in-law in Vermont. In all these experiences, Kipling was menaced by people he regarded as intellectual and social inferiors, and this anxiety, Wilson concluded, explained Kipling's distrust of popular government and his subsequent "psychological sellout". Kipling clearly had been immune to the lure of money or fame, but he had, nevertheless, taken what Wilson called "the big moral bribe that a political system can offer: the promise of mental security".⁴

Edmund Wilson's psychological study of Kipling, whatever its clinical shortcomings, was eloquent and impressive criticism that intensified and distorted the new biographical interest in Kipling. This new interest in Kipling the personality, particularly the Wilsonian interest in Kipling the sick personality, constituted a new, contemporary addition to the many impediments which prevented readers from considering Kipling as a poet. Critics had always been more interested in what Kipling believed than in what he wrote. Now the interest shifted from what he believed to what he was.

For these reasons of personality and politics, Eliot's *Choice of Kipling's Verse* was scarcely the "landmark in the history of English literature" which the book's wrapper claimed. It was a surprise, though, and it did provoke widespread disagreement and dismay in literary circles. To many the promotion of Kipling's verse must have appeared as another example of Eliot's unpredictable opinions—akin, perhaps, to his warning in 1936 that Milton was a dangerous poetic influence.⁵

Of the reviewers who commented on Eliot's anthology, only two, George Cookson and Carl Naumberg, could be regarded as wholly favorable. Cook-

son and Naumberg, certainly, were the only critics who felt that Eliot had underestimated Kipling's poetic achievements. Naumberg, writing in *The Saturday Review of Literature*, praised Eliot's edition as "an outstanding contribution to criticism", but complained that Eliot had unduly limited Kipling's achievements to the ballad and hymn.⁶ George Cookson, writing in *English*, had a similar complaint. Eliot, Cookson wrote, was "too acutely conscious of Kipling's limitations as a poet". To Cookson, Kipling was far more than a great verse writer, and he cited the familiar "L'Envoi", "The Ballad of East and West", and "The Mary Gloster" as poems which "surely give Kipling a claim to be counted a poet as well as a great verse writer".⁷

Aside from Cookson and Naumberg, most reviewers remained unconvinced by Eliot's attempt to rescue Kipling from oblivion. Many, following Edmund Wilson's lead, were obviously more interested in discussing psychology than poetry. Marjorie Farber, reviewing Eliot's *Choice of Kipling's Verse* for *The New York Times*, acknowledged that Eliot "clears away much of the critical fog which has obscured Kipling's stature", but she complained that Eliot left the reader in a "new fog". The "new fog" evidently resulted from Eliot's refusal to probe the Freudian depths of Kipling's sensibility. With repeated references to Wilson's *Atlantic* essay, Miss Farber invoked the infamous "Loot" to demonstrate Kipling's "spectator's delight in savagery" and insisted that Kipling would ultimately have to be explained on psychological grounds.⁸ G. W. Stonier's review of Eliot's anthology in *The New Statesman and Nation* also focused on the Kipling psyche. Citing "Recessional" as "the most war-drugged hymn in the English language", Stonier concluded that the most disgusting aspect of Kipling was "the holy purr of contentment that arises from his contemplation of cruelties".⁹

Critics who eschewed a Wilsonian interest in Kipling's psychology often indulged a familiar impulse to discuss Kipling's politics. World War II evidently intensified the hostility towards Kipling's political poems, and terms like "Hitleresque", "Fascist", and "anti-Semitic" were now used to update distaste for Kipling's political views. Mulk Rai Anand, writing in *Life and Letters Today*, regarded the anthology as "Mr. Eliot's bit in the war effort". No other explanation, he wrote, would suffice to explain "why a poet and critic of Mr. Eliot's eminence has thought fit to resurrect a dead horse". Anand, not unwilling to beat the dead horse with the familiar weapons of the past, objected to Kipling's "patronizing dialect" and "recurrent vulgarity". In spite of Eliot's denials, Anand remained convinced that each poem glorify-

ing the empire "simply oozes with Hitleresque pride in the domination of so-called inferior races".¹⁰ Benjamin Brooks, using similar terms for his review in *Nineteenth Century and After*, concluded that Kipling's political poems provided an "unwitting example of the practical application of Hitler's theory of propaganda". He meant by this that Kipling's poems dealt in "oversimplified slogans" and thereby offered "a ready made idealism . . . as free from subtlety as the political slogans of the yellow press".¹¹

Of all critics to comment on Eliot's *Choice of Kipling's Verse*, Lionel Trilling was the most vehement. Trilling, who had little interest in Kipling's poetry, restricted his remarks to the political attitudes and psychological aberrations which Kipling and Eliot shared. Trilling announced at the outset that Eliot's essay, in spite of its author's talents for being "verbose in evasion", was primarily a political tract. Eliot's essay, Trilling charged, dealt with politics—"politics where it is involved with sentiments, assumptions, and sensibilities". Politics, thus broadly defined, were invoked to explain Eliot's peculiar interest in Kipling. Kipling's political views appeared to have little worth or intrinsic interest. Similar political views, Trilling recalled, had been advanced by Samuel Johnson, Edmund Burke, and Sir Walter Scott. But Kipling was different. "He is not like them", Trilling wrote. "He is not generous and manly; he has none of their mind. His ideals left him mean; his toryism had often—though not always—a lower middle class snarl of defeated gentility in it".¹²

Kipling's politics, in Trilling's view, were not a matter for rational analysis. They issued from the hysteria which Edmund Wilson had diagnosed, and Trilling remained convinced that "the ramparts of Empire are built against the mind's threat to itself". (p. 440)

Kipling's political views were objectionable, then, because they were symptoms of a morbid psychological disorder and because Kipling himself "was too small a mind to conceive anything but a puny and mindless imperialism". In short, Trilling concluded, "Kipling is unloved and unlovable, not by reason of his beliefs, but by reasons of the temperament that gave them literary expression". (p. 440)

It was this temperament and its affinity to Eliot's that explained Eliot's promotion of Kipling's poetry. Both poets, Trilling charged, share "the same fear of a nameless psychological horror and despair. Politically, they share the headlong and angry reliance on administration and authority. They have the same sense of being beset by the ignoble mob". Fear of the mob,

Trilling felt, had stimulated both poets into anti-Semitism. Kipling's anti-Semitism was most obvious in "The Waster", particularly in the ambiguous use of etc. which concluded each stanza.

From the date that the doors of his prep-school close
 On the lonely little son
 He is taught by precept, insult, and blows
 The Things that Are Never Done.
 Year after year, without favour or fear,
 From seven to twenty-two,
 His keepers insist he shall learn the list
 Of the things no fellow can do.
 (They are not so strict with the average Pict
 And it isn't set to, etc.)¹³

Kipling's anti-Semitism, Trilling concluded, was characterized by "ironic good manners" which led him to write etc. when the rhyme required Jew. Eliot's anti-Semitism, evidenced by his inclusion of this poem, was a far more "opened and reasoned anti-Semitism".¹⁴

Trilling's exclusive interest in the psychological symptoms shared by Eliot and Kipling and his understandable sensitivity to any suggestion of anti-Semitism prevented a dispassionate, purely aesthetic, consideration of Kipling's poetry. Eliot's "Kipling venture", Trilling concluded, "would result in nothing more than the possibility of reflection on how deep, how obscure, and how bitterly combative are the motives of literary judgment". (p. 442)

Eliot in a subsequent letter to *The Nation* denied that "The Waster" was anti-Semitic, and insisted that the proper rhyme suggested by "etc." was not Jew but "Hun".¹⁵ But few Jews, familiar with the political views of Kipling and Eliot, would have been reassured. In the anguished year of 1942, ideas had erupted into ideologies, armies, and atrocities which made the motive of psychological analysis as well as "the motives of literary judgment" more combative than ever.

Lionel Trilling's sharp attack on the political and psychological motives behind T. S. Eliot's *Choice of Kipling's Verse* was echoed, in even angrier tones, by Boris Ford's "A Case For Kipling" which appeared in *Scrutiny*. To Ford, Kipling was little more than "a highly efficient journalist" whose minor talents were enhanced only by exceptional powers of observation. Kipling's mind, as Ford described it, "was a very crude instrument, seldom if ever in touch with finer spiritual issues". It was, moreover, a mutilated, sick mind

"entirely devoid of moral discipline and artistic honesty". Accepting the Wilsonian diagnosis, Ford went on to suggest that emotional wounds prevented Kipling from participating in normal human sympathies. The result, as Ford explained it, was a process of compensation by which Kipling "forcibly identified himself with the larger structure of the British Empire, and later of the English tradition. The sentiments which might normally have fastened on individuals were frustrated, and so they drove Kipling, almost frantically and quite obstinately, into participation in the great abstraction".¹⁸

All these observations were familiar variations on Edmund Wilson's theme, but Ford extended Wilson's thesis into a more comprehensive *fin-de-siècle* syndrome. Kipling's disability made him the perfect product of his age, for, in Ford's view, "an atrophy of finer feeling" was "the common disability of an artistic decadence". "The gaudy triumphs of imperialism", Ford explained, "fostered in the energy released, a spirit of irresponsibility in the realm of ideas". Kipling was only one expression of this irresponsibility. Wilde and Wells, like Kipling, hovered "between the superficially divergent worlds of art and politics" and toyed with socialism and literature. Shaw and Whistler likewise shared with Kipling "the contemporary love of verbal dexterity", and other decadent dandies embraced Catholicism with the same sick spirit with which Kipling embraced imperialism. This, then, was the only "case" for Kipling that Ford could recognize, and the major task of his review was to explain how Eliot could "have lowered himself to advocating a revival of interest in such a writer". (p. 30)

Eliot's interest in Kipling, Ford concluded, was personal and political, rather than critical. His essay extolling the merits of Kipling's verse was merely a deceptive imitation of his earlier criticism. It contained, Ford wrote, "the familiar air of subtle differentiation, coupled with the pervasive refusal to observe any precise demarcations. The tone has about it that judicious detachment that was once so suggestive of meaning, but is now employed simply to disarm criticism and to enforce a personal view". (p. 32)

To Ford, an enthusiasm for Kipling's poetry was merely a symptom of Eliot's insecurity—a matter of psychological trauma rather than literary taste. Eliot, Ford theorized, had a neurotic need for Kipling's poetry, because Kipling acted out Eliot's totalitarian fantasies. Anyone, Ford concluded, "can see the attraction that Kipling might have for him; for Kipling was the popular success that Mr. Eliot will never be; he was anti-liberal with a crude gusto that Mr. Eliot can never attempt to equal, and above all he rested within the catholic church of his empire with a solid assurance and with a sense of fulfill-

ment that will always be artistically denied to Mr. Eliot in his dealings with the Anglican brotherhood". (p. 33)

W. H. Auden's psychological assessment of Kipling was far more subtle and benevolent than either Trilling's or Ford's. Auden, reviewing *A Choice of Kipling's Verse* for *The New Republic*, agreed with Eliot that Kipling was an "odd fish", but his oddness resulted, in Auden's view, not from his ability to write great verse, but from his unique "anxiety of encirclement". Kipling was extraordinary, Auden wrote, because "while virtually every other European writer since the fall of the Roman Empire has felt the dangers threatening civilization came from inside that civilization (or from inside the individual consciousness), Kipling is obsessed by a sense of danger threatening from outside".¹⁷

Kipling's sense of encirclement enabled, or perhaps compelled, him to create a special kind of hero, a special kind of politics, and, closely related to these, a special kind of poetry. The Kipling hero, constantly beset by menacing, external forces, is always on guard. "Unlike the epic hero", Auden noted, "he is always on the defensive". His defensive response to the "anxiety of encirclement" explained, among other things, Kipling's technical interests and specialized knowledge. "Thus", Auden wrote, "Kipling is interested in engineering, in the weapons which protect man against the chaotic violence of nature, but not in physics, in the intellectual discovery that made the weapons possible". (p. 580)

Kipling's political views, like his interest in engineering, were symptoms of the same "anxiety of encirclement". His politics rested uneasily and irrationally on a fundamental contradiction between civilization and nature. Civilization consisted of those who resisted the barbarian appetites and impulses by disciplining themselves to live under the "law". Yet the "law" which defined Kipling's concept of civilization, whether the Darwinian law of survival or the Newtonian law of the machine, was itself a product of nature. (p. 580)

The circular, contradictory nature of Kipling's central concepts were minimized in his politics of "critical emergency", for as Auden clearly recognized, "it is precisely when civilization is in mortal danger that the immediate necessity to defend it has a right to override the question of just what it is we are defending". (p. 580)

"The anxiety of encirclement" which made Kipling indifferent to the contradiction lurking at the heart of his politics was not without its effect on

his poetry. To Auden, Kipling's poetry was the perfect product of his philosophy, "the aesthetic corollary of his conception of life". Kipling's virtuosity with language, Auden wrote, "is not unlike that of one of his sergeants with an awkward squad". It was a mechanical, as well as a miraculous virtuosity that Auden could best describe by quoting Kipling's own description of the miracles wrought by drill sergeants.

Said England unto Pharaoh: "You've had miracles before
When Aaron struck your rivers into blood;
But if you watch the Sergeant he can show you something more.
He's a charm for making riflemen from mud."¹⁸

This virtuosity with language, the making "riflemen from mud", may have been what Auden had in mind when he wrote in "Homage to W. B. Yeats" that Kipling had been "forgiven for his language". Yet in this essay, Auden realized the limitations of Kipling's drill-squad diction. "Under his will", Auden wrote, "the vulgarest words learn to wash behind the ears and to execute complicated movements at the word of command, but they can hardly be said to learn to think for themselves". (p. 580)

The limitations which Kipling rigidly imposed on his diction were also the limitations of his poems. Both limitations, Auden suggested, preceded from the same anxiety of encirclement: "His poems have the air of brilliant tactical improvisations to overcome sudden unforeseen obstacles, as if, for Kipling, experience were not a seed to cultivate patiently and lovingly, but an unending stream of dangerous feelings to be immediately mastered as they appear". (p. 580)

The most balanced and incisive response to Eliot's *Choice of Kipling's Verse* was George Orwell's review. Orwell, the tough, independent British socialist, contended that Eliot's defense was marred by extremism of assertion and indefiniteness of detail. Orwell objected, first of all, to Eliot's tendency to disguise rather than defend Kipling's imperialism. Kipling, Orwell insisted with italics, "*is* a jingo imperialist, he *is* morally insensitive and aesthetically disgusting". These unpleasant facts, Orwell believed, had best be acknowledged at the outset. Eliot's error was that he chose to ignore these facts, and, in defending Kipling against the false charge that he was a fascist, he had fallen into what Orwell called "the opposite error of defending him where he is not defensible". "It is no use", Orwell wrote,

pretending that Kipling's view of life, as a whole, can be accepted or even forgiven by any civilized person. It is no use claiming, for instance, that when

Kipling describes a British soldier beating a 'nigger' with a cleaning rod in order to get money out of him, he is acting merely as a reporter and does not necessarily approve what he describes.¹⁹

Orwell rejected such pretence and based his defense of Kipling on distinctions rather than disguises. Kipling was clearly an imperialist, but Orwell distinguished very carefully between the "nineteenth-century imperialist outlook and the modern gangster outlook". Nineteenth-century imperialism, Orwell explained, was characterized by good intentions and responsibility. At its worst, it was a kind of "forcible evangelicism".²⁰

After admitting the unpleasant, but undeniable presence of imperialism in Kipling's poetry, Orwell proceeded to defend Kipling against the charge that he was a fascist as vigorously as he had indicted him as an imperialist. The evidence for these distinctions was found in "Recessional", particularly the line "lesser breeds without the law". This line, Orwell argued, was "always good for a snigger in pansy-left circles," largely because it was ignorantly misinterpreted as referring to exploited and helpless natives. But the phrase, Orwell insisted, "refers almost certainly to the Germans, and especially the pan-German writers who are without the law in the sense of being lawless, not in the sense of being powerless". The misinterpretation of this crucial line, Orwell believed, had distorted the entire poem into "an orgy of boasting" when it was in fact designed as "a denunciation of power politics, British as well as German". (pp. 110-113)

Orwell made similar distinctions about the "Barrack-Room Ballads" and Kipling's frequently misunderstood attitude toward the British soldier. Kipling's soldier ballads were distasteful to Orwell, because they were pervaded by class prejudice. Kipling, Orwell noted, idealized the officers "to an idiotic extent" while patronizing the private soldier to an extent that disfigured some of his best poetry. "Follow Me 'Ome" and "The Sergeant's Weddin'", Orwell argued, were truly lyrical poems sadly flawed by the intrusion of cockney comedy. The cockney comedy, a result of Kipling's irresistible "impulse to make fun of a workingman's accent", usually involved no more than the removal of the "h" from such words as "home". But by the simple device of restoring the aitches, Orwell was able to demonstrate how Kipling's comic use of cockney accents had prevented these poems from achieving their fullest beauty. (pp. 110-113)

The same excessive defensiveness which marred Eliot's comments on Kipling's imperialism was also observed in Eliot's ambiguous claims for Kip-

ling's "verse". "The trouble", Orwell complained was that "whenever an aesthetic judgment on Kipling's work is called for, Mr. Eliot is too much on the defensive to speak plainly". Eliot's juggling of the terms verse and poetry was unsatisfactory to Orwell, who preferred to regard Kipling simply as "a good bad poet". By this, Orwell meant that Kipling was "as a poet what Harriet Beecher Stowe was as a novelist". The good bad poem Orwell defined as "a graceful monument to the obvious" which gave vulgar and commonplace thoughts vigorous and sometimes permanent expression. Kipling's famous lines—"Down to Gehenna or up to the Throne/He travels fastest who travels alone"—exemplified both the best and the worst of good bad poetry, and enabled Orwell to explain Kipling's ability to contribute so many memorable phrases to the language. Such a phrase, Orwell wrote, "may not be true, but at any rate it is a thought that everyone thinks. Sooner or later you will have occasion to feel that he travels fastest who travels alone, and there the thought is, ready made, and, as it were, waiting for you. So the chances are that having once heard this line, you will remember it". (pp. 110-113)

Orwell seemed to agree with Edmund Wilson's thesis that Kipling, by embracing British imperialism so wholeheartedly, had "sold out to the British governing class, not financially, but emotionally". Orwell, however, was less certain about the effect of such views on Kipling's poetry. Kipling's class consciousness did, as Orwell demonstrated with the restored aitches, seriously distort some of his most promising poems. Yet Orwell also realized that by adopting the viewpoint of the ruling classes, Kipling, unlike more fashionable poets of his day, was forced to "try and imagine what action and responsibility are like". The concern with action and responsibility saved Kipling from the superficial exercise of wit and daring, and Orwell was able to conclude that "even his worst follies seem less irritating than the 'enlightened' utterances of the same period, such as Wilde's epigrams or the collection of cracker mottoes at the end of *Man and Superman*". (pp. 110-113)

T. S. Eliot's *Choice of Kipling's Verse* brought Kipling temporarily from obscurity into an exposed, extremely vulnerable, position at a time when his political attitudes were more alarming than ever. The result, instead of a revival, was to demonstrate once again that critics when concerned with Kipling's poetry become inextricably entangled in inflammatory extra-literary matters. Certainly, the violent political and psychological assaults aroused by Eliot's modest claims for Kipling's verse equalled, in malice and hysteria, the diatribes which passed for criticism during the embittered laureate controversy. Eliot's

sponsorship of Kipling, no doubt, complicated the critical task and increased the tendency to evaluate Kipling in political rather than poetic terms. Outstanding figures were stimulated to comment on Kipling, but few said anything to contradict Eliot's conviction that reviewing was a "barbarous habit of a half-civilized age".²¹ Most reviewers seized the occasion to attack the sincerity of Eliot's judgment. For generations critics who preferred to avoid any substantive discussion of Kipling's poetry had concentrated their analytical talents on the motives and shortcomings of Kipling's defenders. The elaborate, often vindictive, analysis of Eliot's political and psychological motivation merely continued this familiar tradition of Kipling criticism in somewhat more sophisticated, pseudo-scientific terms.

Partly because of Eliot's sponsorship, then, *A Choice of Kipling's Verse* failed to generate any new enthusiasm for Kipling as a poet. Judging from the reviews, Eliot's anthology even failed in its announced intention—"to keep Kipling out of the wrong pigeon holes". Critics continued to belabor Kipling's "journalism", his "vulgarity", and his detachment from "the finer spiritual issues".²² A convenient new pigeon hole was the psychological one constructed by Edmund Wilson. George Orwell accepted Wilson's arguments concerning the psychological origins of Kipling's political views, although he was by no means certain that Kipling's "psychological sell-out" was a bad bargain. Lionel Trilling and Boris Ford accepted the Wilson thesis without qualification. Indeed, Trilling and Ford simply recast Wilson's diagnosis in more vehement terms and extended the symptoms to Eliot. Auden's psychological assessment of Kipling was far less hostile than Trilling's or Ford's, but it was poetically far more damaging. Auden, writing in terms of "anxiety" rather than "wounds", suggested that Kipling's images as well as his ideas were products of neurotic fears and that his poems were designed to escape rather than encounter experience.

Wilson's widely accepted reading of the Kipling psyche seemed to influence all the reviews of Eliot's anthology and to dominate some of the most independent minds in literary criticism. As a result of Wilson's pervasive influence, there was little real evaluation of Kipling's poems. Indeed, not a single critic seemed to have read any of the poems from Kipling's mature period, and such observations as the critics made were often based on such familiar, battle-scarred pieces as "Loot" and "Recessionary". But if Eliot's Kipling venture yielded little original insight into Kipling's verse, it did, perhaps, have serious implications for reviewing. If nothing else, it may have demon-

strated I. A. Richards's conclusions on the difficulty of literary judgment. Richards, in *Practical Criticism*, had commiserated with "the sincere and innocent reader" who was "too easily bounced into emptying his mind by any literary highwayman who says, 'I want your opinion', and much too easily laid low because he has nothing to produce on these occasions". This common reader might be comforted, Richards suggested, "if he knew how many professionals make a point of carrying stocks of imitation currency, crisp and bright, which satisfy the literary highwayman and are all that even the wealthiest critic in these emergencies can supply".²³

NOTES

1. T. S. Eliot, *John Dryden. The Poet, The Dramatist, The Critic* (New York, 1932).
2. T. S. Eliot, "Kipling Redivivus", *Athenaeum* (May 9, 1919), 297-298.
3. T. S. Eliot, *After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy* (London, 1934), p. 18. (The Page-Barbour Lectures at The University of Virginia, 1933.)
4. Edmund Wilson, "The Kipling That Nobody Read", *Atlantic Monthly*, CLXVII (February, 1941), 201-214. Reprinted in *The Wound and The Bow* (New York, 1941).
5. T. S. Eliot, "A Note on the Verse of John Milton", *Essays and Studies*, XXI (1936), 32-40. Reprinted as "Milton I" in *On Poetry and Poets*, (New York, 1957), pp. 156-164.
6. Carl Naumberg, "A Package of Kiplingiana", *Saturday Review*, XXVI (November 10, 1943), 8-9.
7. George Cookson, "T. S. Eliot on Rudyard Kipling", *English*, IV (Spring, 1942), 4-7.
8. Marjorie Farber, "The Apostle of Empire", *New York Times Book Review* (September 26, 1943), 1, 22.
9. G. W. Stonier, "Books in General", *New Statesman and Nation*, XXIII (March 28, 1942), 210.
10. Mulk Raj. Anand, "Mr. Eliot's Kipling", *Life and Letters Today*, XXXIII (March, 1942), 167-170.
11. Benjamin G. Brooks, "Kipling's Verse", *Nineteenth Century And After*, CXXII (September, 1942), 139-143.
12. Lionel Trilling, "Mr. Eliot's Kipling", *Nation* (New York), CLVII (October 16, 1943), 436, 440, 442. Reprinted in *Kipling's Mind and Art* (Stanford, 1964), pp. 85-94.
13. Rudyard Kipling, "The Waster", *A Choice of Kipling's Verse*, ed. T. S. Eliot (London, 1941), p. 258.
14. Trilling, p. 442.

15. T. S. Eliot, "Letter to the Editor", *Nation* (New York), CLVIII (January 15, 1944), 83.
16. Boris Ford, "A Case for Kipling", *Scrutiny*, XI (1942), 23-33.
17. W. H. Auden, "The Poet of The Encirclement", *New Republic*, CIX (October 25, 1943), 579-581.
18. Rudyard Kipling, "Pharaoh and The Sergeant", *Rudyard Kipling's Verse* (New York, 1935), p. 198.
19. George Orwell, "Rudyard Kipling", *Horizon*, V (February, 1942), 11-25. Reprinted in *Critical Essays* (London, 1946), 100-113.
20. Orwell, *Critical Essays*, pp. 110-113.
21. T. S. Eliot, "Brief Treatise on The Criticism of Poetry", *Monthly Chapbook*, No. 9 (March, 1920); Quoted by C. K. Stead, *The New Poetic* (New York, 1964), 117.
22. Boris Ford, "A Case For Kipling", *Scrutiny*, XI (1942), 23-33; G. W. Stonier, "Books in General", *New Statesman and Nation*, XXIII (March 28, 1942), 210.
23. I. A. Richards, *Practical Criticism* (Cambridge, 1929), p. 299.