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Tommy Atkins in India: Class Conflict and the British Raj

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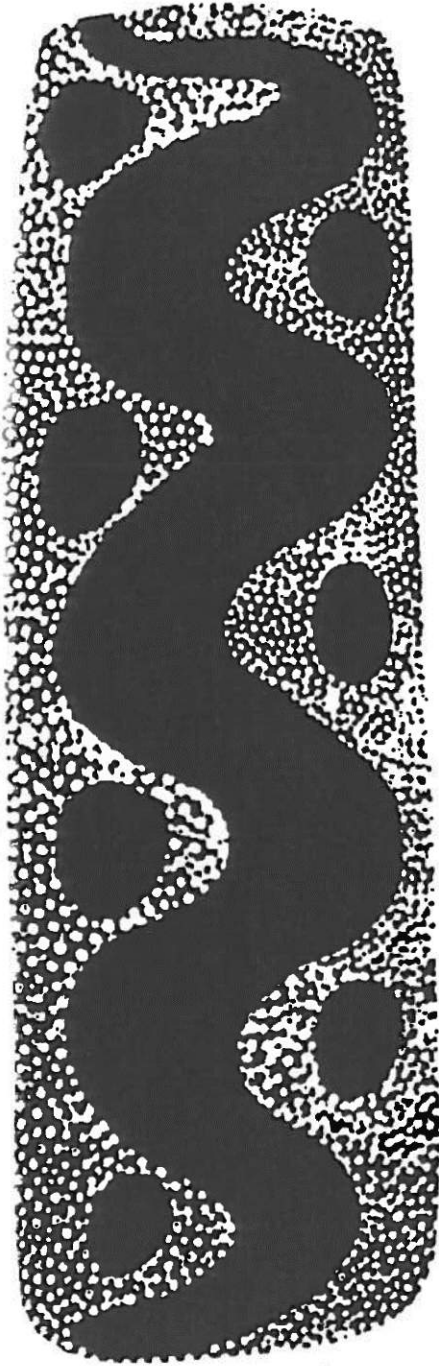
Dedication:

In memory of Lauris Edmond,
First of the 'Unbecoming Daughters'
1924-2000

... and I
awake to another white night, that spare
other world where each leaf and stone
is not to be approached, scarcely named,
so rare, so unearthly has it become.

(Lauris Edmond,
'Summer Near the Arctic Circle')

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TERESA HUBEL

Tommy Atkins in India: Class Conflict and the British Raj

In the May 27th, 1784 edition of the *Calcutta Gazette*, one of the earliest and most widely read of all British India's newspapers, the following notice appeared:

A subscription is opened at the Bengal Bank, for the relief of the Non-Commissioned and private Europeans, of the King's and Company's Troops in the Carnatic, who were unfortunately captured during the war with the Nabob Tippoo Sultan, and have lately been released from their confinement, and the same is to extend to all other Europeans of the lower class in the same predicament¹

Calcutta dwellers of the late eighteenth century were a charitable lot, it seems, for in 1786, the *Gazette* reported that a performance of the *Fair Penitent* three days earlier had been well attended and that the money raised would benefit the Orphan Society. Prior to the establishment of this Society, these children, described further on as the 'offspring of our European soldiers', were permitted to 'lead lives of ignorance and vice in the Barracks', but, we are reassured, 'being now under suitable masters ... will ... instead of being a disgrace to the English name, become useful members of the State' (*Selections from Calcutta Gazettes*, p. 146).

Useful, perhaps, as Mrs. Arend is, who places an advertisement in the *Gazette* on November 22nd, 1787, in which she '[h]umbly begs leave to acquaint the Ladies and Gentlemen of the Settlement, that she washes and dresses Silk Stockings, Brussell's Lace, and clear starches in general' and also 'respectfully informs the Ladies that she dresses hair in the neatest and most fashionable manner'. She says that she is willing to 'wait upon any Lady at her own house on the shortest notice' (*Selections from Calcutta Gazettes*, p. 226).

The existence of war-ravaged poor people, salvaged orphans, and a washerwoman who doubles as a ladies' hairdresser tells us that not all white people in India during the time of the British Empire belonged to the middle or upper classes. But were you to read most contemporary scholarship about colonial India, you might not be able to guess this. Historian David Arnold made a similar observation almost twenty years ago. In 1979 he declared that current writing about the British in India 'would lead an otherwise uninformed reader to suppose that its European community consisted almost entirely of civil servants, army officers, planters and businessmen', the cream of British India's white elite. Tellingly, he adds, 'That, no doubt, was how the Raj chose to see itself'.²

In post-colonial studies we pride ourselves on our ability to dismantle the ideology of British imperialism and reveal the damaging assumptions on which it historically depended. We know that imperialist racism rests on a conception of the world in which a stable, bounded Europe is seen constantly confronting its equally stable, bounded racial other. Having developed some extraordinarily useful and subtle theories about the workings of race and gender in colonialist as well as neo-colonialist contexts, when it comes to *class* and literary analysis and the history of the British Empire, we choose to see the Raj as it chose to see itself — as a stable, bounded, homogeneous ruling white community. But even in the earlier years of the Raj, the years reflected in the passages from the *Calcutta Gazette*, such a community did not exist. And by the final quarter of the nineteenth century, at the height of Empire, nearly half of all Europeans in India were what officials liked to call ‘poor whites’.

According to Kenneth Ballhatchet, during the British Empire, the ‘preservation of social distance ... [between poor whites and the elites was] essential to the maintenance of structures of power and authority’.³ Ballhatchet manages to convey in his book an insight of which few other scholars in either the disciplines of history or literary studies seem to be aware — specifically, that the British Raj was both a race — *and* a class-conscious institution and that the continued hegemony of the white elite classes in colonial India was dependent on the suppression of those white people who were lower on the social scale as much as it was dependent on the persistent subjugation of the Indian population.

But we tend to look through elite class eyes in post-colonial literary studies, and, therefore, we are hugely limited in what we can know of the working classes. Because, of course, privilege hampers perception. This lack of knowledge about the political, social, experiential, and historical realities of class prevents us from creating adequate theories of class. In place of adequate theories are empty references: post-colonialists are often able to identify working-class characters but are just as commonly unable or perhaps unwilling to examine the implications of these characters’ class status in the work they are discussing. The word ‘class’ also sometimes appears in post-colonial articles and books, tagged uneasily on to the end of too frequently repeated phrases such as ‘race, gender, and class’. But while issues of race and gender are accorded the kind of detailed scrutiny for which post-colonial critiques are justifiably appreciated, the significance of class — its effects, its constructions, its contradictions — almost always falls by the wayside. I’m not over generalising when I say that as a *primary* interpretive category — as primary as gender and race and hence as deserving of careful and thoughtful contextual analysis — class has been virtually ignored.⁴

Aijaz Ahmad, one of the few post-colonial scholars who has written about class in some detail and with some finesse, does not think this is an accidental exclusion. Ahmad takes on Edward Said’s ideas about the privileged site of the migrant intellectual in post-colonial theory, and he argues that a middle-class

alliance among these scholars and writers, together with a more generally held postmodernist mistrust of Marxism, has suppressed the analysis of class:

the ideological ambiguity in these rhetorics of migrancy resides in the key fact that the migrant in question comes from a *nation* which is subordinated in the imperialist system of intra-state relationships but, simultaneously, from the *class*, more often than not, which is the dominant class within the nation — this, in turn, makes it possible for that migrant to arrive in the metropolitan country to join not the working classes but the professional middle strata, hence to forge a kind of rhetoric which submerges the class question and speaks of migrancy as an ontological condition, more or less.⁵

Ahmad's theory is provocative, and, while I believe that it goes some of the way towards explaining the deficiency of class analyses in colonial and post-colonial studies, it doesn't account for a similar reticence to address class issues among post-colonialists who are not 'migrants'. So it seems to me that the problem is wider than this.

As difficult as race is to theorise, class is possibly even more vexed, particularly in those settler-colony countries (Canada, New Zealand, the United States, and Australia) where post-colonial studies is an increasingly valued disciplinary area. Among the founding narratives of these nations, which saw so much European immigration throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, was the myth that the entrenched class structures of Europe could be left behind and that upward mobility was both desirable and possible once immigrants reached the 'new world'. In my own Canadian society, this myth is a given in our national identity, so much a given that we are frequently unable to recognise class when it is staring us in the face. We often name its effects (homelessness, squeegee kids, poverty, the widening gap between the rich and the poor), but are unable to see the links between the effects and the complex structures that produce them. A perfect example of this blind spot in our national psyche is a recent front-page story in our national newspaper, *The Globe and Mail*, which reported, with something like surprise, that a new Statistics Canada study has discovered 'a link between parents' income — and the way they earn it — and the future income of their offspring....'⁶ Not once is the word 'class' mentioned in this story, and the absence of this word points to a further absence of understanding about how class works in our educational, economic, political, legal, and social systems. In this particular story this inability to comprehend the structures of class results in an unstated assumption that the answers to the problems identified in the study are individualist ones; the headline for the story reads, 'How rich will your kids be? That depends on you' (*The Globe and Mail*, p. A1), a statement which seems to suggest that individual parents are the ones at fault when their offspring are unable to 'get ahead' (*The Globe and Mail*, p. A14). Our belief in our classlessness (a belief we take into our university classrooms) prevents us from developing theories that speak to our experiences of class, which, in turn, limits our interpretations of things.

Added to this fantasy of classlessness is a tendency specific to post-colonial theory to view the texts produced out of the colonial encounter between Europe

and its colonised populations solely in terms of those texts' relationship to that encounter. In pursuit of theories that explain the ideologies of the coloniser and the colonised, the ruler and the ruled, distinctions that exist within the national cultures themselves get overlooked. Differences attributable to regional and religious affiliation, gender and class political locations are likely to be subsumed into the grander narrative of the colonial divide.

And there is one more reason why there is little discussion of class in post-colonial studies. It seems to me that there is a noticeable carelessness and, with a few excellent exceptions, general indifference to class analysis in all the other areas of literary studies. And by analysis here, I mean the kind of scrupulous interrogations and reconstructions of voice that have made feminist critiques of gender and post-colonialist critiques of race such important contributions to our discipline. Marxism has given us class as a category but has imbued it with an economic and labour-based essentialism that, even today, 150 years after Marx elaborated his theories of the proletariat, gets in the way of our attempts to understand working-class perspectives on middle-class institutions and discourses. The Marxist teleology, which can take us only and inevitably towards revolution, also allows many Marxist critics to overlook both the subtlety and historical specificity of working-class defiances and the multitudinous efforts of ruling class discourses to contain those defiances. Not for a minute do I want to suggest that Marxist interpretations of literary or historical texts are useless. On the contrary, the materialist rigour with which Marxist textual critics have assailed our assumptions about the cultural centrality of literature and through which they have compiled an impressive collection of rebellious re-readings of history makes possible the kind of class analysis I am advocating in this essay. But surely I am not going out on a limb when I say that Marxism has been domesticated in at least North American literature departments and that that domestication is in part the result of Marxist theory's own complicity with the dominant middle-class discourses that continue to provide the intellectual foundations of our discipline. If this were not so, then why, after decades of interaction with literary theory, has Marxism failed to create accessible and well-known curriculums of working-class writing that we might study and teach and failed to maintain a sustainable subversive site from which to interrogate the powerful class-based perspectives that monopolise English departments? Though susceptible to criticisms about its interactions with liberalism, neo-imperialism, and essentialism, academic feminism has, nevertheless, made gender a category for consideration and debate in our studies and our professional politics. Yet Marxism has not succeeded in doing this for its central concept: class.

The final result, then, of these combined tendencies — this screening out of difference other than that generated by imperialist racism, a middle-class alliance among post-colonial immigrant intellectuals and the rejection in settler-colony nationalism *and* in literature departments of class as a significant issue — is the dearth of good class analyses in post-colonialist scholarship, and this is especially true in scholarship about the colonisers. So in this paper I'm offering

a classed⁷ reading of Rudyard Kipling's famous poem 'Danny Deever', a poem that describes a significant event in working-class soldiers' lives in India — namely, the execution of a fellow soldier — but that refuses to see the full implications of that event from working-class perspectives. By so refusing, the poem shows its attachment to the middle-class supremacy in colonial India that ensured that Kipling's portrait of the soldiers would be one of the only portraits available to the public. For the most part, it is still *his* truth about them that we have inherited. What I further hope to suggest in this paper is not only that class analyses open up a wider range of possibilities in post-colonial studies but that the absence of class as a primary interpretative paradigm produces faulty assumptions and questionable interpretations. Race and gender are important, but, even together, they are not enough. Failing to see class, failing to develop those insights from post-colonial, feminist, and Marxist theory that can take us beyond the limitations of today's post-colonialism, replicates the structured invisibility of the working classes embedded in the very discourses — imperialism and nationalism — that we claim to be dismantling in post-colonial studies.

'Danny Deever' is a seemingly simple poem that records what was for white working-class soldiers of the British Raj a rather complex and emotionally wrought experience: being compelled to witness and hence to participate in the brutal execution of another soldier. The narrative perspective through which Kipling allows us to look is that of an old soldier, perhaps the actual Colour-Sergeant named in the poem. The soldiers' terrible misgivings about this act of regimental murder, in which they are the star performers and for which they are also its principal and intended audience, are conveyed to the reader not only through the anxious questions of a young recruit to the older and wiser Sergeant but also by the Sergeant's apparent unwillingness to entirely confront the fact that both he and his young subordinate are about to become collaborators in something that we begin to suspect is a travesty of justice. The Colour-Sergeant's horror and his attempt to protect the young soldier from achieving a full knowledge of the event is implied through his alternate disclosure and avoidance of the truth:

'What makes the rear-rank breathe so 'ard?' said Files-on-Parade.

'It's bitter cold, it's bitter cold,' the Colour-Sergeant said.

'What makes that front-rank man fall down?' says Files-on-Parade.

'A touch o' sun, a touch o' sun,' the Colour-Sergeant said.

They are hangin' Danny Deever, they are marchin' of 'im round,

They 'ave 'altd Danny Deever by 'is coffin on the ground;

An' 'e'll swing in 'arf a minute for a sneakin' shootin' hound —

O they're hangin' Danny Deever in the mornin'!⁸

The Colour-Sergeant seems completely unaware of his contradiction here, his alternate assertion that the weather is both cold and hot, for he is trying to find the usual, safe weather reasons for soldiers to hyperventilate and to faint in order, somehow, to reassure the young recruit, 'Files-on-Parade', that

everything is all right. But we know that everything is not all right, that the Colour-Sergeant is seriously distracted by the event they are all about to witness, and that the soldiers are gasping and fainting with fear.

In 'Danny Deever' Kipling manages to capture the enormous trepidation that surrounded this experience of watching an execution in the nineteenth-century British Army in India. Many soldiers, in their memoirs about their time in India, have written about this event and have testified to this feeling of trepidation. And, although it is not likely that he himself witnessed such an act, we can still surmise that he probably heard barrack-room tales about earlier executions, tales that conveyed the apprehension of the soldiers. We can say, then, that in 'Danny Deever,' Kipling demonstrates his acute abilities as an outside observer, abilities which have won him an audience among working-class people in England and acclaim from academics for the accuracy of his depiction of the lives of ordinary British soldiers — the Tommy Atkins to whom he dedicates the collection of poetry that contains 'Danny Deever', *Barrack-Room Ballads*, and about whom he has written so extensively and passionately in his soldier poems and stories. Kipling manages to get it right enough that some working-class people have been willing, over the years, to read his writings about the soldiers and to find in them something that speaks to them about their own lives and the lives of their brothers, fathers, uncles, and sons who spent time as soldiers in India. But, like so many middle-class authors who are careful observers and, subsequently, recorders of working-class lives, when Kipling goes beyond description into interpretation, explanation, and justification, he reins in the working-class perspective that he has so comfortably adopted, thereby preventing it from undermining the class hegemony that he himself represents, he the published, middle-class writer who, because of his class status, gets to construct working-class lives for his own purposes and in the absence of competing public creations from working-class writers. In other words, when there is almost nothing being published about soldiers in India by working-class writers, or at least nothing that is given the kind of attention Kipling's stories and poems were accorded, who, from that same position of privilege, can gainsay Kipling? He has cornered the market on the nineteenth-century British soldier in India. What he said was and is accepted as truth, as an accurate portrait.⁹

That 'Danny Deever' is a poem written by a member of the English middle class and, predominantly, a poem written for that class becomes evident when we examine what it does when it moves beyond description and into explanation. The poem tells us that Danny Deever is a 'sneakin' shootin' hound' (p. 4) who 'shot a comrade sleepin'' (p. 5) and that for this he is being hanged. Danny Deever, therefore, is a murderer, who has committed a crime that would have garnered the same punishment had he done it back home in England. So what the poem becomes with such an explanation as its foundation is basically a voyeuristic glimpse at a scene of execution and at the wild anxiety of the working-class men who are forced to play the witnesses and executioners. But, given the severity of the apprehension in the poem, this seems just barely a

sufficient interpretation. It doesn't do the poem justice, for it doesn't explain the sense of kinship that the men seem to feel with Danny, a recognition that we hear in the third stanza:

'Is cot was right-'and cot to mine,' said Files-on-Parade.
'E's sleepin' out an' far to-night,' the Colour-Sergeant said.
'I've drunk 'is beer a score o' times,' said Files-on-Parade.
'E's drinkin' bitter beer alone,' the Colour-Sergeant said. (p. 4)

In spite of the Colour-Sergeant's attempt to paint Danny as divorced from the group, alone and distant, in spite of this attempt to lead the young recruit away from the truth, he is nevertheless coming to the horrific realisation here that they are killing one of their own. It is this realisation that makes the Colour-Sergeant 'look so white, so white' (p. 3) at the start of the poem, because, being an Old Soldier, he knows the implications of this execution before it occurs, and it is this realisation that leaves the new soldiers so frightened at the end: 'Ho! the young recruits are shakin', an' they'll want their beer to-day, After hangin' Danny Deever in the mornin' (p. 5). The terrifying truth at the heart of this poem is that the next step beyond witnessing and participating in the murder of one of your own is being murdered by your own. The soldiers gasp and faint and shake in this poem because they know they could be next.

But this reading, though it makes emotional sense, does not make logical sense. For surely it is a real stretch for us to believe that all of the regimental soldiers are potential murderers of their own comrades. While a diehard hater of the working classes might raise a spectre this chilling, it is hard to believe that Kipling, whose writing attests to his affection and admiration for working-class men, would traffic in such possibilities. There is something wrong in this poem or, at least, something not quite right. And it is my contention that the not-quite-right thing here is the result of missing information, information which would create a justification for the soldiers' behaviour that would be both emotionally and logically sensible.

What is missing from this poem, what Kipling refuses to tell us, is that nineteenth-century white soldiers in India were perfectly justified in being fearful at the executions of fellow soldiers, for, far from there being some kind of hard and fast rule about which offences warranted a punishment of death and which did not, the act of execution in the Army was a political one; it was often the class politics of a particular moment that determined whether or not a man would be executed. Moreover, executions functioned for soldiers as a sign that those who witnessed and participated in one execution might just as easily be the victims of another. They were also spectacles staged by a regiment's middle, and upper-class officers, with the explicit and powerfully communal support of the authoritative institution that was the British Army and, in many cases, the support of the middle-class white community in India, and their intended meaning was graphically clear, namely, that soldiers should keep in their assigned places and be deferential to their officers, be submissive, be politically passive or face the possibility that they might reap fatal consequences for any behaviour which suddenly, sometimes shockingly, could be deemed an act of

insubordination. Throughout the nineteenth century, white soldiers in India were executed for the flimsiest of reasons: for striking an officer, for talking back to an officer, or for failing to follow an officer's order. The usual official justification for executing a soldier for these kinds of perceived failures in deference inevitably involved some appeal to the overall good of the Army and the British state in India.

For instance, in 1860, Private William Johnson was charged with disobeying a lawful command when he defied an order by a Lance Sergeant to confine a fellow soldier for refusing to go to his cot. He was court martialled, convicted, and then executed by firing squad. The then Commander-in-Chief, Sir Hugh Rose, approved the sentence, arguing that a soldier's disobedience 'is justly considered one of the worst and most dangerous crimes a soldier can commit' because it 'may cause the defeat of an army; the success of a mutiny; the downfall of a state'.¹⁰ In collusion with such heady middle-class justifications for the execution of a working-class soldier, one unidentified writer, a clergyman, in the December 1860 issue of *The Anglo-Indian Magazine* insisted that Britain's Indian Empire itself was at stake when Private Johnson refused to confine his comrade for failing to go to his cot when ordered. He went even further, adding, in an address to the soldiery, that by acting on their own volition, soldiers were actually sinning against God:

Your orders are express. Your conscience tells you plainly what you ought to do. The Universal sovereign — the Lord of Heaven and Earth — has laid his commands upon you. Will you resist? Will you violate the order of the moral world? Will you set at naught the authority of the Most High? (*The Anglo-Indian Magazine*, p. 226)

So not only was the killing of Private Johnson endorsed by the state, here it is accorded divine sanction as well. For this writer and for Army official Hugh Rose, how easily middle-class interests are made to seem identical with those of the nation, the Empire, even of heaven. Such heady connections serve, of course, to disguise and render invisible the white middle-class dominance that was preserved in India by, among other things, the execution of Private Johnson.

But if the middle-class voices are the loudest, they are not the only ones speaking. Working-class responses to hugely significant events, like Johnson's death, which were seen as great injustices, survive to this day in the letters, memoirs, songs, and stories left by the soldiers themselves. In the case of Johnson, according to Peter Stanley, author of *White Mutiny: British Military Culture in India, 1825–1875*, 'The impact of the execution ... was so powerful that long after distorted accounts of the event still circulated in Indian barrack-rooms among soldiers who had not been born in 1860'.¹¹ Kipling, a frequenter of barrack-rooms in the 1880s and a life-long admirer of the Army's rank and file, might well have heard the soldiers' stories of Johnson's execution. But if he did, if indeed Danny Deever is Private William Johnson turned murderer, in Kipling's poem it is not so much the soldiers' version of the event that we get, but simply a glimpse into their sense that they are vulnerable somehow. It takes the historical records and the soldiers' voices to hear in that expression of

vulnerability a fear of the consequences of middle-class dominance in their lives and their deaths.

Many of the soldiers who were forced to witness the executions of their comrades communicated in their writings their fear, their outrage, and their resistance to the class structure of Britain and the British Army, which allowed a class of ill-equipped, contemptuous, and frequently drunk men to have such enormous control over their lives, even to the point of authorising their execution. One such angry and frightened soldier, Private Waterfield of Her Majesty's 32nd Regiment of Foot, after watching the execution of three of his fellow soldiers, recalls the overwhelming emotional reactions that the first execution elicited. He saw men, he said, 'who had seen death in a thousand shapes now [weep] like children at the thought of the tyrannical scene they had that morning witnessed'.¹² Private Waterfield's fury at the Army drives him to characterise these events as motivated by blood lust on the part of the officers:

But, alas! the awful drama was not to finish here. The rulers of the Army were not yet satiated: they still craved for the blood of more victims, for during the remaining eleven days of this month we witnessed two more military murders. One of the Lancers, and one of the 32nd, the latter for striking a sergeant. Such scenes as the above only tend to make the soldier loathe instead of honouring his profession. (*Memoirs of Private Waterfield*, pp. 31-32)

For Private Waterfield, and for so many other soldiers who have left us extensive descriptions of the conditions under which they served in India, the British Army in India is an institution that tortures soldiers with its drills and its marches, that exploits them with its pay, that drives them to drink and to suicide, and that sometimes executes them unjustifiably. This is hardly the Army life we see depicted in Kipling's stories and poems about Tommy Atkins in India.

So how can we account for this difference between Kipling's vision of the soldier's life and their remembrances? One of the things we surely cannot forget is the class from which Kipling sprang and to which he was indebted in his publishing career. Kipling follows a fairly standard middle-class line when he creates his Danny Deever and the soldiers who watch him die; that is he depicts the working classes as fundamentally nonsensical, behaving in ways that seem excessive or extraordinary given the context. The result of depictions like this one is that working-class defiances get buried under the weight of middle-class stereotypes and middle-class political imperatives. Kipling couldn't show a Danny Deever unjustly convicted and executed, for were he to do so, he would call into serious question the British Army, an institution he revered. While he is willing to suggest in his stories and poems that certain reforms will make life easier for the British soldier in India — better rations, better educational opportunities, better overall treatment by the British public at large — none of the changes implicit in such reforms would radically alter the class structure of the Army or its middle-class ascendancy. Furthermore, Kipling is obviously not willing to contribute to the undermining of the system that has created the Army, namely, the class system of England, which by the end of the nineteenth century was in the control of the capitalist middle classes. We can ultimately

conclude that Kipling's sympathy for Tommy Atkins only goes so far, only as far as his own investments in the middle-class hegemony that constructed and privileged him.

NOTES

- ¹ *Selections from Calcutta Gazettes, of the Years 1784, 1785, 1786, 1787, and 1788, Showing the Political and Social Condition of the English in India Eighty Years Ago*, W.S. Seton-Karr ed. (Calcutta: Government of India, 1864), p. 43. All further references are to this volume and are included in the text.
- ² David Arnold, 'European Orphans and Vagrants in India in the Nineteenth Century' in *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 7, No. 2, January 1979), p. 104.
- ³ Kenneth Ballhatchet, *Race, Sex and Class under the Raj: Imperial Attitudes and Policies and their Critics, 1793–1905* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980), p. vii.
- ⁴ Although the term 'subaltern' is ostensibly a shifting category of subordination, it has hardened somewhat in recent literary and historical scholarship, coming to be understood primarily as a signifier for the most dispossessed people among subject, rather than colonising, populations. Therefore, I hesitate to use this term in reference to the white working classes of colonial India. Furthermore, I have not found literary examinations of the subaltern sufficient substitutes for good class analyses because, while it is a theoretically useful category, which has produced some illuminating, even inspiring explications in post-colonial literary criticism, in practice explorations of subaltern sites slip too easily into enormous generalisations about the nature of subalternity. Too often in post-colonial interpretations a preconceived idea about the subaltern seems to determine how the critic will read the subaltern, or, to put it another way, the subaltern exists prior to its discursive construction in literature. (I have written about this in more detail in my book, *Whose India? The Independence Struggle in British and Indian Fiction and History* [Durham: Duke UP, 1996], particularly in chapters 3, 4, and 5.) But I'm much more interested in promoting and contributing to a body of writing on class that is historically and textually specific, that is willing to perceive class as possessing no essence but instead emerging from various effects — social, cultural, linguistic, economic, political, experiential, etc. — that allows class experience and class construction to be contradictory and fragmented and occasionally, momentarily unified, and that sees texts not as places where class is *represented* but where it is in the process of being *formed*. The best insights of various subalternist critics are, it seems to me, helpful in this kind of class critique.
- ⁵ Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London: Verso, 1992), pp. 12–13.
- ⁶ *The Globe and Mail* (November 6, 1998), p. A1. All further references are to this issue and are included in the text.
- ⁷ I use the word 'classed' in much the same way that I (and many other feminists) use the word 'gendered'. To do a gendered reading of a text generally means to render visible the *specific* historical and cultural structures of and assumptions — often unconscious — about gender that inform a text. A 'classed' reading seeks to uncover

and interpret the structures of class that inevitably exist alongside and intertwined with systems of gender, race, sexuality, etc.

- ⁸ Rudyard Kipling, *Barrack-room Ballads* (Oxford and New York: Woodstock, 1892 and 1993), p. 4. All further references are to this volume and are included in the text.
- ⁹ See, for instance, Byron Farwell's book on the Victorian and Edwardian army, entitled *Mr. Kipling's Army: All the Queen's Men* (New York: Norton, 1981), in which Kipling's representations of the working-class British soldiers, their wives, and their children are used as historical documents and viewed by Farwell as accurate reflections of these people's experiences. Only once does Farwell question Kipling, when he suggests that he may have exaggerated when he wrote in 'The Rout of the White Hussars' that 'the bandmaster is one degree more important than the Colonel' (qtd. in *Mr. Kipling's Army*, p. 130).
- ¹⁰ Quoted in 'The 5th Europeans' in *The Anglo-Indian Magazine: A Soldier's Friend and Home Companion* (No. 32, December 1860), p. 225. All further references are to this volume and are included in the text.
- ¹¹ Peter Stanley, *White Mutiny: British Military Culture in India, 1825-1875* (London: Hurst, 1998), p. 224.
- ¹² Private Waterfield, *The Memoirs of Private Waterfield, Soldier in Her Majesty's 32nd Regiment of Foot (Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry) 1842-57*, Arthur Swinson and Donald Scott, ed. (London: Cornwall, 1968), p. 31. All further references are to this volume and are included in the text.