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SPEAKING OF MYSELF: INDEPENDENCE, SELF-REPRESENTATION,  
AND THE SPEECHES OF RUDYARD KIPLING

by

Jacob Michael Wilkes

A thesis submitted to the faculty of

Brigham Young University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of English

Brigham Young University

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

Jacob Michael Wilkes

This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

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As chair of the candidate's graduate committee, I have read the thesis of Jacob Michael Wilkes in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements, (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

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## ABSTRACT

### SPEAKING OF MYSELF: INDEPENDENCE, SELF-REPRESENTATION, AND THE SPEECHES OF RUDYARD KIPLING

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Master of Arts

Rudyard Kipling is a man of immense diversity. He successfully managed to write for over half a century in a variety of genres: short story, travelogue, ballad, personal narrative, and news reporting, to name only a few. While doing so, Kipling readily interacted with a range of subjects and created a multitude of ideas. Likewise, on a personal level, Kipling led an immensely diverse life. He could easily claim four separate continents as home, living variously in India, the United States, England, and South Africa. By profession he was a writer, but as an observer he was so skilled that he learned by heart a variety of professions ranging from street beggar to statesman. Both before and after his life, this variety and complexity has been a subject of debate. Some ignore it, others focus on a particular side of it, but for all it represents an interesting challenge in both studying and classifying Kipling.

This thesis seeks to address that challenge by focusing on how Kipling's varying and competing images and ideas work together to assert Kipling's independence. In doing so, this

work will look specifically at how Kipling uses multifaceted techniques in his public speeches. In looking at the speeches, the thesis explores three ways in which multiplicity reinforces independence: the combination of privacy and creation, the refashioning of expert detail and self-image, and the fusion of simplistic structure and subtle complexity.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## INTRODUCTION

Rudyard Kipling is a hard man to nail down. It's widely acknowledged that he spent his life as an author, but even as an author it's difficult to classify him. Readily, Kipling could be identified as a poet, children's author, travel writer, Indian storyteller, or reporter. Even more inclusively, at a number of times in his life, Kipling took on the role of the characters he was writing about. For instance, during the summer of 1896, Kipling was a sailor:

We assisted hospitable tug-masters to help haul three- and four-stick schooners of Pocahontas coal all round the harbor; we boarded every craft that looked as if she might be useful . . . And he sent me—may he be forgiven!—out on a Pollock-fisher, which is ten times fouler than any cod-schooner, and I was immortally sick, even though they tried to revive me with a fragment of un-fresh Pollock (*Rudyard Kipling: Something of Myself and Other Autobiographical Writings* 77).

In other circumstances Kipling functioned as a soldier, businessman, educator, and historian. In fact, Kipling's various roles, and the writing that followed them are so diverse that one critic boldly declared, "As to variety I wonder whether Kipling can be matched by any modern English or American writer of reputation" (Pinney 101).

Yet, despite much evidence in his own life and the content of his works, Kipling has traditionally been examined as a primarily one-sided writer—an imperialist icon who focused on the expansion of Britain's empire and the superiority of the British race. As one scholar bluntly put it, "Imperialism and conservatism were in fact essential ingredients in Kipling's life and of much of his writing" (Gilmour x). Indeed, even many who take a neutral view on

Kipling, feel that the imperialistic label is so strong there is little to argue against it. For instance, J. M. S. Tompkins, in surveying Kipling criticism nearly apologizes for her inability to engage Kipling's politics, conceding that "I have nothing to add to them which would justify extending what is already a sufficiently long commentary" (Tompkins x).

Certainly, there is much that validates such arguments. For about half of his career, Kipling focused almost exclusively on India and the Raj. In doing so, Kipling makes no apologies for the British colonial presence in India. Repeatedly, in both short story and verse Kipling includes characters that are racist and imperialistic. Further, throughout his career Kipling wrote sympathetically about soldiers and the military, those who preserved and expanded the Empire. If nothing else, Kipling would forever mark himself as an imperialist for developing the notion of "the white man's burden," a sentiment that has been so pervasive that, as Patrick Brantlinger points out, it has influenced "America's 'new imperialism' in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere" (173).

Yet, despite such evidence, the emotional nature of such claims complicates a final judgment. As Elliott Gilbert suggests, such quick political judgments inherently limit discussion:

That a definitive appraisal and judgment of Kipling the artist has so long been delayed—the writer died in 1936 but most readers assume the event took place several decades earlier—can in part be explained by the fact that both the author and his books are almost always dealt with in a political context and politics notoriously has a way of making it difficult to arrive at sober judgments. (*Kipling and the Critics* vi)

Indeed, as another scholar bluntly points out, “The unexamined stock label of ‘Imperialist’ that has been stuck on Kipling seems to have been all that a politically correct generation needed to know about him” (Pinney 100). As T. S. Elliot observed in reviewing a late collection of Kipling’s verse, “The mind is not yet sufficiently curious, sufficiently brave, to examine Mr. Kipling” (Lycett 497).

However, in recent years a growing body of Kipling scholarship has, in the words of Elliot, become “sufficiently curious” and has brought to light much that complicates Kipling’s traditional identity as a rank imperialist. As Katherine Hodgson points out, the idea that Kipling’s “unflattering reputation in Britain is based to a considerable extent on prejudice and a limited knowledge of his work is now, however, widely accepted, and the verdict of a turn-of-the-century critic who considered Kipling to be an apologist for empire who celebrated the Englishman as a brute and a philistine has long since been superseded” (Hodgson 1058).

Similarly, opening his article on Rudyard Kipling and transportation, Chris Harvie bluntly remarks that views on Kipling “have been comprehensively reassessed in recent years, with the result that the absolute reactions he used to provoke have given way to an understanding of the subtlety of some, if not all, of his perceptions” (Harvie 269). In fact, recent work has suggested that not only is it reductive to identify Kipling as an imperialist, it’s also overly simplistic to suggest any one identity for Kipling. Recently, a standard convention in Kipling biographies is to open by cataloging Kipling’s various and contradictory identities. As one biographer puts it,

Kipling was cruelly abandoned and abused as a child, but was to create some of the most enduring children’s characters ever written . . . Kipling was

physically unfit for military service, but his identification with soldiers was so deep that real soldiers started acting like the characters in his stories . . .

Kipling was castigated as a misogynist, though few writers of either sex have written so warmly about middle-aged women. (Adams 3–4)

Likewise, in reexamining “The Man Who Would Be King,” Edward Marx calls for a reevaluation of Kipling’s primary audience and contends that Kipling focuses on addressing both a British audience and an Anglo-Indian audience. Similarly, in *Hell and Heroism* William Dillingham discusses how Kipling’s writing displays both calls for heroism and deep-rooted pessimism. In *Kipling’s Imperial Boy*, Don Randall explores how Kipling’s description of adolescence simultaneously straddles multiple cultures.

This work builds on such notions in a similar fashion. It engages the idea that Kipling and his works are multifaceted. However, beyond merely acknowledging this fact, it explores the way Kipling’s multiple sides work together. Andrew Lycett, in speaking of Kipling’s imperialism, perhaps put this idea best: “To a colonially reared child of the sixties, Kipling was the epitome of all the superior and reactionary Anglo-Saxon attitudes that I naively believed I was rebelling against. Now I realize that he was this stereotype figure, and, more interestingly, he was not. And in that ambivalence lies the man’s fascination” (Lycett 1). The central focus of this thesis is to look at and push beyond that “fascination”—the space where Kipling’s various identities clash and coexist.

Now in claiming that Kipling’s various sides (even the conflicting ones) belong together, one is left in an interesting position. If Kipling simultaneously represents himself under multiple images, and simultaneously engages in conflicting endeavors, what does that say about his overall image? Is it disingenuous or merely careless? Perhaps, Kipling is just

schizophrenic. In some ways, an argument could be made for each. Creating a multifaceted image could potentially suggest that an author is careless, unbalanced, dishonest, or a myriad of other things. However, the most compelling argument that Kipling's various sides belong together is that Kipling uses his variety of images to create his own independence. That is, the combined effect of Kipling's multiplicity is that Kipling represents himself as an independent man.

In the overall context of Kipling's reputation, this argument holds some significance. It connects to an issue that has been debated by Kipling critics over the last hundred years. In many ways, Kipling's critical reputation has been connected to the idea that Kipling is primarily a popular writer, that is, that Kipling didn't write for himself, he wrote for others; he was dependent on the whims of a popular readership. Granted, all authors who find success in publishing deal with popularity, but for Kipling, more than most, it seems to be a particular issue. Kipling got his professional start in writing when he took employment as a journalist at the age of seventeen. For seven years Kipling worked as a reporter travelling across India recording events, writing sketches, and composing short verse. As a newspaperman dependent on good circulation for his salary, Kipling understood keenly what it meant to "publish or perish" and became adept at giving the public what they wanted to read. As many see it, that dependence on popular appeal never left. As one commentary remarks, Kipling readily accepted the notion of writing for popularity:

By the 1880s the debate about what it meant to be a writer was fuelled by increasing concern for literary standards: writing for posterity versus writing for the immediate, hungry public who were prepared to pay for what they enjoyed. Kipling believed, with Besant, that the commercialization of

literature was an exciting challenge and one that he was proud to accept.

(*Writings on Writing* xxii–xxiv)

Not surprisingly, in most of Kipling's work one will find short stories, quick sketches, and humorous anecdotes, all genres readily accessible to large groups of people. Yet, one will look in vain for works independent of the popular appeal such as treatises, philosophical dialogues, or dense prose.

Further, even Kipling himself seems to suggest on several occasions that his writing isn't about himself, but others. In "Prelude," the opening to *Departmental Ditties* (Kipling's first commercially published work), Kipling begins with a direct overture to both those he was addressing and those he was writing about:

I have eaten your bread and salt,  
I have drunk your water and wine,  
The deaths ye died I have watched be-side,  
And the lives that ye led were mine.

Was there aught that I did not share  
In vigil or toil or ease,—  
One joy or woe that I did not know,  
Dear hearts across the seas?

I have written the tale of our life  
For a sheltered people's mirth,

In jesting guise—but ye are wise,

And ye know what the jest is worth. (3)

It is significant to note that nowhere in Kipling's dedication is there reference to independence or self-fulfillment. This is Kipling's first work, and he says nothing about its creation or what it means to him personally. Instead, he buries his own interests to reach out to others. He gives credit for the subject matter to those he has lived and associated with and offers as his purpose, the guidance and help of others.

Given such an image, one might ask what place the notion of independence holds. Certainly, if Kipling is so direct about being non-independent, there is something amiss with being subtly independent. Yet, it is precisely because Kipling is so openly dependent, not in spite of it, that Kipling's self-representation as an independent man holds such significance. As a skilled writer, Kipling has a number of tools for communication at his disposal. Yet, in looking at Kipling's work the method he preferred most often for significant messages was subtlety. Even in letters to friends, when Kipling had something he wanted to convey forcefully, he used literary hedges to convey it. This work explores how Kipling used the subtlety of multiple images to convey a strong message and offers added insight into this significant feature of Kipling.

In looking at Kipling's work, there are a number of places to explore. Much of what Kipling did demonstrates Kipling's ability to present multiple images. One of the most substantial examples comes in the way Kipling represented himself in his public speaking. As a speechmaker, Kipling fashioned himself under a variety of different images. His collected book of speeches, *A Book of Words*, bears testament to that. Of the thirty-one speeches in the book, no two are the same. In some of the speeches Kipling brands himself as

casual, others philosophical, still others nostalgic. A casual reading might suggest that the only thing consistent about Kipling is his inconsistency. Yet, when taken as a whole these speeches provide one of the most compelling instances of how Kipling represented himself as independent. This thesis will explore how the speeches show Kipling using a multifaceted technique to assert his independence.

Granted, the notion of independence is a broad one. However, in the case of this study the idea of independence refers specifically to the degree of freedom Kipling had in regards to his self-image, audience, and content. As this thesis will show, Kipling's multiplicity allowed him greater freedom and control in each of these areas. In some cases, Kipling's ability to work from multiple sides creates greater privacy for Kipling. In others, it allows Kipling the flexibility to address a greater variety of audiences. In still others, it allows Kipling's subject matter to simultaneously sustain multiple meanings. But regardless, the effect is the same. By bringing together multiple images, Kipling is able to assert his own selfhood and independence. The chapters in this thesis will explore each of these three major areas—self-image, audience, and content—showing how Kipling's multiple sides both work with and complement each other.

The first chapter discusses independence in relation to Kipling's self-image. Specifically, it explores how Kipling increased his independence through the use of privacy and creation. Throughout his life Kipling guarded his privacy fiercely. He destroyed correspondence, refused interviews, and turned down public honors. Yet, despite such paranoia Kipling was anything but a sheltered recluse. On the contrary, Kipling had a very creative and engaging side. He wrote prolifically among a variety of genres and published continuously until the day he died. In looking closely at several speeches this chapter



demonstrates how these two sides of Kipling work together. The speeches show that through pushing for privacy Kipling was able to control his image and by exercising creativity Kipling was able to select his image. In so doing, Kipling was able to gain a greater degree of independence by not only keeping others from altering his reputation, but gaining the ability to craft his image himself.

The second chapter speaks of Kipling's independence in relation to his audience. It examines how Kipling was able to gain increased independence through representing himself as a multi-sided expert. One of the things that Kipling is recognized for is the accuracy and detail he displays in his work. When Kipling speaks of a subject, he speaks of it intimately and familiarly. Indeed, even Kipling's critics acknowledge his ability to speak knowledgeably on a range of subjects. Kipling's speeches draw particular attention to this. In his public speaking Kipling addressed a wide variety of audiences—students, soldiers, doctors, politicians, and businessmen. To each he displays enough knowledge to be able to speak to them on their own terms. As the chapter discusses, this ability to move fluidly among such diverse groups speaks strongly of Kipling's independence.

The last chapter outlines the role of independence in Kipling's content. It explores how Kipling increases his independence through creating multi-layered narratives. In his writing, Kipling often came across as simple. He discussed simple subjects such as animals and children. He wrote in simple straightforward prose cutting out all unnecessary appendages—reducing his texts to their most direct form. He even worked within (arguably speaking) simplistic genres such as young adult stories, ballads, and short fiction. Yet, although he was at once a simple author, he was also extraordinarily complex and sophisticated. For, by his own admission, Kipling overlaid his “simple” text with multiple

layers of complexity and meaning. Within his speeches, Kipling was particularly prolific at this. Time and again, Kipling used his speeches to construct simple narratives and then buried a rich variety of material underneath the surface of the speech. In doing so, Kipling gave himself greater independence allowing his speech to simultaneously take on multiple meanings, purposes, and objectives.

## CHAPTER ONE: PRIVATE CREATION

In October of 1899 the British Empire simultaneously declared war on the Orange Free State and the South African Republic (Transvaal Republic). This action marked the official beginning of the Second Boer War (also referred to as the “South African War” and the “Anglo-Boer War”). The war was the culmination of years of conflict between Britain and the two Boer republics—hostilities that had their roots in the early part of the nineteenth century. As the machinations of war began to spin into progress across civilian and military fronts, both England and Africa began to mobilize. Not the least among these fronts was the press corps, keen on documenting what had become a central topic of debate in the Empire.

In preparation for such coverage, the proprietor of *The Daily Mail* asked Rudyard Kipling to cover the impending conflict as a special war correspondent. Although a man of literature, Kipling was aptly suited for the job. Kipling was an intense patriot who openly supported the war and had a deep affection for soldiers and all things military. Many of Kipling’s most lasting characters and stories revolved around military conflict and culture. Even further, Kipling was a seasoned journalist. He had worked seven years in India as both a reporter and editor, covering among other things several military engagements.

However, despite an obvious fit in both skill and aptitude, Kipling dismissed the offer without hesitation. Instead, he informed the paper that he would assist on his own terms, choosing to contribute a poem about the war. In short order, Kipling handed over “The Absent-Minded Beggar,” a ballad that implores civilians to take pity on the “gentlemen in khaki.” Not long after its release the poem became a runaway success. It was distributed as pamphlets, set on china, sold as engravings, and put to music (by Sir Arthur Sullivan). One

estimate suggests that “by 1903 [the poem] had raised £340,000 (over \$20,000,000 in present day value)” (Richards 97).

Strictly by the facts, Kipling couldn't have made a smarter move. Not only did he avoid the obvious hardships of being thrown deep into the midst of armed conflict, but he also published a best-selling poem. Of course, as in most things in Kipling's life, the matter isn't simply that cut and dry. There are several factors that suggest that avoiding hardship and gaining income may not have been Kipling's only motives. In the first place, Kipling eventually became a war reporter. In 1900 Kipling and his wife went to South Africa to distribute supplies to the troops. While there, Kipling connected with several other journalists from the *Times* and *Reuters* and, with the support and encouragement of the commanding general, began publishing a new outlet for correspondence, *The Friend* (Adams 132). Secondly, Kipling donated all proceeds from the “Absent Minded Beggar” to *The Daily Mail's* Soldiers' Families Fund, a charity that distributed commodities to soldiers and their families. Further, as a simple fundraising ballad, the poem provided Kipling little to no gains in critical reputation. In fact, even Kipling himself would later condescendingly refer to the effort as “the first time I ever set out of malice aforethought to sell my name for every blessed cent it would fetch” (*The Letters of Rudyard Kipling Vol. 4: 1911–1919* 5).

Yet, more than income or recognition, what Kipling's decision did was reaffirm his image as an independent man. It allowed Kipling to show the paper that he was a person that did things his own way. To Kipling, such ownership may have been the most significant victory. As he counseled a group of college students, “one thing stands outside exaggeration or belittlement, through all changes in shapes of things and the sounds of words, is the bidding, the guidance that drive a man to own himself . . . ‘At any price that I can pay, let me

own myself.' And the price is worth paying if you keep what you have bought" (*A Book of Words* 227).

In his own life, Kipling followed that advice to the letter. He did everything he could to both own himself and keep owning himself. It's significant to note how both in Kipling's advice and in his actions these two parts—owning oneself and continuing to own oneself—work together. Achieving full independence requires both. Kipling's understanding of this two-sided effort is aptly demonstrated by his actions in the above example. In dealing with *The Daily Mail* Kipling wasn't merely reclusive and reactive. He pushed back at the invitation to work for the paper, but he didn't simply desert the idea altogether. He merely provided his own solution. While this might seem obvious, it's an important point. It's the multifaceted approach that offered Kipling the most independence. Kipling didn't just provide a void. He pushed for space and then filled that space. Indeed, a key component of Kipling's ability to maintain his independence is his ability to create. It is by mixing privacy and creation that Kipling most sets himself apart as an independent man.

To understand the significance of this argument, it's important to note the lack of true independence if only Kipling's drive for privacy—half of the equation—is taken into account. By itself, the zeal for privacy suggests a Kipling who is more dependent than independent, more reactionary than active. For instance, as Kipling's most recent biographer argues, "When he first became a public figure in 1891 he reacted to any perceived breach of his privacy with a hostility that bordered on paranoia, and that distrust grew more pointed with each passing year (Allen 6). As another scholar concurs, "Kipling was a determined destroyer of personal papers, animated by a fierce resentment of the fact that his privacy was always subject to invasion" (*Something of Myself* xi). Kipling's sister relates, "Ruddy passed

through a phase of almost morbid desire to throw veils over his perfectly respectable past. It used to sadden our parents a little—for after all he was not a bastard brought up in a gutter” (Allen 7). Others have drawn from Kipling’s own private remarks to craft the image of a paranoid man pushing for privacy. As the editor of Kipling’s letters points out, “He does not write about the history of his opinions, the doubts and uncertainties that he has had to go through in working out his beliefs; he does not philosophise, except in the tersest and most epigrammatic way; he does not meditate on the big questions.” The letters, “if they do not quite reveal ‘the inside of things’ . . . come as close to doing that as one can imagine for a writer so determinedly reticent on personal matters” (*Something of Myself* ix).

Although true, what such viewpoints suggest is that Kipling is a limited man. They suggest a Kipling who is guarded, paranoid, and afraid to reveal his true feelings—a man who always watched his back, who lacked full independence. However, as true as that may be, in a larger sense Kipling was able to push beyond simply covering his tracks. In many cases Kipling is able to gain a greater degree of independence by combining his push for privacy with a knack for creativity.

One of the most ready examples of this is in Kipling’s public speaking. In the speeches, Kipling readily combines images of privacy and creativity to create a larger picture of independence. This is particularly important given the nature of the speeches. At once, Kipling is burdened with the potential loss of his privacy. In the act of giving a speech a speaker comes before an audience and expresses his or her feelings on a particular subject and then departs. There are no characters, narrators, or plot lines to hide behind. There is generally no opportunity to explain or justify remarks. What comes from the speechmaker is literally the speechmaker’s own words.

In one sense, Kipling handles this by deflecting opportunities that suggest a way into his private life. As one begins to review Kipling's speeches, one finds that on the surface Kipling says very little about himself. Indeed, the only overt personal references Kipling makes are short descriptions such as *wondering scholar* (*A Book of Words* 17) or *dealer in words* (31). Even when Kipling is introduced with more substantial references about his life, he is quick to move on to less personal subjects. In one speech, after receiving a lengthy and flattering introduction, Kipling pushes the compliment off by focusing not on himself but on the larger scope of his work. Speaking in third person, Kipling relates, "You have done him a great, a very great honour, one which I make bold to hope is not so much to the author whose name I bear as to the ideas that I have been fortunate enough to reflect" (23).

Furthermore, not only does Kipling resist opportunities to talk about himself, he also resists chances to draw on his status as a recognized man of letters. In fact, given the opportunity to do so, Kipling pushes his identity as an author aside. Kipling's response to those who bring up his literary reputation is not simply a kind recognition, but a quick effort to downplay literary authorship. In the first address of his collected speeches, Kipling makes clear that even the "most case-hardened worker in letters . . . must recognise the gulf that separates even the least of those who do things worthy to be written about from even the best of those who have written things worthy of being talked about" (*A Book of Words* 3). Similarly, opening another speech, Kipling remarks, "Your Rector has delivered a eulogium of my work which would demand more than all that quality of imagination he attributes to me" (179).

In fact, Kipling goes to great lengths to distance himself from his literary identity. In a speech given to the Artist's General Benevolent Institution, Kipling makes particular effort

to do so. The focus of the speech is to raise awareness of struggling authors and artists. Kipling speaks at length about the demands of art and the difficulty of making a living at it. However, he never once mentions himself. He does not speak of his early days as a struggling reporter writing short stories and verse on the sly. He does not talk about his numerous rejections or his first editor who succinctly declared, “I am afraid, my dear fellow, you’ll never make your fortune with your pen” (Rattigan 66). Throughout the speech Kipling uses a distant third person, consistently referring to his fellow craftsmen as *they* and *them*. In addition, Kipling speaks of the difficulty of “men who devote their skill to producing things and expressing ideas for which the public has no present need” (*A Book of Words* 11). As Charles Allen points out, Kipling had a particular knack for crafting work that was both popular and unique: “What made Kipling so hugely popular in the 1890s was his seemingly unerring instinct for saying, not exactly what the public wanted to hear but what most needed to be said” (5–6). Interestingly, Kipling never makes any effort to talk about his own complex relationship between popular appeal and original creation, nor how such risks eventually paid off.

To a certain degree, this push to guard personal information works, but at the same time Kipling is still left with the burden of representing himself. Even if he doesn’t share personal details, his audience still leaves with a particular impression of him. Everything he says or does speaks for him.

At some level, Kipling himself seems to suggest this connection. Shortly before his death, and perhaps with an eye towards what happened to the privacy of prominent individuals after their death, Kipling encourages would-be Kipling biographers and scholars to look past the personal details of his life and more to his creative works:



If I have given you delight  
By aught that I have done  
Let me lie quiet in that night  
Which shall be yours anon:

And for that little, little span  
The dead are borne in mind  
Seek not to question other than  
The books I leave behind

(“The Appeal” 19).

In the case of an author, such words are perhaps not an unusual request. Kipling may have been keener on individuals reading his best-selling fiction than his personal letters and diaries. Even further, it aligns closely with Kipling’s strict push towards privacy. On the whole, it seems to offer little passage into the inner-workings of Kipling’s thoughts and feelings. Yet, to borrow a phrase that Kipling uses in one of his speeches, Kipling actually “slips into a blessing where he meant to curse” (*A Book of Words* 164). For although Kipling could speak directly when he wanted to, some of his most powerful and poignant feelings come distilled through his creative writing.

At almost every substantial moment in his life Kipling could be found putting some or all of how he felt into fiction or verse. Kipling does this in particular at very poignant moments, times when he is careful to remain private and conceal personal feelings. For example, when Kipling was a child his parents sent him to live with a caretaker in England while he began his formal schooling. To put it lightly, it was a traumatic experience for

Kipling. The abandonment by his parents (without warning) coupled with the extreme abuse he received at the hands of the caretaker and her son scarred Kipling for life. For years it was an experience he talked about little. It wasn't until several years later, when Kipling was at the start of his literary career, that he fully found release. Under the guise of the short story "Ba Ba Black Sheep" (identical to Kipling's experience with only the names slightly changed) Kipling aired in all its detail what he had been through and what he had felt. Similarly, when he was rejected by his first lover, Flo Garrard, he wrote the novel *The Light that Failed*, a loosely veiled story of a woman who spurns her young lover. Most notably, when Kipling was working through the loss of his only son who had died early in World War I, he used creative writing to express his feelings. As he and his wife struggled to locate their son who was missing in action, Kipling penned the poem "My Boy Jack," repeating through each stanza the plea, "Have you seen my boy Jack?" When it became clear that Kipling's son was dead, Kipling set about writing a two-volume history of his son's regiment aptly titled *History of the Irish Guards*.

Even in less traumatic situations, when Kipling simply felt strongly about something, he generally turned to his creative side and let the writing speak for him. When the British Empire was celebrating Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, Kipling was bothered by the excess of celebration of those around him. Wanting to set a different tone he composed "Recessional," a short poem that mixes the country's hubris with a sense of humility. It speaks boldly of "Dominion over palm and pine" (line 4, *Rudyard Kipling's Verse: Inclusive Edition 1885-1918* 377) but also of the time when "the tumult and the shouting dies" (line 7). Similarly, when Kipling was outraged at the politically corrupt appointment of Sir Rufus Isaacs to be Lord Chief Justice, he sent the *Times* the vicious poem "Gehazi," a modern

retelling of the biblical Gehazi, who was cursed with leprosy for corruptly seeking gain. Similarly, after the Treaty of Paris (ending the Spanish American War) had given control of the Philippines to the United States, Kipling sent a letter to his close friend Theodore Roosevelt, urging the US government to use its resources to build up the Philippine economy. Yet, the letter did not contain a detailed political plan nor was it full of staunch economic theory; its central feature was the now infamous poem “The White Man’s Burden,” which implored the imperial nations to “Send forth the best ye breed—/ Go bind your sons to exile/ To serve your captive’s need” (lines 2–4, *Rudyard Kipling’s Verse*).

As such examples show, even a light overview of Kipling’s life and correspondence reveal that in both public and private Kipling used his creative skills when speaking from or about his personal side. This point is enhanced by an exploration of Kipling’s speeches. In the case of the speeches, there is another dimension added. Not only does Kipling use literary devices to express his views, he uses literature to shape his own self-image. This is particularly important because without personal detail Kipling’s image is left open to speculation.

Revealing something of a personal strategy, one of Kipling’s short stories suggests a clear method for expressing ideas while still hiding detail. In “A Matter of Fact” Kipling tells the story of three journalists traveling by ship from the Cape to England. Along the way, the journalists experience a series of incredible events and witness the death of a sea monster. Faced with “the story of the century” the three set to work at once to record the incredible tale. However, as the story unfolds, each rethinks the effort, and one by one the journalists come to the conclusion that speaking the truth would be less effective than burying it under the mask of fiction. The very last lines of the story drive home the point: “Truth is a naked

lady, and if by accident she is drawn up from the bottom of the sea, it behooves a gentleman either to give her a print petticoat or to turn his face to the wall and vow that he did not see” (“A Matter of Fact” 201). In his speeches, Kipling is figuratively drawn up from the sea. Faced with the prospect of revealing his own identity, he sets about to construct a careful “print petticoat,” a series of literary forms that represent Kipling himself.

Although presented as a collection of occasional and formal speeches, *A Book of Words* is not merely a compilation of dry rhetoric. Kipling emerges as much a storyteller and poet as he does in any of his fictional works. This fact was not lost on those who reviewed the book. Setting up the nature of Kipling’s speech book, the *Nation and Athenaeum* remarks that “it is almost as melancholy a business to read a book of speeches as to turn the pages of a book of pressed flowers.” Yet, in the case of this book, “Mr. Kipling, having decided what to say, says it with such force, brevity, wit, and authority tempered with modesty that even the solitary critic is moved to raise a belated cheer. There is here, as always a magnificent competence in Mr. Kipling’s attack. Having selected his nail, he hits it plumb and hard with words like hammers . . . .The literary critic, as such, is silenced by the beauty of the hammering” (Gates 82). Similarly, *The Times Literary Supplement* comments on Kipling’s ability to bring short stories into his speeches: “Sometimes he will brighten up an old say by broadly comic apologue, like the fable of the First (indeed prehistoric) Sailor, or that other enterprisingly save who hammered out for himself and his tribe the maxims of the drill-book” (Murray 301).

Indeed, even a casual look through the speeches reveals how Kipling used a variety of forms to represent himself as a man of letters. Ever the teller of tales, the speeches are a key opportunity for Kipling to represent himself as a master storyteller. Again and again Kipling

takes the opportunity to relate short stories. He speaks of warriors, hunters, sailors, writers, and travelers. Some of the tales are short, but many form the basis for the entire speech. In “Literature,” Kipling constructs his entire message around a short allegory. After a few brief preliminary comments Kipling opens, “there is an ancient legend” (*A Book of Words* 3). He continues on to tell the story of the first man of letters and then uses that story to frame his entire discussion about the importance of the written word. Similarly, in “The Magic Square” Kipling relates to a group of army cadets the importance of drill. He does so through an intricate story about the origins of military marching, using multiple characters and a continuous plot line to make each point in his speech.

Further, as one looks through the speeches, it becomes readily apparent that Kipling makes an effort to represent himself as a poet as well. Each of the speeches in *A Book of Words* is prefaced by an epigram that connects to the topic of the speech. For instance, before “The Virtue of France” Kipling includes the lines “closer than kinship it is to have loved and suffered together. / Ships on a doubled chain ride to the heaviest Gale” (*A Book of Words* 177). Before “The War and the Schools” Kipling writes, “O foreign-tongued woodlands, we confided to you a child of the generation for whom their fathers prepared such distant graves” (113). Not only is such material a purposeful inclusion that draws attention to Kipling’s artistry, but it also models the book of speeches after Kipling’s creative works. Throughout his career Kipling frequently made it a point to preface book chapters and short stories with short verse. Such verses are scattered throughout Kipling’s short story collections from the first, *Plain Tales from the Hills* (1888), to the last, *Limits and Renewals* (1932). They are present in Kipling’s unfinished autobiography and are included in such popular works as *The Jungle Book* and *Kim*. By including an element that is such a fixture in

his fictional work Kipling, at least implicitly, marks the work as a creative (rather than purely non-fiction) piece. In fact, in a letter to a friend Kipling explicitly refers to the speech book as an opportunity to write creative verse: “I am just pottering at odds and ends and am having some fun with looking over my ‘Book of Words’—a selection of various speeches . . . they make a rather pretty book, which—as I was not allowed to do more verses—I have embellished with faked Greek epigrams” (*The Letters of Rudyard Kipling Vol. 5: 1920–1930* 397). That Kipling goes out of his way to include such a literary element—an element that is emphasized by its repetition throughout the work—suggests at least something of Kipling’s push to fashion himself as a man letters.

The significance of this effort cannot be overstated. Kipling’s ability to repeatedly reaffirm his role as a creative writer within the context of his push for independence says much about Kipling’s independence. Without each other a very different image of Kipling might have emerged. Had Kipling followed his zeal for privacy and truly downplayed his role as an author, sticking with a more traditional, non-literary speech pattern, Kipling might have represented himself as a reactionary, dependent, loner. On the other hand, had Kipling included such literary elements without a push for privacy his image would have been less subject to his control and he would have been likewise dependent. It is the combination that makes the difference. Whether this dual effect was deliberately intended or subconsciously imposed is of little consequence. The fact is, it exists. Kipling’s push for privacy creates a void and Kipling’s literary showmanship fills that void. In so doing, Kipling realizes a greater degree of independence. He is able to provide his own version of himself—an offer that even Kipling couldn’t turn down.

## CHAPTER TWO: JACK OF ALL TRADES

Rudyard Kipling didn't often reuse characters. He renamed characters; he re-created personality types; and he re-used certain themes, and ideas, but he rarely recycled the exact same person. As Jad Adams points out: "Unlike his contemporaries in London —Conan Doyle, Oscar Wilde or Bram Stoker, who created one enduring character each—Kipling created a cast of characters" (3). In general, this rule holds true. It holds only one notable exception: Strickland. Strickland, an Anglo-Indian police officer, finds place in a remarkable six of Kipling's works: five short stories "The Bronckhorst Divorce Case," "A Deal in Cotton," "The Mark of the Beast," "The Son of his Father," "The Return of Imray," and the novel *Kim*.

Strickland is also unusual in another sense in that unlike other colonial officials—who get ridiculed and mocked in many of Kipling's early stories—Strickland is spoken of highly. In particular Strickland is praised for his knowledge of native Indian culture and his ability to effortlessly cross back and forth between British and Indian society:

He was perpetually 'going Fantee' among natives . . . He was initiated into the *Sat Bhai* at Allahabad once, when he was on leave; he knew the Lizzard-Song of the Sansis, and the *Hállli-Hukk dance*. . . When a man knows who dance the *Hállli-Hukk*, and how, and when, and where, he knows something to be proud of. He has gone deeper than the skin. But Strickland was not proud, though he had helped once, at Jagadhri, at the Painting of the Death Bull, which no Englishman must even look upon; had mastered the thieves' -patter of the *chángars* ; had taken a Eusufzai horse-thief alone near Attock ; and had stood under the sounding-board of a Border mosque and conducted service in the

manner of a Sunni Mollah. His crowning achievement was spending eleven days as a *faqir* or priest in the gardens of Baba Atal at Amritsar, and there picking up the threads of the great Nasiban Murder Case (*Plain Tales from the Hills* 17)

Of course, taken in a larger sense, Strickland's presence isn't much of an anomaly. One of the most frequently repeated characters in Kipling's work is what could roughly be called the "multifaceted expert." Again and again, Kipling draws attention and gives praise to characters who possess enough skill and knowledge to independently move across the borders of identity, culture, and society.

For instance, in the *Jungle Book* Kipling describes richly Mowgli's ability to blend human and animal culture and his skill at functioning in two separate worlds. In *Kim*, the plot of the novel revolves around young Kim's ability to straddle the Indian and English world, and it is Kim's ability to expertly work within Indian, Buddhist, and English culture that eventually brings him success. In the "Man Who Would Be King," two conmen set about conquering a mountain tribe by balancing roles as gods, soldiers, bandits, Masons, and Englishmen. Their downfall comes when they lose that balance and undermine their all-knowing role.

In a more general sense, Kipling's most enduring character, both in his early and later work, is the soldier. In fact, Kipling discussed soldiers so often and so persuasively that his fictional depictions began to have a real-life impact. As one commentator relates, "His identification with soldiers was so deep that real soldiers started acting like the characters in his stories" (Adams 3). A significant feature of Kipling's soldiers is their ability to straddle



multiple roles and identities. For instance, Kipling's poem "Tommy" poignantly draws attention to the very real challenge soldiers had in balancing military and civilian life:

I went into a theatre as sober as could be,  
 They gave a drunk civilian room, but 'adn't none for me;  
 They sent me to the gallery or round the music-'alls,  
 But when it comes to fightin', Lord! they'll shove me in the stalls!  
 For it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' "Tommy, wait outside";  
 But it's "Special train for Atkins" when the trooper's on the tide,—  
 (*Rudyard Kipling's Verse* 453).

Even further, Kipling's soldiers often bear the burden of having to assume multiple identities even amongst their own kind. In "The Janeites," Kipling relates the tale of a battery on the Western Front who formed a Jane Austin society. Through mixing their identity as soldiers with their identity as Jane Austin fans, the group is able to endure the horrors of the war. As one of the main characters points out "you've got to be a Janeite in your 'eart, or you won't have any success . . . You take it from me, Brethren, there's no one to touch Jane when you're in a tight place" (*Debits and Credits* 146). Similarly, in "His Wedded Wife" a young soldier struggles to fit in with his company. The rest of his group functions not only as soldiers, but also as musicians, actors, and sportsmen. As the story puts it, "The 'Shikarris' are a high-caste regiment, and you must be able to do things well—play a banjo, or ride more than a little, or sing, or act,—to get on with them" (*Plain Tales from the Hills* 158). It isn't until the soldier pulls a master "sell" where he passes as the senior subaltern's wife—simultaneously incorporating male and female identities—that he fits in with his company.

Not surprisingly when Rudyard Kipling represents himself in his public speeches, when he is forced to create his own character role, he borrows heavily from his most used character trait. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Kipling does much to set himself apart and reinforce his identity as an author. However, in doing so, Kipling doesn't merely limit himself to the realm of literature. Instead Kipling demonstrates that he has the independence to cross back and forth among multiple fields of interest and society. One of the more obvious ways that Kipling promotes this particular type of independence—the ability to move among different cultures—is in the subject matter of his speeches. Again and again, Kipling speaks warmly of people and groups who can combine and cross through multiple identities.

In addressing the Royal Society of Saint George, Kipling speaks at length about the strength and tradition of the English race. In so doing, he firmly declares that it is England's ability to move among multiple cultures and races that gives the English race its strength: “And herein, as I see it, lies the strength of the English—that they have behind them this continuity of immensely varied race-experience and race-memory, running equally through all classes back to the very dawn of our dawn” (*A Book of Words* 169). As Kipling later goes on to point out, England's “varied race-experience” has given the country greater independence and strength, allowing it to progress, improve and reach the pinnacle of civilization. As Kipling had written years earlier in the poem “The English Flag”: “And what should they know of England who only England know?” (line 2, *Ballads and Barrack Room Ballads* 111).

This sentiment is further emphasized at a dinner for the Rhodes Scholars where Kipling speaks of the necessity of becoming expert in multiple cultures and ways of thinking.

He opens the speech by reflecting on an incident where soldiers from multiple countries had lost their ability to function effectively because they suffered from “howling provincialism.” Continuing onward, he reflects on the origins of the Rhodes Scholarship—an endowment that brought students from around the world to study at Oxford. He contrasts the mistakes of cultural near-sightedness with the higher experience of the Rhodes Scholarship:

Each man, bringing with him that side of his head which belonged to the important land of his birth, was put in the way of getting another side to his head by men belonging to other not unimportant countries. It is an asset towards prosperity, even for those whose lot will be cast altogether in one land, to get full and first-hand information about the men they will meet later” (*A Book of Words* 239)

The argument is more pragmatic than idealistic, positing that world leaders perform better when they understand the world, but the underlying sentiment is still clear. A man is much more skilled and independent if he can move among multiple cultures.

In a similar regard, Kipling not only praises the ability to embrace and use multiple identities, he shows it. He demonstrates his independence, his ability to move throughout multiple subject matter, again and again. He speaks of medicine to doctors, sailing to sailors, politics to politicians, and drill to soldiers. However, in doing so Kipling does more than simply offer bits of generalized wisdom. He provides substantial detail—the type of knowledge that readily marks Kipling as not merely a visiting speaker but a skilled insider, a man not only independent from a limited role as an author, but a man free to relate to his audience on their own terms.

When Kipling addresses the Royal Geographic Society, he does not speak as an author throwing out common geography facts or handfuls of pithy quotations about traveling.

He speaks as a fellow wanderer, offering rich, exotic detail—the kind of detail only world class travelers, travelers the caliber of the geographic society, would appreciate. Consider, the following thought, quoted in its entirety for full effect:

Where grease is melting, something is being cooked . . . It is an opulent, a kaleidoscopic, a semitic smell of immense range and variety of colour. Sometimes it reconstructs big covered bazaars of well-stocked cities with the blue haze hanging in the domes; or it resurrects little Heaven-sent single stalls picked up by the roadside, where one can buy penny bottles of sauce or a paper of badly needed buttons. It implies camels kneeling to unload; belts and straps being loosened; contented camp-followers dodging off to buy supplies—turmeric assafœtida, currystuffs; men washing their hands in sand before dipping them into the greasy pewter platters. And the next gust or surge of it may be pure Central Asia—thick, and choking as butter-lamps before a Tibetan shrine—a Tibetan shrine, with frost in the air, one star on the tip of a mountain, and a brown-cloaked Bhotyali rustling up through dry maize-stalks to sell a chicken (*A Book of Words* 103).

In at least one aspect, the description is significant because of its level of detail. Kipling's precise description takes his audience directly to the location he is speaking of. Yet, even more impressive is the fact that Kipling was speaking of matters he hadn't experienced first-hand. Kipling declares quite openly at the beginning of the speech, "I must begin by asking your forgiveness where I touch on matters of which you know much more than I. I cannot claim to have travelled widely, but I have met many travelers" (*A Book of Words* 93).

Kipling's ability to reach beyond his natural tendency and experience, to represent himself as

an expert in matters where he wasn't naturally an expert, speaks of the priority that Kipling placed on representing himself as an insider.

Likewise, Kipling adopts a comparable strategy when speaking to a group of military cadets. In a confident and precise manner Kipling sums up the main parts of military drill: “And, after all, what does drill come to? This—the step, which includes keeping step—the line, by which I mean any sort of line, close or extended—the wheel, which includes a line changing direction—and, most important of all, because it is the foundation that makes every move possible, forming fours” (*A Book of Words* 123). He further bolsters this summary by offering detailed knowledge of specific military regiments: “Now it’s a far cry from a Kaffir compound to a Guard Mount at Buckingham Palace; but if you stand three-quarters on to the Colours as they come out of the gate with the Guard, you’ll catch just a far-off shadow of what the march in slow time originally sprung from, and what it meant” (131). Even further, he speaks fluidly of military traditions and conventions such as “ragging,” handling another’s sword, and speaking of a woman in mess (133–4)—things that no one outside the military would know of.

Again, Kipling’s level of knowledge and detail readily advertises him as something of an expert on military affairs. Not only is he precisely familiar with military protocol, but he has intimate knowledge of military customs. But as in the previous example, Kipling’s knowledge is all gained second-hand. Kipling never served in the military, not even as a volunteer. The precise knowledge Kipling had of military culture was gained solely by inquiry and observation.

This knack for offering extensive detail is repeated frequently in other speeches. Kipling constructs an entire discourse on sailing to the East Coast Patrol of the Royal Navy.

He covers medical procedure with the Royal College of Surgeons, and talks familiarly of markets and trade to a group of successful businessmen—each time offering not only accurate knowledge of the profession but precise details on conventions and traditions particular to the group in question. It should be noted that in order to supply detail of this magnitude Kipling would have had to have gone to some effort.. As Kipling would point out in another speech, “No one can play cricket like Ranji at his best. But to appreciate Ranji’s play; to pick up enough from it to try and improve your own with; you must have played cricket for more than two terms” (*A Book of Words* 85). Without question Kipling put in his “two terms” before coming to address his speakers. He knew his audience and could speak as one of their own. This allowed Kipling not only to function as an author, but as a multitude of other things as well—precisely the way expert knowledge allowed so many of Kipling’s fictional characters increased access and opportunities.

This effort to supply extensive detail is further supported by how Kipling dialogues with his audience. In looking through the speeches one will readily find that as Kipling transitions from group to group, not only does he supply enough knowledge to be counted as an insider, he often constructs his identity as if he were already an insider. He uses inclusive terminology and inclusive tone. He downplays his image. He overcomes natural inequalities—all in order to be equal with his audiences. Granted, Kipling functions on his own terms, and in his own way, but the result is still clear. Kipling is able to place himself directly among his listeners, thus expanding the reach of his self-image and his independence.

Consider for instance the opening to an address at McGill University. Speaking of the speech as a whole Kipling relates:

The only penalty youth must pay for its enviable privilege is that of listening to people known, alas, to be older and alleged to be wiser. On such occasions youth feigns an air of polite interest and reverence, while age tries to look virtuous. Which pretenses sit uneasy on both of them. On such occasions very little truth is spoken. I will try not to depart from the convention.” (*A Book of Words* 17)

Taken out of context the thought offers nothing singular. It’s clever, but its casualness suggests it could have been an impromptu remark. However, a closer examination reveals that the opening is very deliberate. The natural flow of circumstances would have clearly placed Kipling in an unequal position with his hearers. In the first place, the rhetorical act of a speech creates unequal ground. In such a setting the speaker clearly takes precedence; it is the speaker that sets the tone, the topics, the information, and even the length of the event. The listeners are simply present as docile learners. This unequal relationship is even further promoted by the disparity between the identities of Kipling and his audience. Although there are no precise records as to who attended Kipling’s speech at McGill University, given the setting and the fact that Kipling repeatedly refers to his audience as “youth,” it is likely that Kipling’s audience was composed primarily of young men. Kipling, on the other hand, is an older man with years of experience and knowledge, someone who has seen much and traveled much. What’s more, he’s a celebrity. He is one of the bestselling authors of his generation, a Nobel laureate (the first British author to win the prize for literature), and a man who counts among his closest associates, world leaders in military, politics, and business. Yet, Kipling opens by poking fun at himself, speaking in the voice of his young listeners relating in a “we all know how it is” type of attitude exactly how the circumstance stands

Likewise, in a speech given in Canada in 1907, Kipling creates a similar tone. Opening the speech Kipling quickly brushes aside the flattering introduction he's just received. "I am only a dealer in words" (*A Book of Words* 31) he remarks. Then quickly he seeks to equalize himself with his audience, building a common bond by relating, "if any one of you in his life has ever been called 'good,' he will perhaps recall the thoughts that went through his mind when he considered what he really was" (31). Later, addressing the difference between Canadians and Britons, Kipling makes the equal relationship explicitly clear: "I know that at heart all our men are pretty much alike, in that they have the same problems, the same aspirations, and the same loves, and the same hates" (31).

Such moves are significant because Kipling has to make an effort to overcome a natural inequality between himself and his audience. In this instance, Kipling is addressing the Canadian Club of Winnipeg. At the time, Winnipeg was a small frontier city only several decades old. The city's inhabitants were pioneers, men and women who made a living by their hands. Kipling on the other hand was very well to do. He lived on a large estate manned by several servants and had arrived in Winnipeg in a private Pullman car. Yet, one does not find condescension. Kipling speaks as a fellow citizen.

This push towards equality and a more independent self-image is even further emphasized by Kipling's use of inclusive language. Again and again, Kipling refers to his audience inclusively, substituting what might have naturally been *you* and *your* for *we* and *our*. For instance, at one key moment in a speech to students Kipling remarks: "Youth can be a season of great depression, despondencies, doubts, waverings, the worse because they seem to be peculiar to *ourselves* and incommunicable to *our* fellows" (emphasis added, *A Book of Words* 19). Similarly, to Wellington College Kipling speaks of the importance of schoolwork



and reading: “it is possible that *our* reading, if so be *we* read wisely, may save *us* to a certain extent from some of the serious forms of trouble; or if *we* get into trouble, as *we* most certainly shall, may teach *us* how to come out of it decently” (emphasis added, 79). Likewise, in opening a speech to the Worshipful Company of Stationers, Kipling remarks, “You have referred with great indulgence to an author of my name. An hour ago I admit I was that author, but thanks to the high honour which you have done me, I am now a Stationer, duly entered and obligated” (247). Kipling stays true to his remark and spends the rest of the speech referring to the various ups and downs of being a stationer, all the while using the inclusive terms *we* and *us*.

What makes such examples particularly important is that the use of inclusive terms isn’t essential to the speeches. In every case where inclusive language is used there is no direct reason to do so. Kipling had no obligation to place himself on equal terms with groups such as students or stationers. He could have readily, and perhaps more naturally, used non-inclusive terms.

That Kipling makes such efforts—using inclusive terminology, casting himself as a member of his audience, and offering substantial details about that audience—speaks of the significance Kipling attached to being an insider. Kipling didn’t need to cater to his audience. He was a best-selling author, a celebrity, and a well-regarded public figure. He could have said anything he wanted to. He could have rightly taken the role of the all-knowing bard—the disinterested man of letters speaking from a higher plane. Yet, Kipling goes out of his way to become one with his diverse audiences. In doing so, Kipling offers up an exchange. In a degree he loses his prestige and preeminence. However, at the same time he gains increased freedom. If Kipling functions only as a lofty, disinterested author, then he confines himself to

the realm of high art. However, by becoming one with his hearers Kipling gains the ability to fluidly move through many different societies, and to Kipling not only was that ability desirable it was absolutely essential. Commenting on this need to reach out, Kipling once stated, “Every man must be his own law in his own work, but it is a poor-spirited artist in any craft who does not know how the other man’s work should be done” (*Something of Myself* 119).

Granted, at some level one could argue that such reaching out is simply the rhetorical gesture of an intelligent speaker. Yet, even the pretense of inclusion is significant for Kipling. The speeches recorded in *A Book of Words* come at the end of Kipling’s life, which, to put it lightly, was a dark time for Kipling. As one biographer points out, “A series of miseries assailed Kipling in his final years” (Adams 185). Such miseries include the death of Kipling’s beloved daughter, the death of Kipling’s only son, the traumatic effects of World War I, and an increasing loss of his literary and personal reputation. Further, such emotional turmoil was supplemented by a physical pain: “For the last 20 years of his life, age and the constant pain of illness wore away at him” (185). Many have argued that Kipling’s primary antidote for dealing with his misfortunes was to become increasingly more reserved and isolated. Angella Thirkell, Rudyard Kipling’s cousin, suggests that after the death of Kipling’s daughter Josephine, Kipling created a pronounced distance between himself and others: “I feel that I have never seen him as a real person since that year. There has been the same charm, the same fascinating speech, the same way of making everyone with whom he talks show their most interesting side, but one was only allowed to see these things from the other side of a barrier” (Ricketts 259). Similarly, “an American newspaper predicted that Kipling’s seventieth birthday would be the anniversary of a ghost: the bard’s life had become

so secluded and remote that to most Englishmen he belonged to the ‘folklore of his country—a silent, shadowy figure of the past’” (Gilmour 309).

Kipling’s ability to reach beyond his personal hardships suggests the degree to which Kipling valued the independence that came with moving as an expert among varying societies and people. It also suggests that even within his inner self, Kipling had the ability to cross borders between varying personalities, moving back and forth between seclusion and openness. Indeed, as Harry Ricketts points out:

At every stage of his life, a number of ‘Rudyard Kiplings’ co-existed in varying degrees of compatibility with each other: devoted son/damaged ‘orphan’, precocious aesthete/apprentice sahib, scholar gipsy/rule-bound conformist, would-be American/Empire Tory, innovative craftsman/fervent jingoist, doting father/bellicose tub-thumper—to mention only a few. (xi)

To Kipling such multiplicity is key. It was a valued part of his expertise and identity. It offered him not only flexibility but the breadth he so often praised in the multifaceted characters in his stories and verse. Indeed as Kipling himself once put it so well:

I would go without shirt or shoe,  
Friend, tobacco or bread,  
Sooner than lose for a minute the two  
Separate sides of my head!

*(Rudyard Kipling's Verse 252)*

### CHAPTER THREE: READING BETWEEN THE LINES

On the twenty-fourth of October 1907 Kipling gave the last speech on his Canadian tour. The tour had begun in September of that year, and when Kipling arrived in Montreal for his final address, he had traveled across the country. Unfortunately, despite a generally warm reception, Kipling's final speech was not exactly a heralded valediction. Instead, his hearers seemed put off that Kipling merely proffered a simplistic lecture. As one commentator put it, "Evidently there was some disappointment in the speech: the *Daily Star* called it 'an informal talk'; the *Montreal Gazette* said it was a 'fifteen-minute chat on things in general'" (*Uncollected Speeches* 45). However, as one commentator points out, part of the reason for the poor reception was that Kipling's audience hadn't looked at the speech carefully enough. They saw the speech in terms of only one subject: "The Canadians presumably wanted to hear more about their politics; but we may find that Kipling's remarks about literature make it one of the more interesting of his Canadian speeches" (45).

That Kipling's Canadian audience saw the speech merely as a simplistic political address is understandable. Kipling starts out with a nod to political solidarity, "we are all united, at least in the essentials of the great aim of Empire" (45). He then transitions into a discussion on the national literature of Canada. Then he moves on to the relationship between authorship and nationalism, cautioning of the "danger that might lead writers to present their ideas from a national, rather than personal point of view" (47). He then finishes by speaking of journalism's connection to the life of a country, "If the journalist was slovenly or disrespectful in his work he sinned against the national life, and lowered his country in her own eyes and those of her fellows (48). Indeed, the overall theme of the speech is focused on political ideas such as nationalism and patriotism, and from this standpoint Kipling does

speak only of “things in general.” Yet, in looking closely at the speech it becomes clear that politics isn’t the only idea at play. Kipling’s remarks speak clearly to ideas such as journalism, literature, authorship, individualism, and myth-making. The connections Kipling makes suggest interesting dialogue among a number of issues. Yet, in order to reach this level one is required to push past the simplistic surface message of the speech and into Kipling’s subtle nuances, ramifications, and connections. Whether or not Kipling intended his audience to pick up on such subtleties is unknown. What is certain though is that they usually didn’t.

To the credit of Kipling’s audience in Montreal, Kipling was often viewed as a simplistic one-sided author. As Henry James once infamously remarked, “He has come down steadily from the simple in subject to the more simple—from the Anglo-Indians to the natives, from the natives to the Tommies, from the Tommies to the quadrupeds, from the quadrupeds to the fish, and from the fish to the engines and the screws” (Carrington 267). It’s a bold statement, but there’s a measure of truth to it. Kipling’s first short story compilation, the 1888 “Plain Tails from the Hills,” is a collection of sketches on ordinary life in India, most of them told through the eyes of Anglo-Indians, soldiers, and native Indians. Later, Kipling wrote about talking animals in works such as the *Jungle Book* (1894) and the *Second Jungle Book* (1895), and still later, Kipling wrote almost literally about “engines and screws” in tales such as “.007” (1898) and the futuristic “With the Night Mail” (1909). Yet, as a whole, James’s categorization is more a generalization than a general rule. It subscribes to the fallacy that Kipling merely moved from one subject to the next. A closer look at Kipling’s work suggests no deliberate pattern. Kipling’s stories about Anglo-Indians, Tommies, fish, and screws are to a large degree interspersed with each other. Even further, as

works such as the *Jungle Book* and *Kim* attest, Kipling often mixed such ideas within the same narrative. Yet, for all its oversight, James's observation that Kipling is "simple" and "more simple" is significant. It represents in concise fashion a paradigm that has dominated Kipling's authorial reputation. More often than not, when Kipling is approached he is approached from a single perspective, and that perspective often focuses on Kipling's simplicity.

Arguably, the most common way to view Kipling is as a writer of simple Indian sketches. As Thomas Pinney argues, many refuse to see him any other way: "the idea of what Kipling is all about is still dominated by those stories written by the young, uncopyrighted, Indian Kipling" (100). Similarly, in reviewing the breadth of Kipling's work, Angus Wilson succinctly declares, "It is this Indian vision that Kipling will surely above all be remembered by" (122). For many, that India is often seen as simple, a developing subcontinent, full of a developing society. As Sandra Kemp relates, Kipling's India was beyond the borders of sophisticated European society, existing merely as an unrefined other: "His early stories do define India as an unknown other in the terms established by a European racism" (Kemp 6). As Oscar Wilde would put it more bluntly, "one feels as if one were seated under a palm-tree reading life by superb flashes of vulgarity" (*Kipling and the Critics* 7).

Both critics and admirers alike continue to focus on the simplest aspects of Kipling's early work. For instance, in Patrick Brantlinger's "Kipling's 'The White Man's Burden' and its Afterlives," one of the most significant recent articles on Kipling, Brantlinger focuses primarily on Kipling's famous poem and its even more infamous catchphrase. The article as a whole is a sophisticated chronicle of the legacy of "The White Man's Burden" connecting it from the late nineteenth century to America's current war on terror. However, as a point of

discussion, the poem itself is never interrogated. As Brantlinger himself outlines, only the poem's context and history are explored: "After reviewing the main context of Kipling's poem—America's colonization of the Philippines—I examine some of the uses to which 'The White Man's Burden' has been put from 1898 to the present" (172–3). Nothing is said of the poem's subtleties, complexities, or contradictions. "The White Man's Burden" is merely taken at face value as simplistic imperialist propaganda.

Even those who take a broader view of Kipling's work, still often focus on Kipling's simplicity. Consider, for instance, Roger Green's overview of Kipling's style, which he described as "a frankness and largeness in the use of the 'language of common men' that shocked many, delighted many more, and brought for all a refreshing blast of genuine fresh air into the hot-house atmosphere of the fin-de-siècle" (emphasis added, 4). Likewise, as Robert Buchanan, a contemporary of Kipling, put it, Kipling's works were popular primarily because they were short and simple, appealing to "general readers, too idle and uninstructed to study works of any length or demanding any contribution of serious thought" (*Kipling and the Critics* 21). As Elliott Gilbert argues, it is Kipling's simplicity that many consider to be his most valuable feature: "Certainly, the author of 'Mandalay' and 'Gunga Din' still seems to many today to be no more than an extraordinarily skillful journalist, a best-selling, slightly vulgar entertainer, rather than a serious artist" (*The Good Kipling* 50).

Although such criticism was frequent during his lifetime, Kipling never directly responded to it. He made it a point not to respond to reviews: "I would not to-day recommend any writer to concern himself overly with reviews" (*Something of Myself* 123). However, in a more general sense, Kipling addresses the issue of simplicity in his autobiography: "In an auspicious hour, read your final draft and consider faithfully every

paragraph, sentence and word, blacking out where requisite. Let it lie by to drain as long as possible. At the end of that time, re-read and you should find that it will bear a second shortening” (121). As he remarks on his own writing: “I have had tales by me for three or five years which shortened themselves almost yearly” (121).

On a surface level, such remarks might seem to solidify Kipling’s image as a simple writer. They seem to confirm that even in Kipling’s mind simplicity was a characteristic that writers should strive for. However, in making his remarks on simplicity, Kipling is careful to clarify precisely what he means by *simple*: “Note, though, that the excised stuff must have been honestly written for inclusion. I found that when, to save trouble, I ‘wrote short’ ab initio much salt went out of the work” (121). In effect, for Kipling, the idea of simplicity isn’t about content and meaning; it’s about length and style. This is further underscored in Kipling’s criticism of his contemporaries, many of whom he felt were overly simplistic: “I was struck by the slenderness of some of the writers’ equipment. I could not see how they got along with so casual a knowledge of French work and, apparently, of much English grounding that I had supposed indispensable. Their stuff seemed to be a day-to-day traffic in generalities, hedged by trade considerations” (123). This seems a fair enough declaration—good literature should be more than generalized fluff. However, one is left to ask, if Kipling was keen on not losing content and was genuine about the need to connect one’s work to the best in French and English literature, why does his work often seem so simple?

The fact is, Kipling’s work isn’t simplistic. As Pinney points out: “Kipling . . . was a writer for whom every stroke counted. Yet this economy is allied with great richness of implication. He is a master of allusion, so that the words and phrases of his stories constantly set up connections with worlds of experience beyond their immediate limits” (110). Kipling



may have been simple on the surface, but he wasn't simple on the whole. For beneath his apparently simple stories and poems Kipling layered a rich network of ideas and images. Kipling draws particular attention to this dual technique in speaking of one of his later works *Rewards and Fairies*: "since the tales had to be read by children, before people realized that they were 'meant for grown-ups. . . I worked the material in three or four overlaid tints and textures, which might or might not reveal themselves according to the shifting light of sex, youth, and experience'" (*Something of Myself* 111). In particular, Kipling is apt to point out that a key to this technique is that the "tints and textures" be combined seamlessly and clearly underneath the general framework of the story, "like working lacquer and mother o' pearl, a natural combination, into the same scheme as niello and grisaille, and trying not to let the joints show" (111). In a very significant way this technique speaks strongly of how Kipling represented his independence.

On one level, Kipling's subtle inclusions create an independent creative sphere that Kipling is able to enjoy by himself. By subtly including extra material, the material is Kipling's and Kipling's alone. Unlike a purely simplistic story, which is accessible to all, a complex story with hidden narratives is, in some measure, completely owned only by the author. The author is the only one who ultimately knows all the story contains and ultimately the only one who can fully appreciate what it holds. Kipling acknowledges as much in describing one of his collections of short stories: "I loaded the book up with allegories and allusions, and verified references until my old Chief would have been almost pleased with me . . . It was glorious fun; and I knew it must be very good or very bad" (*Something of Myself* 111).

In looking at the overall body of Kipling's work, one can readily find how this mixing of simple and complex readily played out and how it provided Kipling both private satisfaction and the ability to address multiple ideas simultaneously. One of the clearest examples of this method comes in Rudyard Kipling's speeches. The speeches, more than much of Kipling's literary output, provide a keen opportunity to engage in this type of multi-layering. Unlike his print works, Kipling's speeches force Kipling to directly confront a multifaceted audience. He is exposed directly to the reactions and interpretations of a wide spectrum of people. This is a challenge that Kipling readily accepts. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Kipling does this at least in part by adapting his image to various audiences, thus creating multiple messages for multiple groups of people. However, as this chapter will point out, this tactic is supplemented by Kipling's ability to multi-layer his messages, allowing a single message to simultaneously reach out to multiple individuals. Likewise, in exploring the transcript of Kipling's speeches it becomes clear that much of the material in the speeches is primarily for Kipling himself to enjoy. The speeches are rich with references and details that a listening, or even reading, audience would have been hard-pressed to fully appreciate. One of the better examples of how such techniques took place in Kipling's public speaking is an address entitled "The Magic Square," a speech given in 1917 to the Household Brigade Officers' Cadet Corps. Within the speech, Kipling constructs a simple message on drill. Yet, buried underneath Kipling reaches out to a host of ideas such as modern society and literature. In addition, he includes much detail that only he himself can fully appreciate.

One of the first things one notices about the speech is that it follows the pattern of Kipling's simple framework. From a general standpoint there is nothing in "The Magic

Square” that remarkably stands out. It is a simple message about military drill and decorum given to a group of army cadets.. In opening, Kipling plainly declares “my lecture this morning deals with the origin, development, and moral significance of Drill” (*A Book of Words* 121). Although direct, this simplistic declaration stands in contrast to many other public addresses where Kipling begins with a joke, a story, or a thought-provoking insight. In this case he simply offers a direct and straightforward statement. Further, Kipling’s own label for the address, *lecture*, particularly in the context of the young men it is addressed to, suggests a bland, pedantic series of remarks. There is only one other instance where Kipling refers to his address in this manner (a similar speech called “The First Sailor”). However, even semantics aside, there is little about Kipling’s topic—the history of drill—that suggests anything complex or engaging. In fact, to a group of soldiers—men who spend much of their days marching and drilling—there are arguably not many things that Kipling could have picked that would have been more mundane or routine.

Nowhere in the speech does Kipling depart from his opening declaration. He sticks to a simple overview of military drill told through a short story. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Kipling does an excellent job of “walking the talk.” He offers specific detail and displays a keen understanding of military culture. However, even in doing so, he sticks to a simple subject: the four parts of drill—the line, the step, the wheel, and forming fours—and their usefulness. There is no discussion of tactics, battles, or complicated military strategy. As one reviewer points out, Kipling’s address is as straightforward as the drill he describes, remarking that “Mr. Kipling likes to keep to the centre in just the same way when he talks” (Gates 82). In a general sense, this is the speech’s first layer. As a straightforward address on

drill it reaches out to men in the armed services. It discusses a basic point of military protocol and reinforces that point. It “keeps to the centre.”

However, beyond its role as lecture on protocol, there is much about the speech that connects it to a variety of other ideas. One of the keenest is the speech’s main narrative thread. As mentioned above, the speech begins with Kipling’s declaration that he intends to discuss the “development and moral significance of Drill among mankind.” However he is quick to launch into a narrative by pointing out “when I say man, I do not mean any sort of man that we are acquainted with, or of which we have nay record.” Kipling issues the invitation, “I ask you to imagine” (*A Book of Words* 121). What follows is Kipling’s tale of a “prehistoric person with a vocabulary of a few score words” (121) who learns to hunt, establishes a tribe, subdues his enemies, and in the process invents the four key parts of modern drill. It’s a clever way to impart a “lecture” but at the same time it allows Kipling’s message greater independence to engage other subjects.

In one regard, it connects on an entertainment level. It allows Kipling to speak of an otherwise bland subject in an engaging way. It invites Kipling’s audience to push past the issue of drill and focus instead on a story. This was a tactic that Kipling had fantastic success with in his fiction. One of the most successful volumes that Kipling ever published was a children’s collection called *Just So Stories*. The volume, on its surface, is simply a catalogue of ordinary events: leopards’ spots, elephants’ trunks, the alphabet, and letter writing. However, through addressing each of these subjects via an entertaining origin story, Kipling is able to create a rich network of stories and characters. Likewise, it is a tactic that Kipling employs in several of his other speeches. One review is keen to point out “sometimes he will brighten up an old say by broadly comic apologue.” In particular, the review speaks of “the

fable of the First (indeed prehistoric) Sailor” (Murray 301). The story is indeed interesting, but it’s significant to point out that it stems from merely a simple discussion on sailing. Similarly, Kipling speaks to the dry topic of proper government by describing fictional Anglo-Saxon politicians, discussing how “the Member for Lewes was as likely as not to record his vote against the hon. Member for Brightelmstone with an axe or a sword” (*A Book of Words* 59).

In a similar way, Kipling’s narrative also allows Kipling to connect to contemporary society. For instance, sprinkled within the story are several references to celebrities popular during the time of the speech. The main character in Kipling’s story, Kipling’s ancient man, is named “George Robey.” Robey, also known as the “prime minister of mirth,” was a popular comedian at the turn of the century and was, at the time Kipling was giving his speech, performing a comedy sketch on ancient man (*A Book of Words* 121). Similarly, in opening up his origin story Kipling remarks, “and thus, my beloved ‘earers” (123) a direct reference to the trademark phrase in Jorock’s Sporting Lectures, a contemporary humor series that related to hunting.

In addition to referencing contemporary celebrities, Kipling also reinforces modern notions by connecting to a contemporary mindset. Although Kipling’s ancient men have only recently become civilized, they think and act in the same in curiously modern ways. Despite living from day to day on their ability to hunt and gather, Kipling’s ancient men seem particularly concerned with form and ceremony, “forming fours was originally not a hunting formation at all, but a portion of ceremonial drill” (*A Book of Words* 129). Although Kipling doesn’t break his narrative too much, it is hard not to see the shadow of contemporary men in Kipling’s story—men who don’t depend on hunting for livelihood who have the luxury of

worrying about form. At the same time though, Kipling is clear to make sure that his description of ancient man conforms to contemporary notions about evolution and the origins of humankind. In looking at Kipling's ancient tribe the references to modern ideas of evolution are clear. The inventor of drill was a man "who had not long given up living in trees" who functioned "much as gorillas and chimpanzees do to-day" and who "fought with his teeth and nails like the animals" (121).

Numerous other examples of the varying connections could be brought to light. However, it is significant to point out that not only does Kipling's speech create a measure of independence by allowing Kipling's ideas to freely connect to multiple subjects, it provides a space where Kipling can independently appreciate his own writing. In other words, there is much within the speech that is there primarily for Kipling himself. Perhaps the best example of this is a quotation Kipling uses to open his speech: "What put the idea of drill into man's head at the beginning of things? 'As Shakespeare so beautifully observes 'What made man first drill upon the Square with Sergeants marching round and round?'" (*A Book of Words* 121).

In one sense, the quotation provides an interesting connection. It is a unique move for Kipling. In none of his other discussions on origin does Kipling connect his inquiry to an outside source. In Kipling's other speeches, Kipling dispatches with questioning altogether and simply begins his origin story. Yet, despite being unique, it gives the speech an extended dimension that Kipling's other origin stories lack. In a very real way, it adds a measure of reality to Kipling's fiction. It allows Kipling's ideas to function as both fiction and reality. The allusion to Shakespeare creates a legitimate origin for both the concept Kipling wishes to

discuss and the question he is asking. It points out that despite arguing from a fictional position, Kipling's position has a legitimate base that extends back for hundreds of years.

However, beyond adding legitimacy to Kipling's story, the allusion is most significant in that it represents a keen instance of how Kipling connects to an independent sphere, adding an element that listeners wouldn't have ever been able to truly appreciate. The full impact of the quotation comes only through picking apart its various layers. In the first place, Kipling's audience might not have picked up on the fact that the allusion to Shakespeare is completely false. The way Kipling utters it, the quotation seems both plausible and legitimate. Nothing Kipling says provides any indication of the quote's illegitimacy. However, it is false on multiple levels. In the first place, there is nothing Shakespeare ever said that even approximates Kipling's phrase. A full-text search through Oxford's collected works of Shakespeare finds no instance where Shakespeare utters the line "What made man first drill upon the square with sergeants marching round and round?" Even further, there is much to suggest that there is no probable way Shakespeare would have ever uttered the phrase. To begin with, Kipling's central term *drill* is problematic. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the first recorded use of the word *drill* doesn't occur until 1626, ten years after Shakespeare's death (*Oxford English Dictionary*). Further, even giving Kipling some flexibility—allowing for slight changes in usage and possible paraphrasing—the quote is still problematic. The concept of drill is a notion that Shakespeare doesn't discuss. Shakespeare mentions the military frequently in his works. However, the soldiers and armies that Shakespeare mentions are actively engaged. Shakespeare does not refer to the kind of training Kipling mentions; when Shakespeare talks about the military, he talks about war. Granted, the notion of training men to march in lines and formation dates back to the

Roman military. However, the idea of drill as Kipling refers to it here is a fairly recent invention. By all accounts the allusion appears to be completely spurious.

Now, Kipling's audience of cadets might have been well educated, many of them could have been university-educated. However, it seems highly unlikely that any of them could have spotted the deception merely on hearing the remark in passing. One can reasonably ask how familiar Kipling's audience would have been with word origins, linguistics, and the complete body of Shakespeare's work. To a group of cadets, even highly educated cadets, the remark would have been only a passing matter.

However, to Kipling personally, it has some significance. For one thing, it's a very independent move. It pushes past a key element of Kipling's technique and personality. To put it mildly, Kipling was obsessed with accuracy and detail. As even Edward Said, one of Kipling's harshest critics, points out, Kipling has an "eye for wayward detail, the odd character, the slice of life, the amused sense of human foibles and joys . . . local color, scrupulous attention to exotic detail, and the all-enclosing realities of the Great Game" (15). By his own advice Kipling urges, "Take nothing for granted if you can check it . . . There are always men who by trade or calling know the fact or the inference that you put forth. If you are wrong by a hair in this, they argue: 'False in one thing, false in all'" (*Something of Myself* 137).

As one so obsessed with detail and accuracy, Kipling's false allusion is an interesting inclusion. It isn't that it's the only time Kipling was patently incorrect. As Pinney argues of Kipling's autobiography, "not only was it thin on the facts of Kipling's life, it often had them wrong as well" (*Something of Myself* vii). However, the allusion seems to be a matter of a different sort. The autobiography was never finished and it was written in the last months of



Kipling's life, a time when Kipling's memory often failed him. The speech on the other hand was delivered in the prime of Kipling's life. Further, there is nothing about the speech or any of Kipling's other speeches that suggest any measure of carelessness. In fact, as one review says of Kipling's collected speeches, "these are, almost without exception, first-class specimens of that premeditated speech which . . . comes to full growth in the spoken word" (Gates 82). The allusion is curious because it's one of the few times that Kipling appears to be purposefully inaccurate. In one sense, it could be that Kipling simply chose to break pattern, that he did something simply for the sake of being different. However, a closer look at the allusions suggests something more purposeful.

As a type, the false allusion has a significant connection to literature. Indeed, several of the most significant works in world literature begin with a purposely false statement. Miguel Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, often regarded as the first novel, begins with the claim that it is actually a history. Pointing out the conversation that occurs in the prologue of the book, one commentator remarks,

The friend who advises him, in the prologue to Part I, about the preliminaries to his work calls it simply a "book." If, as the friend assumes, *Don Quixote* is essentially a parody of the *libros de caballerias*, one would think that the term designating the original would be the best to apply to the parody. But Cervantes seldom uses it in the body of his text. He prefers to call the book a *historia*, by which as we shall see, he means, not a story, but a history. (Wardhopper 1)

Similarly, some of the first novels in English also start in the same way. Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* begins by remarking,

Indeed I must confess, that as to the People of Lilliput, Brobdingrag (for so the Word should have been spelt, and not erroneously Brobdingnag), and Laputa; I have never yet heard of any Yahoo so presumptuous as to dispute their being, or the Facts I have related concerning them; because the Truth immediately strikes every Reader with Conviction. (1)

Likewise, Daniel Defoe begins *Robinson Crusoe* by claiming that “The Story is told with Modesty, with Seriousness . . . The Editor believes the thing to be a just History of Fact; neither is there any Appearance of Fiction in it” (1).

This type of literary connection is significant for Kipling. It’s a convention that Kipling himself often imitated. In the preface to the *Phantom Rickshaw*, Kipling’s second book of short stories, Kipling remarks:

This is not exactly a book of downright ghost-stories, as the cover makes belief. It is rather a collection of facts that never quite explained themselves . . . The peculiarity of ghost stories is that they are seldom told first-hand. I have managed, with infinite trouble, to secure one exception to this rule. It is not a very good specimen, but you can credit it from beginning to end. The other three stories you must take on trust as I did.” (*Writings on Writing* 9)

Later, Kipling makes a similar move in the introduction to “The United Idolaters” when he quotes Ode 17 from Horace’s *Fifth Book of Odes*. Although Horace is an apt addition to the story, no such poem exists. Horace only published four books of odes. Similarly, in three other stories from the same collection, Kipling also quotes false passages from Horace.

Kipling expanded on this and in 1920 Kipling published *Q. Horatii Flacci Carminum Liber Quintus*, an entire spurious collection of translated Latin verse.

That Kipling makes the effort to connect himself to great authors is emphasized in how Kipling discusses authorship. By Kipling's own definition the mark of a true author is someone who not only writes well but is intimately familiar with the best authors. In recounting his introduction to the literary scene in London, Kipling relates that he was unimpressed with the so-called "great authors" of his time. He holds them in low esteem particularly because they lack the ability to pick up on false allusions: "I would ask simple questions, misquote or misattribute my quotations; or (once or twice) invent an author. The result did not increase my reverence. Had they been newspaper men in hurry, I should have understood; but the gentlemen were presented to me as Priests and Pontiffs" (*Something of Myself* 123). In "The Magic Square" Kipling gains a similar kind of independent satisfaction. In much the same way he is reaffirming his own superiority and setting himself apart.

Why Kipling pushes back like this is never fully explained. Why Kipling uses this speech to assert his independence at all is itself something of a mystery. Kipling was speaking to a group of army cadets, young men who were accustomed, if not required, to listen regardless of whether they wanted to listen or not. In a very real way, Kipling could have said anything he had wanted. There was no compelling need to enrich the message of the speech by including subtle references and making references to outside topics. Likewise, there seems to be no obvious need for Kipling to push past his audience with a series of connections only he could understand. Kipling himself never offers an answer, but perhaps that is the answer. Kipling didn't need a compelling reason from his audience. Like his

address to the Canadian Club in Montreal, Kipling needed only say what he felt compelled to say; the rest his audience could figure out for themselves.

The effect of this approach has been divided. For the Canadians, and many others, the surface is what matters. A simple speech is a simple speech. To others, the value lies in the details. As one biographer has argued, “there is always the sense of buried truth with the best Kipling” (Adams 192). Whether Kipling’s multi-layered writing represents Kipling’s best, or whether it’s simply a means to covering a shallow address is a matter of debate. The only thing that is truly certain is that opinions on Kipling’s writing are divided. Perhaps that’s exactly what Kipling would have wanted. For, divided as they are, the two positions suggest firmly that Kipling’s writing had a keen ability to speak to multiple ideas at the same time. They also suggest that in the absence of consensus only Kipling himself can fully appreciate what’s being said.

## CONCLUSION

Thomas Pinney, in his introduction to the collection of Rudyard Kipling's uncollected speeches, remarks, "The formal speeches, whether long or short, always show at least something of the marks of a master of language and are always, therefore, worth reading" (*Uncollected Speeches* x). The central argument of this thesis is the same. Rudyard Kipling's speeches are always worth reading.

From a purely literary standpoint, most of the speeches are excellent. Arguably speaking, the writing in a majority of them is as good as anything else Kipling ever wrote. They are polished, thoughtful, and engaging. Likewise, the speeches include an immense variety of literary forms. One will readily find travelogues, sketches, short stories, and poems. Although most are brief, the speeches successfully engage a variety of meaningful topics such as war, love, duty, work, unity, and literature. They show how Kipling could interact with both young and old and how he could adapt his message to audiences around the world.

Similarly, Kipling's public speaking is a valuable resource that provides a ready insight into Kipling himself. As mentioned earlier, first-hand information about Kipling is rare. Kipling both destroyed personal artifacts and refused personal interviews. Anything about himself Kipling could avoid sharing he did. However, the speeches provide convenient passage beyond this barrier. Kipling's first recorded public speech came as a seventeen-year-old reporter. His last came only months before he died. Taken as a body, Kipling's speeches cover more of Kipling's life than any work save his autobiography. Likewise, because of the nature of speechmaking, Kipling is obliged to function both as a character and a narrator.

Readily, the speeches provide a key opportunity to explore more fully how Kipling viewed himself and how he chose to be represented.

However, as this work has argued, perhaps the most lasting contribution the speeches make are their insights into how Kipling's various images and representations intersect and engage each other. Throughout the speeches, Kipling takes on a variety of roles and presents a variety of messages. At times he is private; at others he is open. Sometimes Kipling readily interacts with his audience and at others he pushes back. Some of the speeches speak directly; others are more subtle and elusive. As a collection, the speeches readily testify to Kipling's diversity and complexity. As mentioned in the introduction, this doctrine is emphasized by how Kipling is often approached biographically. A standard feature in most of the recent biographies on Kipling is to open with something of an explanation about the inability to adequately cover Kipling's variety or resolve his various contradictions. As Philip Mallett, a recent Kipling biographer, put it, perhaps such a challenge undermines the nature of biography: "To some readers what follows will no doubt seem ideologically suspect" (ix). Perhaps it is, but this thesis suggests that at least in some measure Kipling's complexities can be combined without being suspect.

In a very real way, the methods Kipling used in dealing with the various sides of his head speak strongly of Kipling's ability to assert his independence. They show that besides merely providing diversity, Kipling's complexity offered something else. They gave Kipling the chance to control his own image, move fluidly among a range of audiences, and construct complex narratives. The speeches in particular show that Kipling was able to do this consistently and among a variety of circumstances and conditions.

As a rhetorical strategy, this skill is extraordinarily useful. The ability to be creatively independent enriches Kipling's material. The capacity to be personally independent keeps the balance between audience and author. However, Kipling's ability to function independently is more than a successful rhetorical device. In a very real way, it's a key to understanding Kipling's life and work. Andrew Lycett, in looking at how Kipling's life and work interact with society suggests—perhaps without even realizing it—how independence plays into understanding Kipling. Addressing the issue of where Kipling belongs socially, Lycett enthusiastically suggests that Kipling simply belongs to multiple societies: “Kipling could not have straddled the nineteenth and twentieth centuries more skillfully if he had tried (2). Indeed, Kipling couldn't. Kipling is very persuasively Victorian. He has a strong sense of decorum, industry, and work. He is conservative, respectful of authority and tradition and proud of Britain's preeminence as the world's cultural and financial capital. He readily dialogued with the public issues of the day and used his pen to support what he thought were worthwhile social causes.

Yet, at the same time Kipling is decidedly modern. He experiments with new forms and ways of writing. He ignored those who criticized his work and continued publishing even when his reputation waned. He wrote openly about controversial subjects such as interracial attraction, government practices, and the independence of women.

Nowhere is this mix of literary periods shown more strongly than in the way Kipling represents his independence in his speeches. The push to be independent is definitely modern. Yet, many of the ways Kipling goes about doing it, connecting to his audience on a practical level, bringing in an embellishment of literary forms, is definitely Victorian.

In a way, such mixing places Kipling outside the bounds of both Victorian and modern society. As acknowledged in the beginning, it certainly places Kipling outside the normal realm of speechmaking. It suggests that really, when all is said and done Kipling and his work exist in a liminal space, somewhere between Victorian and modern, complex and simple, popular and refined, Indian and English—in a way, truly independent.



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