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DECLARATION

An abridged version of chapter one was published as "'More Mighty than the bat, the pen': Culture, Hegemony and the Literaturisation of Cricket" in Sport in History, 23/1 (Summer 2003). Sections of chapter four were published as "The Politics of the Aesthetic: Cricket, Literature and Empire" in The International Journal of Regional and Local Studies, 2/1(1) (Spring 2005).
ABSTRACT

Whilst in recent years a number of historians and sociologists have analysed sports as social, cultural and economic processes, relatively few have considered the cultural and ideological implications of sport as an object of representation. This thesis aims to intervene in such debates by considering the emergence and development of the discourse of cricket, a sport intimately associated with ideas of "Englishness" and empire, and one with an unparalleled "Literary" tradition. In order to account for the socially productive function of forms of literary discourse in defining the hegemonic meaning of the cricket field, three interconnected discursive processes are identified: Literaturisation, Canonisation and Aestheticisation. These processes are related to broader manifestations of English cultural nationalism such as the emergence of English Studies in the late nineteenth century. The main body of the thesis is structured around the analysis of a series of historical moments (such as The Great War and the 1926 General Strike), "discursive events" (for instance, the "Bodyline" Series of 1932-33), and key writers and texts. As well as utilising its main trinity of theoretical concepts, the analysis identifies patterns of repetition and regularity within the changing patterns of cricket discourse. These analyses reveal that the discursive meaning of cricket as a symbol of nation and empire was a matter of constant renegotiation, and was consistently produced and reproduced as a response to perceptions of socio-economic, political and cultural crisis. Because cricket discourse was an agent of both imperial hegemony and anti-colonial counter-hegemony, the analysis also considers its dissemination and cultural work within the colonial and postcolonial dispensations. Through a reading of C.L.R. James's Beyond a Boundary,
a theorisation of the relationship between the discursive and the performative emerges as a means of accounting for the counter-hegemonic appropriation and re-articulation of cricket into an instrument of postcolonial subjectivity and agency.
INTRODUCTION: WRITING THE CRICKET FIELD

The Game of cricket, philosophically considered, is a standing panegyric on the English character: none but an orderly and sensible race of people would so amuse themselves. It calls into requisition all the cardinal virtues, some moralist would say. As with the Grecian games of old, the player must be sober and temperate. Patience, fortitude, and self-denial, with an unruffled temper, are indispensable. For intellectual virtues we want judgement, decision, and the organ of concentrativeness – every faculty in the free use of its limbs – and every idea in constant air and exercise ... As to physical qualifications, we require not only the volatile spirits of the Irishman Rampant, nor the phlegmatic caution of the Scotchman Couchant, but we want the English combination of the two; though, with good generalship, cricket is a game for Britons generally...¹

This passage comes from a book entitled The Cricket Field published by Longmans in 1851 and written by the cricketer, classicist and clergyman, the Reverend James Pycroft, a writer also known for his educational treatises on English reading and Greek and Latin grammar.² The Cricket Field was Pycroft’s second venture into cricket literature and was initially only a moderate commercial success, but by 1897 the book had run into nine editions, including an American edition published in 1859. In describing cricket as a modern exemplar of ancient Olympian ideals, Pycroft endows the sport with a sense of history and prestige and goes on to associate it with Victorian bourgeois ideals of temperance and self-denial. At the same time, with its negotiation of the moral, the cerebral and the bodily, the passage foreshadows the discourse of what was later to become known as “Muscular


Christianity" - a discourse originating in the public schools of the mid and late-nineteenth century which grew out of an educational compromise between the dictates of the classroom, the chapel and an increasing emphasis on the playing field. By synthesising the discourses of religion and sport in the "Gospel of Athleticism," an authorised version of normative masculinity eventually emerged that subsequently formed the basis of a hegemonic construction of Anglo-British identity.

Although the ideology of Muscular Christianity espoused by Pycroft and many others (including its strongly literary dimension) has been well documented and analysed by a number of scholars, most notably James Mangan, there is more to be said about the representation of sport in various media during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For example, the passage quoted above is notable for espousing both a reflectionist view of culture and literature, and an ahistorical understanding of national character as pregiven, unchanging and unmediated. In seeing cricket as "a panegyric on the English character," the text advances a view of culture as a public proclamation or expression of a national identity that pre-exists representation. The self-confirming logic of the writing elides any sense that acts of textual inscription such as this are actively creating a particular construction of Englishness through cricket. Aside from Pycroft’s Anglo-centric view of cultural authority ("good generalship"), and his casual stereotyping of "volatile" Irish and "phlegmatic" Scots against which "Englishness" is silhouetted, the passage is significant because it highlights the problem of such reflectionist notions of culture and identity. In other words, there is no sense that the cultural identity of the sport of cricket, or the English character it supposedly expresses, are actually the product of literature such as this.

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Such a view of cricket as straightforwardly reflecting Englishness is a widespread and continuing literary conceit. During the Second World War, at a time when many authors and publishing houses were emphasising and celebrating the Englishness of various cultural practices and artefacts in the cause of the war effort, the most famous and canonised English cricket writer, Sir Neville Cardus (whose work is analysed in detail in the following chapters), made the point as explicitly as is possible: "It is far more than a game, this cricket. It somehow holds the mirror up to English nature." In a recent study of Englishness, *England an Elegy*, by the right-wing philosopher, Roger Scruton, cricket is again cited as epitomising various supposedly natural English characteristics. In the following passage the use of the past tense suggests the loss of the Englishness once symbolised by cricket on the village green:

The game of cricket was an eloquent symbol of this experience of membership: originally a village institution, which recruited villagers to a common loyalty, it displayed the reticent and understated character of the English ideal: white flannels too clean and pure to suggest physical exertion, long moments of silence and stillness, stifled murmurs of emotion should anything out of the ordinary occur and the occasional burst of subdued applause. As Scruton acknowledges in a footnote, this portrayal of village cricket is based on descriptions of cricket matches from two literary texts written over one hundred years apart – Mary Mitford’s *Our Village* (1824), itself an elegiac account of a rural way of life seemingly disappearing due to land enclosure and the migrations from country to town during the Industrial Revolution, and Francis Brett Young’s *Portrait of a Village* (1937), another text that emerged from a period of apparent cultural crisis during

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which the English rural way of life was seen as further threatened. Clearly, Scruton’s view of cricket is an intensely literary one. To remark upon this is not to deny the social importance of cricket clubs in village communities then or now, only to point out that cricket, and particularly village cricket, has had a remarkable ability to discursively reproduce itself as the symbol of a particular version of Englishness. Furthermore, cricket’s ability to do so relies on the existence of a convention of literary and aesthetic representation, a discursive blueprint that includes and elaborates certain features of the cricket landscape and omits other, less desirable aspects. This set of rhetorical conventions has been utilised most frequently during periods of accelerated social change or perceived cultural and socio-economic crisis. Though it is not surprising to find such a view of cricket in the work of a reactionary such as Scruton, preoccupied with the need to elegise a mythical construct of Englishness in the face of apparent challenges to it such as multi-racialism and European integration and expansion, such idealised views of cricket have been, and continue to be, widespread across the political spectrum. The former Conservative Prime Minister and now President of Surrey County Cricket Club, John Major, may well have evoked images of shadowy village greens, warm beer and cricket as a desirable image of a post-Thatcherite “classless society”, but he was shamelessly borrowing his imagery from George Orwell, one of the most influential literary figures on the political left during the middle decades of the twentieth century (see figure 1).
Unfit to compete

IT HAD to come eventually. Pull down a very deep bomb and you will inevitably reach the booby trap. So, in the signs of money pile up, John Major is just guessing what newspapers report as "a buoyant manner". "Britain is on the up," the Prime Minister says.

But, if we are on this up, it is only in the sense that a drowning man is on one up before he sinks for the third time. The truth is that Britain cannot afford another consumer boom. It could not afford the last one. Because we were not earning enough money ourselves, we paid for the boom by importing. We still have to redeem the IOUs. We must do so by exporting more than we import. The Government has implicitly recognised this by introducing deferred tax measures that will reinstate home consumption from next year. Thus, we have the first recovery in history where action to stamp it down is taken before it has officially started.

This ought to surprise nobody. For most of the century, the economy has been inherently incapable of supporting the living standards in which people aspire. Hence, each boom must be followed by a roughly corresponding bust. An outside boom, such as that of the late 1980s, must be followed by an outside bust, such as that of the past three years. But the late 1980s boom was in de-portfolioisation, that is, this time, we cannot really be allowed the next one. Ministers promise no more boom-bust cycles. They have reason: the prospect is of bust-bust cycles, with insignificant intervening recoveries.

Why should Britain be in this bind? Low manufacturing investment, bad industrial relations and lack of coherent government intervention have all, at times, played their part. But the most consistent reason is the unremitting extermination of the mass of the workforce. When production encounters some minor problem, it has to stop while a specialist is fetched because the average worker is incapable of fixing it. When we introduce some new production process, it takes longer for our workers to get to grips with it. This is one armchair speculation. It has been exhaustively demonstrated in a series of reports from the National Institute of Economic and Social Research, comparing factories producing the same goods in Germany, France, Japan, the US and Britain.

A typical British firm cannot compete on quality of products, it must therefore compete on price. This is why the Government's strategy is to induce wages and other overheads down, for example, abolishing statutory council tax relief and minimum wages and by allowing employers to shed labour more easily. It also why ministers remain so determined to resist the social chapter to which other EC countries agreed at Maastricht, but this strategy entails competing with the evergreen economies of South-east Asia. These economies are gradually adopting the higher skill levels that Britain neglects; but they will be succoured by other developing systems. The hope is that British wages and working conditions define those of the Third World.

The alternative strategy is to raise the skill levels of the British workforce. One set of figures here: 27 per cent of British workers have technical qualifications, against 63 per cent in Germany, 57 per cent in the Netherlands, 40 per cent in France.) Remarkably, ministers show no sign of grasping this necessity. The Government's only approach to the massift inadaptability of vocational training is to keep changing the names of the various schemes. "The magic reality," said a report from the Centre for Economic Performance at the London School of Economics last year, "is that, despite all the rhetoric about new initiatives, real expenditure on off-the-job vocational education and training has, if at all, fallen over the last five years." Further, the Government provides few grants, and a combination of fees and grants, for students on degree courses but charges fees for the vast majority on vocational training. Britain on the up? TVH workers measure the low-skills shackle from the workforce. Britain will be almost continuously on the down.

What a lot of tosh

THE FUTURE of Britain lay in Europe, John Major said in his speech on Thursday, but the character of Britain would "survive unaltered in all essentials". Fifty years from now, and the Prime Minister, Britain "will still be the country of long shadows on county [cridget] grounds, warm beer, incomparable green suburbs, dog lovers and pools filled by the morning mist" as another unamendable emblem of Britishness. Orwell depicted these old maids in his long essay, The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius, which was published in 1941, and which was published in 1906, pico Dinklage and pre-Pearl Harbour, when Britain stood alone against Germany. Orwell pondered the unique attributes of "English civilization" and concluded that it was "somehow found by with solid breakfasts and glossy sausages, smoky towns and rotting fields of rapeseed, that old mill town where the only smut is on bonfire night, that pillar-box which may be privatised, that old maids speaking Irish, that new maids speaking Irish, that new maids speaking Irish, that new maids speaking Irish. The answer is George Orwell, who supplied the quote in Mr Major's speech.


In order to more fully understand the close links between cricket and its important role within Anglo-British and imperial culture and society there is a need to...
examine more closely its literary discourses, and to understand them as having a socially and culturally productive function. Whilst in recent years an increasing number of sociologists and historians have analysed sports as social, cultural and economic processes, relatively few have considered the cultural and ideological implications of sport as an object of representation. This is a serious oversight given that vast numbers of people only experience sport via various forms of media such as newspapers, magazines, books, radio, television and the internet. In fact, the symbiosis between the growth and development of modern sport and the modern media has been given scant scholarly attention. As far as literature is concerned historians of sport have often used literary texts as source material, but have paid little attention to these works as active and ideologically saturated producers of meaning. This project not only argues that experience of modern sport has increasingly been a mediated one, but that the meaning of a modern sport such as cricket has always been produced through various forms of mediation and, until the advent of radio and television, particularly literature. Whilst sociological and historical accounts of sport have been highly alert to broader economic, social and political factors, they have tended to view the relationship between sport and literature in straightforwardly reflectionist terms: sport “means” certain things and, in turn, literature simply conveys what sport “means” to a readership. One problem with such an approach is brought out through the consideration of cricket as an expression of Englishness. A tourist might seek “direct”, “unmediated” experience of cricket by visiting a rural Southern

English village on a Sunday afternoon in order to sit at the boundary's edge and enjoy the sights and sounds of a match. The observer might well think of the whole scene as quintessentially "English". However, it is likely that whatever his or her nationality, and however unconsciously, the tourist would have been exposed to a whole range of cultural representations of cricket that for a variety of reasons (commercial, dramatic, political, economic, social and so on) were carefully constructed in such a way so that cricket signified a particular rural construction of Englishness. In the terminology of Roland Barthes, the tourist would be caught in a semiotic chain in which signifier ("cricket"), signified ("rural idyllic setting") and sign ("cricket in the English countryside") function together in a self-confirming logic that naturalises the image of cricket within a particular rural landscape and elides any sense of the game as a highly rationalised, commercialised, technocratic and competitive national and international sport. 10 In other words, cricket has been made to signify a particular construction of Englishness through a whole gamut of cultural representations (including books by Neville Cardus and Roger Scruton). Although there is little doubt that the modern game of cricket originated in England, it is important to register that its associations with this version of rural Englishness derive from a particular historical moment - the early industrial revolution - when there was a need to culturally validate certain rural customs and traditions, or, if they did not exist, invent them as such. Those involved in both urban and rural cricket in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries such as pub landlords who often sponsored matches, or aristocrats who lent money and prestige to cricket but often gambled prodigiously on the outcome of games, would have been astonished at Pycroft's literary reinvention of the game. 11 As Stuart Hall

has explained, cultural forms or symbols have no inherent meaning or value, instead they are:

...composed of unstable and antagonistic elements. The meaning of a cultural form and its place in the cultural field is not inscribed inside its form. Nor is its position fixed once and forever ...the meaning of a cultural form is given in part by the social field into which it is incorporated, the practices with which it articulates and is made to resonate. 12

Hall’s insights into the potential fluidity in meaning of cultural signs should have important implications for scholars of cricket who should be alert as to why the sport has been made to mean certain things at particular historical moments. Though the Victorian literary construction of cricket remains culturally pervasive up to the present day, it needs to be understood as originating in a particular set of economic, social and cultural conditions. That the meaning of cricket has been, and remains a matter of negotiation and contestation is particularly relevant in the analysis of the sport in former British colonies where, as one of Hall’s mentors, C.L.R. James, showed, cricket came to assume a set of meanings different from those which the Victorian bourgeoisie had originally intended. 13

This project seeks to explore the ways in which cricket literature produced and reproduced ideas of the national and imperial cultures in the period between the publication of Pycroft’s The Cricket Field in 1851 and the middle of the 1960s. In the four decades following the first publication of The Cricket Field, cricket became the most popular, written-about and symbolically significant sport in England. The sport’s incorporation into the curricula of the elite schools, the development of the railway

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network, the closely-related processes of industrialisation and urbanisation (with their resultant effects on leisure patterns), and the emergence of the ideologies of rational recreation and Muscular Christianity had all played a part in raising the game to the status of a national fetish. Significantly, during the same period cricket was been taken to the British colonies and was becoming an important component of the cultural complexion of colonies such as Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, India and the British West Indies. As such cricket could be hailed as embodying the cultural bonds of empire and, particularly in non-white colonies, of the success of the British civilising mission. At the same time the sport was inscribed with a strong parochial and rural identity. As the English urban bourgeoisie struggled to reconcile their increasing material prosperity with an apparent loss of spiritual values, cricket formed part of a mythical and timeless image of the English countryside, an archetypical landscape that against the background of social Darwinism was seen as the repository of Anglo-Saxon purity and thus a counterfoil against fears of racial degeneration. In the 1920s and 30s, after the unprecedented mass slaughter of the Great War, cricket was endowed with an even greater burden of symbolic importance. Economic decline, the reconfiguration of class forces, the threats of both communism and fascism and major tensions in the bonds of empire produced a literature of the cricket field that inscribed it as both a legacy of the certainties of the old world, and as a terrible indicator of the economic, political and cultural tensions of the new. By the post-Second World War period nationalists in the newly independent India and in the Caribbean had to a degree wrested cricket from its discursive links to Englishness and were rearticulating it in the cause of their post-colonial and anti-colonial agendas. An alternative discourse of the cricket field was emerging which used and subverted the game's metaphors and moral codes to create new, and often problematic, conceptions.
of cultural identity. Two fundamental questions therefore structure and lie at the heart of this thesis: first, what role did literature play in the dissemination and acculturisation of cricket within the nation and empire?; and second, what role did literature play in the counter-hegemonic re-articulation of cricket within the colonial dispensation?

The strong link between cricket and Englishness is an important justification for making it the object of academic study, as work by Richard Holt, Jack Williams and others has shown. For example, Williams' seminal contribution to the study of inter-war cricket uses the sport as a means of illuminating the period's broader cultural context and, in doing so, correctly identifies that cricket was both a cultural practice and a discourse. The first chapter of the book foregrounds the importance of images of cricket: the ways that literary and other representations of the sport actively produced its meanings. However, as Williams has himself noted, it is a "surprising fact that few studies have concentrated on cricket writing." What little work there is all too easily falls back into the belletrist musing that characterises much of the discourse of cricket itself. For example, an extended essay on the subject by Patrick Allitt begins with the following provocative statement: "Class, race, gender, hegemony, imperialism, ritual, liminality, sex, and discourse! Everyone's favourite analytical instruments – and never more useful than in the interpretation of England's


15Jack Williams, xviii.

national game, cricket."\textsuperscript{17} However, after this important and accurate assertion Allitt’s analysis degenerates into a series of author-based interpretations that fail to connect the discourse of cricket to its broader socio-economic, political and cultural context.

As Allitt’s essay testifies, another important (and closely related) reason for a study of cricket writing is the sport’s sheer literariness.\textsuperscript{18} According to one anonymous writer, “that cricket lends itself better than any other game to literary expression is one of those truisms which nobody need justify.”\textsuperscript{19} One objective of this thesis is to take issue with that statement, to consider why cricket is so literary, and to investigate the cultural implications of the enduring relationship between the two fields. The belief that cricket is a particularly literary sport has sound quantitative, if not qualitative foundations. Padwick’s extensive, if not exhaustive, \textit{A Bibliography of Cricket} published in 1977, lists no fewer than 8,294 items, including specialist prose and fiction, poetry, technical books, histories, biographies and references to the sport in various forms and genres including prose fiction and verse that is not primarily about cricket.\textsuperscript{20} That such a work of amateur scholarship should have been undertaken is itself testimony to the sheer literariness of the sport. Indeed, during the course of their work Padwick and his colleagues were able to draw upon an already established tradition of cricket bibliographies going back to at least the end of the nineteenth century (cricket’s literariness is such that there is a bibliography of cricket

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{17}Allitt, 385.
  \item \textsuperscript{18}Jeff Hill, \textit{Sport, Leisure & Culture in Twentieth-Century Britain} (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 55.
  \item \textsuperscript{19}Benny Green, \textit{A Cricketer’s Archive} (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1977), jacket gloss.
  \item \textsuperscript{20}E.W. Padwick, \textit{A Bibliography of Cricket} (London: The Library Association, 1977).
\end{itemize}
bibliographies\textsuperscript{21}). However, though the canonisation of Neville Cardus has led a minority of commentators to assert that the sport produces fine literature, few have argued that cricket writing has much "Literary" value. Even John Arlott, an important literary figure in cricket from the 1940s to his death in the early 1980s, and the author of several essays on the subject of cricket writing, opined that only half a dozen cricket books were of true literary value.\textsuperscript{22} This study does not intend to challenge such an assertion, or make any aesthetic claims on behalf of particular texts; rather, it seeks to show that cricket's hard-earned aura of literariness has been a crucially important component in carrying out the sport's cultural work within the nation and empire.

The third important reason for a study of cricket literature is the game's crucial role within colonial and post-colonial culture. Although scholars from a number of fields have analysed the cultural dynamics of cricket within the imperial and post-imperial dispensations, little attention has been given to the game's discourses, as if the ability of cricket to reproduce itself in the most distant reaches of empire, and the counter-hegemonic appropriation and transformation of the sport in the colonies were unmediated processes. Exceptions to this are short studies by Arjun Appadurai and Ian Baucom, both of which inform this thesis and are discussed below.

The final (and again closely related) justification for this study is the importance and influence of C.L.R. James, the author of the most intellectually significant book about cricket ever written, \textit{Beyond a Boundary}, first published in Britain in 1963. Since just before his death in 1989 there has been a flurry of


publications on and by James, some of which contain, or are concerned with, his cricket writings. Helen Tiffin, Neil Lazarus, Kenneth Surin and Sylvia Wynter, for example, have produced important readings of works such as *Beyond a Boundary* and "Garfield Sobers," 23 whilst a collection of James’s shorter cricket writings edited by his one-time amanuensis, Anna Grimshaw, has appeared. 24 However, little attention has been given to James’s relationship to the tradition of English cricket writing. In the final chapter of this study, therefore, it is argued that James’s cricket writings represent an important counter-hegemonic subversion of the canon of English cricket writing as he sought to find alternative ways of representing a West Indies “nation” through cricket, and that some of the theoretical problems inherent in James’s cricket writings are due to his obvious debt to this long tradition of English cricket literature. This, I believe, constitutes an original approach to the work of this still undervalued writer.

**Theorising the Cricket Field**

Three main overlapping and inter-related theoretical concepts inform and, to a degree, structure this project: Literaturisation, Canonisation and Aestheticisation. All three are seen as constitutive of cricket’s ability to form and re-form constructions of national identity.

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Literaturisation

The pluralistic, non-evaluative approach to the category of “Literature” adopted in this study in no way denies its historical importance as an aesthetically validating factor. On the contrary, one of the most important arguments of this thesis is that in the two decades preceding the publication of Pycroft’s *The Cricket Field*, cricket began to undergo a process of literaturisation, and that the subsequent intensification of this process was absolutely crucial to cricket’s ongoing ability to symbolise the nation and subsequently the empire. This concept of literaturisation has been borrowed and adapted from Steve Redhead’s study, *Post-Fandom and The Millennial Blues: The Transformation of Soccer Culture*. Here Redhead describes a process by which literary figures (most prominently Nick Hornby) attempted to improve football’s image so damaged in Britain during the 1980s by factors such as hooliganism and the Bradford, Hillsborough and Heysel Stadium disasters.\(^25\)

According to Redhead:

The commercial success of *Fever Pitch*, an account of growing up a male soccer fan of Arsenal FC by Nick Hornby … has encouraged some parts of the media and certain cultural writers to proclaim a “new football writing” in which the “literati” attempt to rescue the game’s reputation so sullied in Britain by the mid-1980s. A collection of fan essays, edited by Hornby, was published in October 1993 in conjunction with [the] fan magazine *When Saturday Comes* under the title *My Favourite Year* … The media saw it as marking the “emergence of a new class of soccer fan – cultured and discerning”, as the *Observer* put it, emphasised perhaps by Roddy Doyle, Booker prize winner, being one of the contributors to the collection.\(^26\)

Since its publication in 1992 *Fever Pitch* has given rise to countless narratives by educated male soccer fans dealing with football as a safe medium of masculine self-analysis and contained emotional expression. In such narratives childhood allegiance


\(^{26}\text{Ibid., 88.}\)
to a particular football club and its nostalgically evoked terrace culture (an emotional commitment usually fostered by the narrator’s father) provides a rite of passage to an often emotionally arrested sense of manhood.  

Catherine Bennett correctly placed such narratives in the context of a male “confessional culture” originating in the 1980s in which men came to unburden themselves in print.  

Whilst writers such as Hornby and Doyle (and the major publishing houses which represent them) typify the culturally validating aspect of soccer’s literaturisation, Redhead has also noted that at the other end of the print culture spectrum emerged a plethora of self-published fanzines, a proliferation of football discourse emanating not so much from the terraces, but from the seats of the increasingly modernised post-Taylor soccer stadia. Though many of these publications were short-lived, they tended to construct the new fan in terms of a more sophisticated sensibility with much cultural interchange between football, popular music and fashion. Through such texts sections of society such as women, gay men and lesbians, who had long been marginalised or totally excluded from football culture, attempted to appropriate the sport as their own, inscribing the football field with new meanings and transforming the notion of fandom into a more pluralistic concept. In an essay published in 1993 in a collection edited by Redhead, Richard Haynes gave an account of the rise of the fanzine phenomenon and analysed its role in constituting new gender, class and racial identities around football. He points to publications such as Born Kicking, a fanzine written by and for women, and the Football Pink, a publication for gay and lesbian

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28Quoted in Redhead, 90.
football supporters that challenged male heterosexual hegemony in football and was a "clear retort to the Muscular Christian ideals of the late nineteenth century."  

Of course, Redhead's concept of literaturisation is a peculiarly post-modern phenomenon of cultural cross-over, an interpenetration of football and an increasingly complex popular culture by which literary treatment of soccer increases the sport's marketability to the middle-classes. However, even though there are obvious dangers in adopting the idea of literaturisation as an ahistorical and universal concept, the work of writers such as Redhead and Haynes is of particular relevance to the study of cricket literature. As will be discussed in chapter one, at the beginning of the nineteenth century the game of cricket did not have the elevated status that it was to achieve only later in the century. The game's associations with violence, gambling and absenteeism meant that it was frequently the object of censure in various forms of official discourse. However, as the British middle classes, newly empowered by the 1832 Reform Act, adopted the sport, and as the sport became an integral part of the curricula of the newly reformed public schools, the game underwent a process of discursive transformation that inscribed it with a series of moral, religious and social attributes. As the sport was discursively wrested from its historical links with the disreputable old popular culture, this process of literaturisation endowed it with the necessary cultural validation to become a symbol of nation. The literaturisation of cricket involved the construction of a series of narratives that were instrumental in creating Benedict Anderson's "imagined community" of the nation.  


element of a bourgeois appropriation of a sport, but as a hegemonic process it could never indelibly inscribe a set of cultural meanings upon it. As was pointed out by Haynes, discourses surrounding a sport allow for counter-hegemonic acts of re-inscription or appropriation to occur. Although cricket successful reproduced itself as a symbol of a dominant hegemonic Englishness well into the twentieth century (and arguably beyond), counter-hegemonic negotiations of its codes and discourses occurred at the peripheries of the empire. Here a modified series of aesthetic, ethical and political meanings and resonances were inscribed upon cricket as a part of various anti-colonial struggles.

Canonisation

As literaturisation established cricket as England’s national game, cricket began retrospectively to organise its discourses so that a canon or “Great Tradition” of cricket writing emerged. Underpinned by the quasi-Biblical authority of *Wisden Cricketers’ Almanack*, this canon of cricket literature provided the sport with a sense of tradition and signified the boundaries of permissible ways of writing about the sport so that cricket could continue to fulfil its important cultural work within the nation and empire. The cricket canon was a body of authorised texts that were deemed appropriate and useful in weaving national and imperial narratives around the sport. Through the logic of the canon, certain authors and texts were accorded a privileged place in the discourse of cricket, and these writers and texts subsequently produced vast amounts of critical commentary and interpretation. The canon became a space of continuous inter-textuality in which Englishness could be constantly reproduced. Such meta-discourse carried significant cultural capital. The canon’s self-confirming combination of authors and discourse produced what we now mean by “cricket

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31There are many references to *Wisden* as cricket’s Bible. For example, Pelham Warner, *Book of Cricket* (London: Sporting Handbooks, 1943), 115.
literature” and writings which did not fit within this discursive formation were simply edited out. However, much as the canon provided quite rigid models for permissible ways of writing about the sport, literary representations of cricket always absorbed and refracted their broader literary, cultural, social and economic contexts. Cricket writing is thus a discourse embodying tensions between the ongoing sense of English tradition signified by the cricket field and its literary canon (diachronic continuity) and the synchronic stresses imposed upon those formulae of representation.

Aestheticisation

The process of cricket’s aestheticisation is the most theoretically complex of the concepts utilised in this project as it raises the vitally important issue of the relationship between cricket as both discourse and embodied practice. In one sense, as the title of this project implies, it is an umbrella term that takes in the ideas of literaturisation and the canon. As Gregory Jusdanis has argued in his study of Modern Greek cultural nationalism, the making of national literatures and literary canons were elements in a broader aestheticisation of modern national cultures. As has previously been noted, cricket’s literaturisation was a means of providing a national sport with cultural capital, whilst the making of a cricket canon provided a series of authorised textual models to enable cricket to be constantly reproduced in particular ways. The literaturisation of cricket produced a particular aesthetic of cricket, of its landscapes and of its bodily movements that were intimately tied up with the broader cultural (re)production of Englishness. As the previous statement suggests, this thesis is not concerned to establish or refute cricket’s aesthetic status, rather, following the example of cultural theorists such as Pierre Bourdieu, Raymond Williams and Terry Eagleton, it conceptualises the aesthetic as a series of historical uses that were crucial

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in establishing and maintaining bourgeois hegemony. According to Williams, the emergence of the category of the aesthetic was essentially a response to capitalism, "a protest against the forcing of all experience into instrumentality ('utility'), and of all things into commodities." This reified notion of art was absorbed into cricket discourse from the time of its emergence and subsequently united writers as diverse in their politics as Neville Cardus and C.L.R. James. However, in his elaboration of Williams, Eagleton has identified another crucial feature of aesthetic discourse that is of relevance to a study of cricket writing (and sport more generally). Eagleton concurs with Williams in identifying that the aesthetic emerged as a distinct category in the late eighteenth century, but goes on to note that it has been consistently characterised by an inner tension between the disinterested contemplation of abstract beauty and the experience of sensual bodily pleasure. According to Eagleton this dialectical tension between abstraction and embodiment endows the aesthetic with the ability to disrupt and disturb. In this project it is argued that cricket discourse has always had to negotiate with the disruptive potential of the body, particularly in the colonial context where the embodied practice of cricket produced anxieties about the sport's ongoing ability to discipline and fashion the identities of the colonised. In all the chapters of this thesis the issue of the aesthetic is addressed in relation to cricket, both as an historical series of uses that were instrumental in producing the "Englishness" of cricket, and as a series of bodily disruptions to the pedagogical discourse of cricket.


34Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 151.

35Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*. 
Texts, Forms and Genres

One result of cricket's literaturisation and canonisation was the production of a notable sameness of ideological meaning in the sport's discourses. This sameness was an essential element in cricket's ability to reproduce itself as a symbol of nation and empire and transgressed generic boundaries so that a wide range of literary genres including prose fiction, poetry, reflective essays and instructional manuals depicted the sport in a highly formulaic way so as to construct the cricket field as a stable receptacle of tradition. Although the vast amount of cricket literature available has necessarily led to a degree of selectivity in choosing texts and genres, there is no rigid exclusivity in this matter. In particular, the nature of chapter one, which is concerned to explore the emergence and growth of a discourse of cricket, dictates that a pluralistic approach be taken to the issue of genre. Religious tracts, court orders, newspapers and periodicals, novels, poetry and non-fiction prose are all considered so as to identify a set of conventional ways of producing and reproducing cricket. The later chapters are narrower in their generic focus, the emphasis is upon the popular genres of reflective prose essay (these were often first published in newspapers and consequently reprinted in book form), books of prose, tour accounts (which are important in many ways, not least as colonial travelogues), and poetry. Poetry receives particular attention in this study for the following reasons: first, it was frequently written by the same cricket litterateurs responsible for many prose essays; second, it often exemplifies, in condensed form, the idioms and imagery of cricket discourse. Fictional genres are under-represented in this study, partly because of Eric Midwinter's recent book on cricket in literature, although major fictional texts in the cricket canon such as Tom Brown's Schooldays and Hugh de Selincourt's The Cricket Match are discussed. After-dinner speeches (another genre often subsequently
reprinted in newspapers and books) and political speeches are also referred to. The matter of genre is particularly significant in relation to C.L.R. James. Although much of his cricket writing was in the form of newspaper reports and journalistic essays, in *Beyond a Boundary* he consciously crossed the traditional generic boundaries between autobiography, political tract, cultural history and cricket book to produce a new, yet hybrid, genre of literature. *Beyond a Boundary* is deliberately constructed in such a way that it foregrounds issues of personal and national identity, politics and aesthetics so as to politicise an avowedly apolitical form of discourse.

This pluralistic approach to the concept of literature is also indicative of a shift of theoretical emphasis within the academic field of literary studies. Within the permeable boundaries of this field the influences of structuralism and post-structuralism have led to a questioning of the validity of the division between literature and other texts or "signifying practices".36 Because of a concomitant shift from literary into cultural studies, scholars once narrowly preoccupied with the English literary canon are now analysing a wide variety of texts and genres such as popular fiction, cinema, journalism and even sports writing.37 A second aspect of this theoretical shift, and again one that ultimately derived from post-structuralism, and particularly the work of Michel Foucault, has again challenged the boundary between "literary" and "non-literary" works by adopting an alternative approach to the question of historical development and to the relationship between a text and its historical context. Broadly speaking this approach can be labelled "New Historicism". Essentially New Historicism posits the literary text not as a mere reflection of history,


but as history itself. For example, rather than seeing Shakespeare’s sonnets as a reflection of the Renaissance preoccupation with the individual subject, New Historicists argue that in these texts the modern individual subject was actively being invented and constructed. In other words, the modern idea of the subject and of subjectivity was produced by, and did not precede, its literary expression and performance. As has already been suggested this idea that literary texts have a productive social function represents a challenge to the ways we perceive the relationship between textual representations of sport and their historical context. There is a need to analyse sports literature as a discourse that is actively producing, rather than merely reflecting, the meaning of a sporting practice. The New Historicist paradigm also suggests a need to place representations of sport within a broader discursive field. Such an approach leads to greater understanding of the ways that sports literature is both shaped by, and contributes to, broader literary and cultural contexts.

Cricket as Discourse and Embodied Practice: Arjun Appadurai and Ian Baucom

Although this study focuses upon cricket’s status as a discourse, it avoids an overt linguistic determinism by acknowledging that cricket is both a discourse and an embodied performative practice. Furthermore, an understanding of the relationship between the two is crucial to an understanding of cricket as a hegemonic and counter-hegemonic cultural practice. Two recent essays on cricket and empire by Arjun Appadurai and Ian Baucom have provided important theoretical insights into this relationship between the discursive and the performative. These insights inform this project, particularly chapter five. Appadurai begins his essay, “Playing with

Modernity: The Decolonization of Indian Cricket" by noting that within contemporary Indian culture cricket still remains a field "where the urge to cut the ties with the colonial past seems weakest." He then goes on to define the counter-hegemonic "indigenization" of cricket in India in terms of the relationship between the discursive and the performative:

The process by which cricket gradually became indigenized in colonial India can best be envisioned by making a distinction between "hard" and "soft" cultural forms. "Hard" cultural forms are those that come with a set of links between value, meaning, and embodied practice, links that are difficult to break and hard to transform. "Soft" cultural forms, by contrast, are those that permit relatively easy separation of embodied performance from meaning and value, and relatively successful transformation at each level. In terms of this distinction, I would suggest that cricket is a "hard" cultural form that changes those who are socialised into it more readily than it is itself changed. 40

According to this theory "hard" cultural forms are those characterised by a tight intertwining of the performative and the discursive. In other words, Appadurai regards cricket as a practice with an external form closely dictated by its pedagogic (moral and identity-forming) function. Because the practice of cricket was so bound-up with the moral and educational discourses of Victorian England, Appadurai argues, cricket should have resisted Indian indigenization yet, on the contrary, cricket, he notes, has become "profoundly indigenized and decolonized." 41 Whereas Ashis Nandy has explained the growth and popularity of cricket in India in terms of mythic structures that underlie Indian culture and society (leading to a ready assimilation of the tempi and rhythms that characterise cricket 42), Appadurai notes several dimensions to the


40 Ibid., 24.

41 Ibid.

process of indigenization that are very much the product of modernity including "the ways in which media and language help to unyoke cricket from its 'Englishness'." He thus suggests that cricket discourse is not as stable as his initial thesis suggested.

The first stage of this process of unyoking identified by Appadurai is the emergence of vernacular radio commentary. Though the first radio coverage of cricket in India (starting in 1933) was in English, commentary in Hindi, Tamil, and Bengali began to emerge in the 1960s and was "probably the single most important instrument in the socialization of the Indian mass audience into the subtleties of the sport," resulting in a modification of English cricket terminology into a variety of vernacular syntactic structures. Radio commentary in the vernacular thus had two important cultural effects: it enabled Indians – even those in the most remote rural locations – to come into contact with what had previously been an arcane "English" game, and it resulted in the language of cricket becoming linguistically domesticated in the form of various cricket pidgins. These processes resulted in an increase in mass understanding of cricket's cultural codes. Equally relevant to this study is Appadurai's emphasis on the emergence of a canon of vernacular Indian cricket literature ("news, biographies of stars, commentaries, and instructional literature") in the creation of a mass cricket audience and to the process of cricket's indigenization:

The role of the mass vernacular literature in this process is crucial, for what these books, magazines, and pamphlets do is to create a bridge between the vernaculars and the English language, put pictures and names of foreign players into Indic scripts and syntax, and reinforce the body of "contact" terms. English terms transliterated into Hindi, Marathi, or Tamil, heard on the radio. Some of these materials also are instructional and contain elaborate diagrams and verbal texts that explain the various strokes, styles, rules, and logics of cricket to readers who may know no English. This vernacularization process, which I have examined most closely with a body of materials in Marathi, provide a verbal repertoire that allows large numbers of Indians to

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43 Appadurai, 25.
experience cricket as a linguistically familiar form, thus liberating cricket from the very "Englishness" that first gave it its moral authority and intrigue.  

Appadurai places indigenous radio, television and literary representations of cricket within patterns of post-colonial, counter-hegemonic subversion. But Appadurai develops this argument further by proposing a dialectical relationship between discourse and practice that is manifest at the level of bodily hexis. Through the workings of these media, cricket discourse and terminology is inscribed upon the body of those that play cricket in streets and villages "as a site of language use and experience." Cricket is not only vernacularized but the sport's discourses are projected into "the bodily practices and body-related fantasies of many young Indian males." At the level of both cultural reception and bodily performance therefore, the pedagogic and disciplinary discourse of cricket is transformed into a crucial instrument of post-colonial subjectivity and agency.

Another illuminating and deeply suggestive approach to the relationship between cricket as discourse and performance has come from Ian Baucom in a chapter of his book on Englishness and empire, Out of Place: The Locations of English Identity. Central to the overall thesis of Baucom's work is his identification of six seemingly disparate cultural spaces - Gothic architecture, the Victorian Terminus in Bombay, the Anglo-Indian Mutiny Pilgrimage, the cricket field, the country house and the zone of urban riot - "each of which," according to Baucom, "housed the disciplinary projects of imperialism and the imperial destabilizations and re-formations of English identity." In terms of his analysis of the cricket field as a

44Ibid., 36.

45Ibid., 38.

place both of imperial accomplishment and instability, Baucom focuses upon the destabilising work of the performative within the pedagogic and does so through a reading of James's Beyond a Boundary. Before doing so, however, he traces a brief history of nineteenth and twentieth century cricket and cricket writing, focusing upon the sport's ability to fashion hegemonic ideals of English masculine identity and the literary construction of the cricket field as an auratic and identity-inscribing locale. Yet despite cricket's ability to present a positive staging of Englishness and empire, its imperial role – the fact that the cricket field was transported to the colonies as part of the identity (re)-forming and disciplinary procedures of empire – necessarily meant that it was an unstable space that was susceptible to imperial revision and transformation. Baucom's reading of Beyond a Boundary correctly places emphasis on the importance of James's fully formulated aesthetic of cricket, identifying that for James, the sport's bodily movement "complicates its relation to a discourse of cultural discipline." 47 Yet for James, he argues, the pedagogical (or discursive) and the performative are not absolutely distinguishable from one another, neither are the categories of Englishness and Caribbeanness; rather, James suggests, "they exist in a condition of constant oscillation across one another's spaces," resisting binary oppositions "by persistently crossing terms, by reading Englishness as an unbounded and unpossessed space available to reinscription and reinvention by the Caribbean, and by animating pedagogy as a performance." 48

In this analysis Baucom provides an important counter-argument to essentialist interpretations of James such as that of Manthia Diawara who has read James as proposing an absolute dichotomy between a pedagogic Englishness and a

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47Ibid., 160.

48Ibid., 159.
performative and resistant Blackness.\textsuperscript{49} In comparison to Appadurai’s thesis, Baucom is less concerned with the language and terminology of cricket discourse as a site of resistance (a reflection, of course, of the difference between cricket in polyglot India and in the English-speaking Caribbean); instead, Baucom is concerned more with resistant adaptations of cricket’s performative grammar, the subversive ways that James’s cast of great West Indies cricketers played in such a way so as to reveal new means of enacting cricket’s givenness. But even this slight difference in emphasis between Appadurai and Baucom’s analyses itself reveals a shared perception of an almost symbiotic relationship between the discursive and the performative in cricket. Whilst not denying the usefulness of Appadurai and Baucom’s dialectical understanding of the discursive and the performative in the analysis of the counter-hegemonic appropriation of cricket in the former colonies, it is important to recognise that discourse is an important means through which the performative is conceptualised and accorded particular ideological and cultural meanings.

\textbf{Antonio Gramsci, Pierre Bourdieu and the Cricket Field}

As in the work of Appadurai and Baucom, the theoretical approach to the relationship between discourse and practice adopted in this thesis derives in part from the work of Pierre Bourdieu. In addition, as has been noted, Gramsci’s theory of hegemony also provides a means of understanding patterns of incorporation and resistance through cricket. There is therefore a need to briefly consider the theoretical compatibility of these two thinkers in order to reach a useful theoretical synthesis. In recent years cultural analysis of sport emanating from Britain has been dominated by hegemony theory. For example, in his seminal study of television sport, Gary

Whannel advocates a view of culture as neither simply imposed from above or generated from below, but as a site of struggle between dominant and subordinate groups. Following the example of Tony Bennett, Whannel views sport as a site of hegemonic contestation within a broader struggle between the dominant group’s attempts to retain hegemony and the response of the subordinate groups to this struggle.\(^{50}\) Such uses of Gramscian hegemony theory have positioned themselves against structuralist theories of linguistics and ideology (emphasising determination and control), theories that claim sport does nothing but reproduce dominant social relations. According to another Gramscian theorist of sport, John Hargreaves, the problem with such approaches is:

Sport is viewed as a totally ideological phenomenon, totally controlled by, and working in the interests of, the dominant class without limit. There is little or no conception of a dialectic between dominant groups attempting to control and use sport, and subordinate groups with their own responses to such attempts, so there is no real explanation of conflict surrounding sports, of their differentiated nature, and little sense either of sport and culture as material processes.\(^{51}\)

Hargeaves correctly identifies sport as a field of contestation and negotiation rather than of overt social control but, in a footnote to this passage, cites Bourdieu as an advocate of structuralist reproduction theory. This is misleading because Bourdieu clearly positioned himself against structuralist and post-structuralist accounts of culture. Whilst recognising that such accounts were superior to idealist conceptions of culture, and that they provided a starting point for social analysis, Bourdieu attempted to transcend the dichotomy between the two. As Randal Johnson has argued, Bourdieu sought to develop a concept of the agent free from the voluntarism and


idealism of subjectivist accounts and a concept of social space free from the deterministic and mechanistic causality inherent in many objectivist approaches. Thus Bourdieu's concept of habitus was developed as an alternative to idealist accounts of subject and consciousness and to structuralism in which the agent was reduced to a "bearer" (the Althusserian Trager) or effect of structure.52

To identify an error in Hargreaves's conflation of Althusserian structuralism and the quite distinct and consciously differentiated theoretical position offered by Bourdieu is not to make any direct connection between the latter and Gramscian hegemony theory. However, much as these two theoretical positions emerged from distinct historical and political contexts, here it is argued that Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, fields, position-taking, and so on are not theoretically incompatible with Gramscian hegemony theory. Both theorists understood systems of political domination and power as diffuse: for Gramsci, they enact themselves through the workings of civil society, including culture; for Bourdieu, through areas of cultural practice. Gramsci's conception of the role of culture in maintaining and perpetuating class hegemonies by rendering perceptions of inequality as "common sense" is compatible with Bourdieu's understanding of culture's role in the reproduction of social structures and misrecognised unequal power relations. As Gramsci claimed, hegemony is "an order in which a certain way of life and thought is dominant ...informing with its spirit all taste, morality, customs, religious and political principles and all social relations."53 This formulation is consistent with Bourdieu's similarly diffusional theory of power in which power, although often concealed, finds


expression in all areas of cultural practice, and particularly in matters of taste. Unlike structuralist theorists, both writers see the possibility of "counter-hegemonic" activity (Gramsci) or "acts of resistance" (Bourdieu) within the cultural field. Indeed, the work of a cultural theorist such as Stuart Hall has revealed these points of theoretical confluence between Gramsci and Bourdieu. In plotting a theoretical position between structuralism and New Left culturalism (with its emphasis on agency and experience), Hall advocated a synthesis through the Gramscian concept of Hegemony. As Jennifer Hargreaves has noted, for Hall and others working at the C.C.C.S., hegemony theory "provided the potential for understanding both the liberative and controlling features of culture." 54 Significantly, at the same time Hall saw a similar potential for theoretical synthesis in the work of Bourdieu. As Derek Robbins has pointed out, "Hall implied that Bourdieu's work potentially offered a way forward for cultural theory beyond the conflicting legacies of wholly internal or wholly external analyses of symbolic systems." 55

With this in mind it is possible to construct a model of the cricket field in the manner of Bourdieu by freezing history around about 1900. Firstly, we can detect a Bourdieusian homology between the late Victorian cricket field and the broader cultural field by understanding it as "the economic world reversed." 56 With the establishment of amateur hegemony (the official historiography of cricket has elided the dominance of professionals in cricket before the 1880s), cricket discourse –


discourse that according to Bourdieu was “fully bound up with the struggle for social power”\textsuperscript{57}—shifted to a disavowal of the economic realities of the present and increasingly placed emphasis on the accumulation of symbolic capital. Cricket discourse legitimised and consecrated the sport as a symbol of Englishness and the bonds of empire, whilst the image of the gentleman cricketer was constructed as embodying intersecting hegemonic ideals of moral probity and normative masculinity. Discourses surrounding the cricket field produced a construction of Englishness based on the ideal of the gentleman amateur and the metaphoric use of the cricket field as a site of class cohesion, strictly demarcated social distinctions (based on the amateur/professional divide) but equality under the laws. Writings on cricket (though themselves implicated within the growing sports and media industries identified by Bourdieu\textsuperscript{58}) were consequently strongly critical of any perceived commercialisation of the sport and, although amateurs actually earned far more money than professionals, amateurism was defined in terms of symbolic, rather than economic, capital. Though in reality the cricket field was to an extent penetrated by commercial values and imperatives, a series of what Bourdieu called doxic discourses surrounding the field disavowed this economy.\textsuperscript{59} Within this logic winning or losing a match was less important than the way one played the game (almost a Bourdieusian “winner loses logic”). In cricket discourse emphasis was placed on the notion of “fair play”, gentlemanly conduct, as well as on a particular style of play, a style that was strongly associated with the amateur gentleman ideal. On the pages of descriptive essays,

\textsuperscript{57}Bourdieu, Distinction, 211.


match reports and coaching manuals, this emphasis on style meant that a distinctively bourgeois ideology of the body characterised by graceful movement, economy of effort and leisured ease, was produced and reproduced through cricket. A doxic discourse had emerged around cricket that was crucial in terms of its reproduction as a symbol of Englishness.

In his writings on sport and leisure Bourdieu was mainly concerned with cultural production and consumption in late twentieth century France. However, he also drew attention to the transformation of popular sports into elite sports in the British public schools in the mid-nineteenth century, a process that entailed a change of meaning and function, endowing sports like association football, rugby, and particularly cricket with a pedagogic function.60 This transformation in the meaning and function of sports again demonstrates Hall’s understanding of culture as a site of hegemonic contestation. In Bourdieu’s schema, because of class and individual *habitus* (a particular disposition or “feel for the game” that is transposed into the specific logic of a field) a sport (or any cultural practice) does not mean the same thing for all who practise it, watch it, or read about it.61 Bourdieusian *habitus* is a complex and rather ambiguous concept that is nevertheless of great usefulness in understanding the exact complexion of counter-hegemonic transformations and appropriations of cultural practices. It has particular relevance to scholars of sport because it denies the mind/body separation that characterises Western cultural thought and was originally used by Bourdieu in relation to dancing.62 As has already been suggested, Bourdieu’s concept avoids both the voluntarism and idealism of

60Bourdieu, “Sport and Social Class,” 823.

61Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 209.

subjectivist (idealist) accounts (those which posit the agent as transcending their socio-historical ground) and notions of deterministic and mechanistic causality inherent in many structuralist approaches. Bourdieu defined *habitus* as the system of

...durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organise practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. Objectively “regulated” and “regular” without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organising action of a conductor.63

Bourdieu sometimes described the *habitus* as a “feel for the game” or a “practical sense” that leads an agent or player to perform within the specific logic of a particular field in a way that it is not necessarily calculated, and is not merely a matter of deliberate or conscious adherence to rules. Instead, Bourdieusian *habitus* is a particular disposition, the outcome of a process of inculcation going back to early childhood, a “second sense” that may be transformed into the specific logic of a number of different fields. As both “structured structures” and “structuring structures”, these dispositions incorporate the objective social conditions of their inculcation and have the ability to generate practices within fields. Because of *habitus*, official (usually bourgeois and metropolitan) discourses have been historically unable to confer on sport some essential, universal and indisputable meaning, though they usually claim that their authority derives from the inherent nature of the field.64

In conjunction with its trinity of theoretical concepts, the work of Gramsci and Bourdieu run like intertwined threads through this thesis. The threads are at times more clearly visible than at others, but nevertheless consistently inform its insights

63 Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 5.

64 Ibid., 209-218.
and arguments. Although it lies outside the period of this study, the usefulness of such
an approach to an understanding of cricket as discourse and practice is brought out by
consideration of the Kerry Packer affair in the late 1970s. The Packer affair is here
treated as a significant “discursive event” through which the meaning of cricket was
renegotiated. Throughout the twentieth century the field of Australian cricket had
been discursively characterised by an uneasy compromise between the acceptance of
professionalism and an adherence to doxic notions of the sport as inalienable. In 1977,
having failed in his attempt to secure the right to televise international cricket from
the Australian Cricket Board, the wealthy media magnate, Kerry Packer, used his
considerable economic capital to induce a majority of the world’s leading cricketers to
join his own, specially-created cricket league. Packer’s “World Series Cricket” (or
“Circus” as its many traditionalist critics dubbed it) introduced a series of innovations
such as floodlit matches, coloured clothing for the players, a white ball and fielding
restrictions aimed at increasing the number of boundaries scored. Packer’s
innovations did not stop at the transformation of the sport’s forms and structures but
infiltrated and modified the game’s discourses and codes. Cherished and supposedly
inalienable doxa such as the notions of fair play and sportsmanship made way for the
values of winning at all costs and an overt commitment to professionalism and
commodification. At the same time, a crowd culture emerged at World Series Cricket
matches that was notably vociferous, partisan and openly jingoistic. Packer’s dispute
with the Australian Cricket Board – which was represented in the Australian and
English sporting press as a bastion of cricketing tradition - represented a series of
agonistics or disagreements as to what truly constituted the meaning of cricket. The
English cricket establishment (who had happily sold the T.V. rights of a recent home
Test Series against Australia to Packer) and most English cricket writers sided with
the Australian Board, frequently describing the affair in neo-colonial terms, with Packer cast as the personification of an emergent, rapacious Australian-ness. In discourses surrounding the dispute, the forces of commodification and accumulation so at odds with the official cricket ethos were projected onto the former colonies. Tony Greig - the South African born England Test captain who had secretly acted as Packer’s English recruiting sergeant - was partially excused his act of betrayal by one writer by dint of the fact that he was “an Englishman only by adoption.” To Christopher Martin-Jenkins, “As the French Revolution could never have occurred in England because of the greater flexibility of British society, so the Packer revolution could never have begun in England because of the camaraderie of county cricket.”

When, after two years of legal dispute, the Australian Board eventually made an agreement with Packer, they were accused by many traditionalists as having sold cricket’s soul. The former Wisden editor, Graeme Wright, described the board’s capitulation as a shameless and consensual acquiescence to the advances of Packer’s brazen commodification:

Now Australian cricket had chosen to stand on its head, and it cared not whom saw the colour of its underwear. As this would not always be white, it could be taken for granted that Australian cricket had forsaken any pretensions of purity. Its marriage to Packer may not have been a love match, but it went into the union with its legs wide open.

The use of this gendered imagery, in which femininity signifies immorality and greed, figures a state of affairs in which any residual adherence to the cricketing doxa of moral manliness has supposedly been turned upside down. Such retrospective

65Graeme Wright, Betrayal: The Struggle for Cricket’s Soul (London: Cassell, 1993), 114.


67Wright, 118.
accounts of the Packer affair, in which the issue of commodification is subsumed into binaries of nationality and gender, were part of a broader agonistics of the cricket field in which the implications of Packer were seen as a revolutionary threat to the game’s core values. However, recourse to a Gramscian/Bourdiesian interpretation reveals a different interpretation. There is no doubt that Packer’s intervention into the relatively autonomous field of Australian cricket represented an increased commodification of the field. Packer’s intervention led to a shift of power within the field from the relatively autonomous to the heteronomous pole. Although Australian cricket had hitherto been administered by elected amateur officials, the effect of Packer was for Australian cricket to be taken over by agents with strong media and business interests and for its administration to be given over to individuals and groups whose cultural capital derived from the economic, media and legal fields, rather than that of sport (Packer himself was briefly in charge of the Australian Cricket Board).

The idea of the Packer affair as a revolutionary upheaval in the practice of cricket, however, requires closer scrutiny. Packer had become interested in cricket in 1975 when the first World Cup was held in England, a one-day tournament that commanded a massive global television audience. The 1970s witnessed a significant T.V.-driven popularisation of cricket that began well before Packer. Likewise, the “creation” of a more vociferous and nationalistic Australian cricket audience was not inaugurated by Packer but had long historical antecedents. After the great Anglo-Indian batsman, Ranjitsinjhi had visited Australia in 1898 with A.E. Stoddart’s team, he recalled encountering this alternative discourse surrounding the cricket field:

The only regrettable incident of the match to which reference must be made in this narrative of our tour, was the merciless “barracking” of which I was the recipient during my first innings in the match. I was at the wickets for about a
quarter of an hour, and during the whole of that time uncomplimentary and insulting remarks were hurled at me from all parts of the field.\textsuperscript{68}

Packer was clearly tapping into an already well-established alternative culture of spectatorship that had always been at odds with the sport's dominant moral and aesthetic codes. Through Packer's active encouragement of this culture in the marketing of World Series Cricket, an assertive partisan sense of Australian-ness continued to be produced and reproduced around the cricket field, now with a greater emphasis on youth participation. As far as Packer revolutionising the aesthetics of cricket with his introduction of coloured clothing into the game, this again needs to be placed in a historical context. As one of Packer's greatest critics, Christopher Martin-Jenkins (who coined the pejorative term "pyjama cricket") noted, "...as late as the second half of the nineteenth century coloured shirts were the accepted cricket dress in England ..." The white shirts and flannels so closely associated with the dominant cricket aesthetic, symbolising the "lily-white" moral values of the game and those who played it, were in fact a classic invention of tradition that had emerged from the Victorian reinvention of the game discussed in chapter one. The sense of trauma induced in many cricket writers by the Packer "revolution" is revealed by Martin-Jenkins's subsequent statement: "Yet it was not easy to be objective at the time. Packer had overturned the established order of things."\textsuperscript{69} However, a more accurate reading of Packer is as a figure who established an alternative hegemony by cleverly exploiting and manipulating already existing elements of both Australian and global popular cricket culture.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[68]Prince Ranjitsinhji, \textit{With Stoddart's Team in Australia} (London: Constable & Company, 1985), 186. For a history of the "barracking" tradition in Australia see Richard Cashman, \textit{'Ave a Go Yer Mug!: Australian Cricket Crowds from larrikin to ocker} (Sydney: Collins, 1984).

\item[69]Martin-Jenkins, 50.
\end{footnotes}
Although the Packer affair lies outside the historical period of this study and was an example of the power of the modern mass media and global business interests to penetrate and refashion the field of cricket, it shows in a pronounced way that at the level of discourse, a series of agonistics or negotiations can arise as to what constitutes the legitimate meaning of the cricket field. If the writers and journalists who represented the institution of cricket figured the events in the language of trauma and revolution, it was because it was perceived to seriously challenge a series of long-standing doxa, a discourse which had become constitutive of the modern institution of cricket, but was nevertheless always subject to reinterpretation and revision.

The thesis is structured around the analysis of a series of historical moments (such as The Great War and the 1926 General Strike), “discursive events” (for instance, the “Bodyline” Test Series of 1932-33), and key writers and texts. The analysis also identifies recurring rhetorical strategies and tropes within the changing patterns of cricket discourse. These analyses reveal that the discursive meaning of cricket as a symbol of nation and empire was a matter of constant renegotiation, and was consistently produced and reproduced as a response to perceptions of socio-economic, political and cultural crisis. What now follows is a synopsis of the chapters that constitute this project and an explication of how they relate with one another. Chapter one is a broad overview of the emergence of cricket discourse and traces the development of cricket’s literaturisation, aestheticisation and the construction of the sport’s literary canon. Firstly, in order to provide an historical background to the emergence of these processes, a number of the earliest written references to cricket are examined to suggest that cricket initially emerged into life as a national pastime through prohibition and censure. The chapter will then show that from the middle of the eighteenth century, having emerged from obscurity to prominence through its
discursive repression, cricket began to be inscribed within various genres of literary discourse as a symbol of nation. The chapter will then argue that from about 1820, cricket began to undergo processes of literaturisation and aestheticisation. These processes are shown to have been crucial elements in the bourgeois appropriation of cricket. Finally, it shows that the construction of cricket's literary canon in the second half of the nineteenth century formed part of a broader context of cultural and literary nationalism in which the concept of "Englishness" was produced as a panacea to a series of contemporary ideological tensions.

Chapters two and three are more historically focused case studies that explore the relationship between inter-war cricket discourse and its broader literary, cultural and socio-economic context. Despite cricket's ongoing ability to discursively reproduce itself as a symbol of Englishness, key historical events such as the Great War, the 1926 General Strike and factors such as the rise of communism and fascism, commodification, debates about the countryside and the changing balance of class forces are all shown to have disturbed the English imaginary so closely associated with the cricket field in literary culture. In chapter two the work of a number of influential cricket writers, anthologists, editors and historians are examined to suggest that the literaturisation, aestheticisation and canonisation of cricket were intensified during the period as the organic and socially homogenous national culture represented by the cricket field was perceived to be threatened by a series of cultural, political and socio-economic factors. Chapter three further develops this theme by focusing on the work of Neville Cardus, cricket's most critically celebrated writer whose work forms the keystone of the sport's literary canon. By contextualising Cardus's writings, this chapter argues that the cricket discourse of the period registered, refracted and
attempted to symbolically resolve a series of intense cultural, social and political tensions.

Chapter four extends the analysis of cricket writing in relation to the vitally important cultural and social role of cricket within the former British Empire. The literaturisation, aestheticisation and canonisation of cricket are here revealed as having important imperial dimensions. In order to do so, the chapter will be structured around the analysis of a number of key texts and "discursive events". Firstly, examples of various forms of literature such as newspaper reports, instructional books, fiction and poetry are viewed as testifying to the important textual dimension of cricket's spread within the British Empire. These texts are shown to have been instrumental, not only in cricket's dissemination and acculturisation, but also in terms of cricket's self-representation as a hegemonic cultural form within the imagined community of empire. Here it is argued that these texts constructed the imperial cricket field as a place of accomplishment, endowed this cultural space with the ability to transform the identities of male colonial subjects in accordance with ideals of English civility, and hence rendered it a place symbolising the strength of empire. However, the remainder of the chapter considers the various ways that cricket discourse mediated anxieties about the bonds of empire. The second section considers representations of a number of colonial cricket tours, seeing these events as important discursive events that frequently gave way to a troubled dialogue concerning English national identity and the meaning of the colonial relationship. To further develop this theme the third section analyses representations of two great colonial cricketers, the Indian, Prince Kumar Shri Ranjitsinhji, and the Trinidadian, Sir Learie Constantine – figures who were important mediators of empire as cricketers, texts and writers. Here attention is given to the ways in which a distinctively colonial aesthetic of cricket was
perceived by metropolitan commentators as representing a performative reinvigoration of the moribund idioms of English cricket. At the same time, the bodily performance of a player such as Constantine is shown to have produced colonial anxieties concerning the ability of the cricket field to civilise and fashion identity. This section of the chapter articulates closely with earlier parts of the thesis by placing this metropolitan aestheticisation of colonial cricket in the context of cultural crisis discussed in chapters two and three. Finally, the chapter concludes with an analysis of the discourses surrounding the “Bodyline” Test Series in 1932-33, a discursive event through which the legitimacy of the imperial relationship symbolised by the cricket field was both challenged and reasserted at a time of acute imperial instability.

Chapter five focuses upon the process of aestheticisation and the idea of the canon of cricket literature by analysing the seminal work of C.L.R. James. It begins by positioning James’s work in relation to the canon, and particularly the writings of Cardus. This suggests the extent to which James’s work was both implicated in, and sought to subvert, the canon. It then analyses James’s important, immediately post-colonial essay, “Garfield Sobers”. Here James’s subversion of the canon produced an aestheticisation of cricket which transcended the exclusive class and racial politics of English cricket discourse. Finally, it provides a critique of James’s theoretically problematic aesthetic, arguing that his major contribution to the discourse of cricket is an implicit theorisation of the relationship between cricket as discourse and cricket as embodied practice. After a concluding chapter in which some further avenues of research are suggested, there is an extensive bibliography which, it is hoped, may be of use to other scholars of cricket and its literature.
CHAPTER ONE

“MORE MIGHTY THAN THE BAT. THE PEN...”: CULTURE, HEGEMONY AND THE LITERATURISATION OF CRICKET

More mighty than the bat, the pen,
And mightier still as we grow old,
And hence I needs must scribble when
I’d fain be bowling – or be bowled.
Yet thoughts, whate’er the task, will stray,
To work they never wholly yield;
And mine, on every sunny day,
Are in the field, are in the field!

The quotation forming part of the title of this chapter is taken from “Alleviation”, a poem first published in 1898 in a collection of cricket verse and prose entitled Willow and Leather. Its author, E.V. Lucas, was one of several cricket bellestrists working at this time whose oeuvre nevertheless went well beyond the boundary of cricket to include biography, travel writing, articles on food and drink, arts criticism and fiction. In this modest octet Lucas wistfully contrasts his youthful cricketing exploits with the more mundane realities of his work as a professional writer. Typical of so many English cricket lyrics in its nostalgic evocation of youth, Lucas’s cricket field figures a lost past that is nevertheless somehow retrievable. In this sense it is not merely an imaginative refuge from the everyday demands of his literary work, but a metaphor of England itself, a generic space of memory, an always and everywhere available “spot of time” that draws the reader into a shared discourse of English remembrance.

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Equally significant is the opening line in which two images, the bat and the pen, through the logic of synecdoche, figure two cultural fields that have played particularly privileged and significant roles in the historical construction of Englishness. Taken admittedly somewhat out of context, this opening line hints at a fundamental question about the relationship between cricket and literature. Is there somehow a unique, but unequal, relationship between cricket and the literary field - a relationship in which the representation of a sporting practice has a peculiarly significant role in defining its cultural meaning? Is there truth in that irresistibly idiosyncratic historian Benny Green’s view that, “Not only does cricket, more than any other game, inspire the urge to literary expression; it is almost as though the game itself would not exist at all until written about?”\(^2\)

Using Lucas and Green’s highly suggestive words as a point of departure, this chapter will explore four aspects of the historical relationship between cricket and literature. In terms of chronology this will necessarily entail something of a “broad brush” approach. Firstly, by examining some of the earliest reliable written references to cricket, it will suggest that cricket initially emerged into life as a national pastime in part through discourses of prohibition and censure. In this sense the emergence of cricket typified Michel Foucault’s stress on the role of repression in the creation of a proliferation of discourse. The chapter will then go on to show that from the middle of the eighteenth century, having emerged from obscurity to prominence through its discursive repression, cricket began to be inscribed as a symbol of nation. Secondly, it will argue that from about 1820 cricket began to undergo processes of literaturisation and aestheticisation - processes of inscription and cultural validation that were crucial elements in the national dissemination and acculturisation of cricket, and in what

C.L.R. James and other historians have identified as the middle class appropriation of the sport. Thirdly, it will suggest that as these two interconnected processes intensified during the Victorian period, cricket was gradually transformed into a pedagogic discourse in which the cricket field became inscribed by the pen as an image of the national community and constructed as a hegemonic cultural practice able to discipline the minds and bodies of English males. Here cricket writing is shown to have been a crucial element in the production of the discourse of “Muscular Christianity”. However, this section also shows that the discourse of cricket could produce nuanced negotiations as to the legitimate definition of English masculinity. Finally, the chapter will argue that in the second half of the nineteenth century, many of cricket’s most influential cultural gatekeepers began retrospectively to organise the sport’s discourses in the shape of a literary canon and to construct a historiography of cricket. These processes are shown to have articulated closely with a broader context of literary nationalism in which the idea of “Englishness” was increasingly being called upon to reconcile a series of ideological anxieties and tensions.

The Emergence of Cricket Discourse

The point that the printed word played a major part in cricket’s acculturisation during the Victorian and Edwardian period has been well made by, amongst others, Keith Sandiford and Ian Baucom. In *The Long Revolution*, as established a cultural historian as Raymond Williams drew attention not only to the rapid growth of print

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3C.L.R. James, *Beyond a Boundary*, 149-184.

culture in the nineteenth century, but to the way that the expansion of the sporting press was fed by the rapid increase in sports journalism.\(^5\) As Baucom has pointed out, though thousands flocked to see W.G. Grace play, many more thousands read about him.\(^6\) By the end of the 19th century, with cricket established as the pre-eminent national sport and as a symbol of the strength and unity of empire, the great Anglo-Indian batsman and popular cricket author, Prince Kumar Shri Ranjitsinhji, testified not only to the spectacular nature of the sport but also to the productive union of cricket and print. In his highly successful *Jubilee Book of Cricket* (1897) he wrote:

“There are very few newspaper readers who do not turn to the cricket column first when the morning journal comes; who do not buy a halfpenny evening paper to find out how many runs W.G. or Bobby Abel has made.”\(^7\)

Cricket was by now an intensely literary phenomenon. In a poem written after the publication of Ranjitsinhji’s book, Alfred Cochrane testified to its popularity, and to the status of its author as a living oriental trope:

To buy it all the people press  
With a despairing eagerness  
That borders on the tragic;  
All men peruse with sighs and vows,  
And Towel about their brows,  
This work of Eastern magic\(^8\)

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\(^6\) Baucom, 152-153.


However, to chart the emergence of the relationship between cricket and the printed word there is a need to historically backtrack from the hegemonic role of the sporting press in the late Victorian period to examine some of the earliest existing written references to the game, some of which are reproduced in modern anthologies of cricket writing. What is most striking for the literary historian is that the majority of these references relate to its unlawful status. As well as being a corrective to the misguided notion that cricket has always enjoyed an exalted status, they show the game as almost emerging into life from discourses of prohibition and censure. For example, The Maiden Corporation Court Book of 1562 contains a charge against John Porter alias Brown, and a servant, for “playing an unlawful game called ‘clycett.’”\(^9\) In 1622 an indictment by a Chichester churchwarden charged a group of men for playing on the following grounds: “first, for it is contrarie to the 7th Article; second, for that they are used to break the Church window with the balls; and thirdly, for that little children had like to have their braynes beaten out with the cricket batt.”\(^10\) In 1629, having been censured for playing “at Cricketts”, the curate of Ruckinge in Kent unsuccessfully defended himself on the grounds that it was a game played by men of quality. But a Puritan minister, Thomas Wilson, thought cricket an activity wholly unsuited to the clergy and regarded Maidstone as “very prophane town where Morrice-dancing, Cudgels, Stoolball, Crickets …” were played “openly and publickly on the Lord’s Day.”\(^11\) Cricket was here emerging in a written sense, not through the form of a celebratory discourse, but as the target of Puritan and Sabbatarian ire. Even


in the first reliable literary reference to cricket - in *The Mysteries of Love and Eloquence* (1658) by John Milton’s nephew, Edward Philips, the game is represented as synonymous with brutality: “Ay, but Richard, will you not think so hereafter? Will you not when you have me throw a stool at my head, and cry, ‘Would my eyes had been beaten out with a cricket ball [batt?], the day before I saw thee.”

With a relaxation of attitudes towards sports at the Restoration, cricket began to emerge from its position of relative obscurity with the printed word starting to define it, along with other folk games, as an element of the national culture. Edward Chamberlyne’s *Anglia notitia*, a handbook on the social and political conditions of England, lists cricket as a pastime of “Inhabitants” for the first time in the eighteenth edition of 1694: “The natives will endure long and hard labour; insomuch, that after 12 hours hard work, they will go in the evening to foot-ball, stool-ball, cricket, prison-base, wrestling, cudgel-playing, or some such like vehement exercise, for their recreation.” At the same time, newspaper notices of more organised and formal matches began to appear, testifying not only to the increasing acceptability and popularity of the sport and to the considerable sums of money often at stake, but to the role of the printed word in transforming cricket from a relatively obscure folk game into an organised cultural activity occupying a public space.

Nevertheless, as has been well documented, the status of cricket in the eighteenth century remained a matter of discursive contestation. Cricket was continuing to gradually emerge as an element of the national culture in part through

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12 Brookes, 22.

13 *Anglia notitia: or, the present state of England; with divers remarks upon the ancient state therof*, (London: T.Hodgkin, 1694), 78.

discourses of moral censure. Puritans in particular continued to condemn the game as an abomination with the aristocracy’s increased involvement in cricket invoking the strongest wrath. In 1712 a tract entitled “The Devil and his Peers, or a Princely Way of Sabbath Breaking”, recounted “a famous cricket match between the Duke of M ..., another Lord and two boys, for twenty guineas.” The pamphlet goes on to condemn gambling, Sabbath-breaking and electoral corruption.15 Another Puritan tract of the same year included a fantastic cautionary tale warning young men of the dangers of Sunday cricket:

Being a very dismal Account of four Young-Men, who made a Match to Play at Cricket, on Sunday the 6th of this Instant July 1712, in a meadow near Maiden-Head Thicket; and as they were at Play, there arose out of the Ground a Man in Black with a Cloven-Foot, which put them in a great Consternation; but as they stood in the Frighted Condition, the Devil flew up in the Air, in a Dark Cloud with Flashes of fire, and in his Room he left a very Beautiful Woman, and Robert Yates and Richard Moors hastily stepping up to her, being Charm’d with her Beauty went to kiss her, but in the Attempt they instantly fell down Dead.

The other two, Simon Jackson and George Grantham, seeing this Tragical Sight, ran home to Maiden-Head, where they now lye in a Distracted Condition.16

There were also economic reasons for condemning cricket. For some businessmen, the well-publicised “great matches” that were by now attracting vast crowds, were to be condemned for encouraging widespread absenteeism and for providing the occasion for an unhealthy mingling of the social ranks. A contributor to the Gentleman’s Magazine in 1743 thought cricket “a very innocent, and wholesome exercise” but its popularity was threatening family life and encouraging “a spirit of idleness at a juncture, when, with the utmost industry, our debts, taxes, and decay of

15Brookes, 75.

trade, will scarcely allow us to get bread."17 In 1756 an article in *The Connoisseur* took a dim view of gentlemanly participation in cricket and other sports:

The most striking instance of this low passion for drollery is Toby Bumper, a young fellow of family and fortune, and not without talents, who has taken more than ordinary pains to degrade himself ... He is frequently engaged in the Artillery-ground with Faulkner and Dingate at cricket, and is himself esteemed as good a bat as either of the Bennets.18

In his satirical poetic vision of cultural chaos, *The Dunciad* (1742), Alexander Pope lampooned the fact that members of the ruling class were prepared to associate themselves with a game of such low reputation:

The Judge to dance his brother Sergeant call;
The Senator at Cricket urge the Ball;\(^19\)

Between 1650 and 1750 therefore, what was happening around cricket, to quote Foucault, was a "discursive ferment": a multiplicity of discourses emanating from various mechanisms and institutions such as the Church, the legal system, business interests and the expanding popular press, were driving this once obscure folk game out of hiding and demanding that it lead a discursive existence. The once dubious status of cricket, its associations with violence and Sabbath-breaking, seems to have been nothing less than a Foucauldian "incitement to discourse."20 With cricket thus becoming the object of knowledge, even the early written "articles of agreement" and laws of cricket (which began to appear from the late 1720s) were a means of


ensuring efficient gambling practices free from dispute. The result was to begin to standardise the way the sport was played and, although not the prime intention, ensure that subsequently it could be disseminated and practised uniformly on a national basis.

Once this process of dissemination had begun to occur, and once cricket became the object of literary attention in the context of an expanding national print culture, the way was clear for it to be more systematically redefined in the interests of nationalism. Although in 1671 the philologist, Stephen Skinner, had calmly proposed French derivations both for the game and its name,21 by 1755, in Samuel Johnson’s *Dictionary of the English Language*, the sport was being Anglified as deriving from the Anglo-Saxon “cryce”, meaning a “stick”.22 Already in the 1740s the game was being explicitly treated as a symbol of British national identity in the first full-length poetic description of a cricket match, James Love’s *Cricket: an heroic poem*. Framed within the conventions of a Homeric battle scene, cricket is legitimised as a suitably manly pursuit that is worthy of its status as a national pastime:

Hail Cricket! glorious, manly, *British game*!
First of all Sports! be first alike in Fame!.

As the author’s emphasis suggests, here cricket seemingly embodies the peculiarly British qualities of manliness and athleticism - qualities that are equated with the nation’s political freedom and stand in opposition to, but are also threatened by, the supposedly emasculating influences of European culture:

Leave the dissolving Song, the baby Dance,
To soothe the Slaves of *Italy* and *France*:


While the firm Limb, and strong brac’d Nerve are thine.
Scorn Eunuch Sports; to manlier Games incline;
Feed on the Joys that Health and Vigour give;
Where Freedom reigns, ‘tis worth the while to live.23

It was cricket’s quintessential Englishness that Wordsworth evoked in his
sonnet of 1802 entitled “composed in the valley near Dover, on the day of landing”,
one of a series of poems “Dedicated to National Independence and Liberty” written
after Wordsworth had renounced his early revolutionary views. Here, a boys’
meadowland cricket match is one of a series of images figuring an idealised pastoral
England. This landscape symbolises political freedom in contrast to abjected post-
revolutionary France from which the disenchanted speaker has just returned:

Dear fellow Traveller! Here we are once more.
The cock that crows, the smoke that curls, that sound
Of bells, those boys that in yon meadow ground
In white sleeved shirts are playing by the score,
And even this little River’s gentle roar,
All, all are English. Oft have I looked round
With joy in Kent’s green vales; but never found
Myself so satisfied in heart before.
Europe is yet in bounds; but let that pass
Thought for another moment. Thou art free,
My Country! And ‘tis joy enough and pride
For one hour’s perfect bliss, to tread the grass
Of England once again, and hear and see,
With such a dear Companion at my side.24

That this somewhat ambiguous reference refers to cricket is verified in the journals of
Wordsworth’s sister, Dorothy – the “dear Companion” of the poem. Her account
exemplifies the emergence of the cricket field within English literary culture as a
place of unchanging Englishness, even though there is a significant discrepancy

23 James Love, “Cricket: an heroic poem, with critical observations of
Scriblerus Maximus,” in Frewin, 460-469.

24 William Wordsworth, “composed in the valley near Dover, on the day of
landing,” in Frewin, 11.
between the sonnet's idealised image of a simple meadowland boys' game and the clearly organised and well-attended sporting spectacle here described:

When within a mile of Dover, saw crowds of people at a Cricket-match, the numerous combatants dressed in "white-sleeved shirts", and it was in the very same field where, when we "trod the grass of England" once again, twenty years ago we had seen an Assemblage of Youths engaged in the same sport, so very like the present that all might have been the same!²⁵

The influence of the Romantic Movement, of which Wordsworth was such a seminal figure, created and fed an increased interest in folk customs and culture including practices such as cricket. C.L.R. James stated that to the Victorians, cricket, like the poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge, provided an antidote to the "degrading thirst after outrageous stimulation,"²⁶ but it is important to recognise that for at least fifty years the game had been interpellated into a literary discourse that associated it with ideals of English rural life. In a poem called The Kentish Cricketers, John Burnby located the Kent versus Surrey match of 1773 in an Arcadian landscape of ineffable beauty with "matchless cricketers" in "milk-white vestments" a seemingly organic part of the landscape.²⁷ Even when cricket was associated with the, as yet unreformed, Public Schools, the literary strain was usually pastoral. Lord Byron, a keen school cricketer, wrote of cricket as an integral element of the rural scene as well as being the occasion for ritualised male-bonding.²⁸ Brief references to cricket in two dramatic works first produced in the 1790s denote the quaint bucolic charm of the


²⁷John Burnby, "The Kentish Cricketers (in 1773)," in Frewin, 439-441.

²⁸Lord Byron, "Cricket at Harrow," in Frewin, 107.
characters. Significantly, the author of one, Thomas Morton, was a member of the Marylebone Cricket Club, an urban institution which was then succeeding Hambledon as the pre-eminent legal and organisational force in the nascent field of cricket. Although, as Michael Harris has shown, in the first half of the eighteenth century print culture had played a major part in enabling cricket to become a commercialised activity closely associated with the elite groups of society and occupying the public spaces of the urban centres, as the century wore on, at the “higher” cultural end of the literary spectrum, cricket was being inscribed as something essentially anachronistic and rural. Cricket thus identified with its past at the very time that it was inaugurated as a product of modernity. Whether we consider William Blake’s illustration of a boy cricketer in “The Echoing Green” from Songs of Innocence (see figure 2), Leigh Hunt’s essay on “Cricket and other Pastimes”, or William Hazlitt’s “Merry England” in which cricket is celebrated as an element of a dying folk culture along with other practices and artefacts such as the maypole, the game was being written into existence as a legacy of a near extinct folk culture, as uncontaminated by modernity, and hence as authentically English.

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Literaturisation and Aestheticisation

With the countryside and the so-called “organic communities” threatened, a mode of popular literature emerged from the 1820s which both lamented the passing of this way of life and sought to reaffirm the values of rural communities. Works such as Cobbett’s *Rural Rides* and Mary Mitford’s *Our Village* thus contributed to a perception of the countryside and its inhabitants that was to remain deeply embedded in English literary culture. Significantly, Mitford’s book, which was initially serialised in *The Lady’s Magazine* between 1824 and 1832, contains the first comprehensive prose description of a cricket match. The emergence of such cricket narratives should therefore be understood in relation to this sense of social transformation and not merely to the growing popularity and significance of the sport.
itself. Indeed, Mitford’s book and John Nyren and Charles Cowden-Clarke’s deeply nostalgic *The Cricketers of My Time* (1832) had, as their central problematic, the perceived disappearance of the organic community. This is a significant factor for the tradition of English cricket writing because both writers have subsequently been constructed as major canonical figures, and thus (to use the concept of the canon in its original sense), as models for future writers. However, the timeless concept of the canon, in which Mitford and Nyren have been afforded the status of originators, tends to elide both the historically-determined features of these narratives, and the fact that the discursive field of cricket writing itself emerged from a period of acute anxiety about the countryside and those who lived there. Mitford’s construction of the rural cricket field, with its eroticised descriptions of blacksmith/batsmen, mediates this contemporary crisis by opposing rural masculinity to urban effeminacy, thus casting tradition and modernity in gendered terms. At the same time, as Elizabeth Helsinger has noted, there is a significant meta-fictional quality to Mitford’s writing which constantly draws attention to the rural as an object of representation. Whilst Cobbett less self-consciously attempted to render the countryside as a means of gauging the “State of the Country”, Mitford consistently treats the village as an aesthetic artefact in language that repeatedly returns to the idea of representation. Her narrative accounts frequently draw attention to their own artifice by describing themselves as “pictures” and “scenes”. As much as any feature of the village, therefore, Mitford’s cricket field has no pretensions of authenticity, rather it is a self-consciously rendered literary construction. Whilst Mitford’s country girls are often entangled in courtship - the first stage in reaching emotional and financial security - her boys and young men

32 Gregory Jusdanis, *Belated Modernity and Aesthetic Culture*, 53

can escape the hardships and uncertainties of rural life in the aestheticised space of the cricket field:

I doubt if there be any scene in the world more animating or delightful than a cricket-match: - I do not mean a set match at Lord’s Ground for money, hard money, between a certain number of gentlemen and players, as they are called - people who make a trade of that noble sport, and degrade it into an affair of bettings, and hedgings, and cheatings ... nor do I mean a pretty fete in a gentlemen’s park, where they show off in graceful costumes to a gay marquee of admiring belles ... No! the cricket that I mean is a real solid old-fashioned match between neighbouring parishes, where each attacks the other for honour and a supper, glory and half-a-crown a man.34

It is important to recognise that this frequently anthologised ur-text of cricket prose is heavily preoccupied with insisting on a particular aesthetic of cricket. The cricket episode is not simply a valorisation of cricket on the village green over and above urban, commercialised, or socially sophisticated versions of the sport (although there is clearly a struggle in the text over the legitimate meaning of cricket involving issues of town and country, commodification and masculinity) but, within the meta-fictional logic of the text, there is an insistence on a particular aesthetic of representation. However self-consciously constructed Mitford’s cricket field is, in a text which links parish and nation through a simple process of metonymic substitution (the village is described as “that goodly state, our parish!”35), the utopian place of the cricket field needs to be rendered according to a specific set of fictional conventions so it can (re)produce a particular construction of Englishness. Mitford’s cricket field in no way presents itself as a reality but as a fictional construction that nevertheless has significant symbolic capital and reconciliatory capacities at a time of traumatic social and economic transformation.


35 Ibid., 198.
As soon as cricket began to be written into an element of English national culture it became discursively endowed with aesthetic status. In the first decades of the nineteenth century, when cricket was still highly controversial due to its associations with gambling, violence and absenteeism, literary culture was endowing the game with a degree of cultural validation by associating it with an anachronistic sense of English rural life: cricket, like Schiller’s aesthetic artefact, was held to resist commodification and modernity.\(^{36}\) This is particularly evident in John Nyren and Charles Cowden-Clarke’s *The Cricketers of My Time* – a book which during the later nineteenth century was constructed as the foundation stone of English cricket’s literary canon through the work of antiquarians and belles-lettres such as James Pycroft and John Mitford.\(^{37}\) Sometimes described as the “Hambledoniad” in its canonising discourse,\(^{38}\) the subsequent critical construction of Nyren’s book proves Bakhtin’s definition of epic, where “beginning”, “first”, “founder”, “ancestor” and so on, are valorised temporal categories within a discourse of nationhood.\(^{39}\) In the twentieth century the text’s seminal status in the canon was further consolidated in the publications of writers such as E.V. Lucas, F.S. Ashley-Cooper and John Arlott.\(^{40}\)


\(^{40}\)See E.V. Lucas, ed. *The Hambledon Men*; John Nyren, *The Young Cricketer’s Tutor*, ed. F.S. Ashley-Cooper (London: Gay & Bird, 1902); John Arlott,
Though published in 1832, the book is a deeply nostalgic account of the heyday of the Hambledon cricket club in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, a series of “scenes, of fifty years bygone” that were “painted in [Nyren’s] memory.” Significantly, the text testifies that even in its earliest manifestations cricket discourse offered a particular aestheticised construction of the past as a comment on modernity.

Nyren’s book also needs to be understood as part of a new literary and artistic sensibility emerging in the early nineteenth century that according to George Mosse, was “crucial in defining the beauty of manliness”. Consistent with Mosse’s argument, in this text images of cricketers are presented as ideals of English masculinity in which “body and soul, outward appearance and inner virtue were supposed to form one harmonious whole.” The text testifies that a series of aesthetic/ethical ideals were already being inscribed upon the sport and the bodies of its players before the Victorian period, and that the subsequent writing of the ideology of “Muscular Christianity” involved an adaptation of already existing discourses. Another important and closely related feature of the text as a blueprint for future representations of cricket is that the category of the aesthetic has an additional function as a marker of social distinctions, with the aristocratic and yeoman players described as displaying a more stylistically elegant economy of bodily movement than the players further down the social ladder. Here are the origins of the distinct Gentleman and Players poetics of late nineteenth and twentieth century cricket.


"John Nyren, *The Cricketers of my Time: The Original Version*, ed. Ashley Mote (London: Robson Books, 1999), 73. All quotations are taken from this edition which reproduces the original 1832 Town version of the text.

discourse. For example, whereas the Duke of Dorset and Lord Tankerville are described as “pretty players”, Tankerville’s gardener, Mitchell, “was not an elegant player, his position and general style were both awkward and uncouth,” a stylistic deficiency that supposedly indicates flaws in his character: “he was”, we are told, “as conceited as a wagtail.” As David Gervais has argued, in English literary culture from the early nineteenth century to E.M. Forster’s *Howard’s End*, the yeoman class were often presented as “exemplary in their Englishness.” Accordingly, in Nyren the aesthetic ideal embodied in the yeoman cricketers denotes the possession of inner virtues that are defined as constitutive of a distinctively English form of normative masculinity. “Silver Billy” Beldham, for example, is described as “the beau ideal of grace, animation, and concentrated energy,” and such aesthetic markers signify “sterling qualities of integrity, plain dealing and good english [sic] independence…”

As in the canonised writings of Neville Cardus from the 1920s and 30s, such discourse required an aesthetic “other”, an internal counter-image that could provide humorous contrast whilst silhouetting the refinement and graceful bodily movement of the aristocratic and yeoman players. Such a contrast was provided by Nyren’s cast of rustics, who have been likened by John Arlott to those of Thomas Hardy. Arlott is correct to an extent – here two characters called Tom and Harry Walker are initially presented as organic figures – but these initial images are replaced by those of labour and technology with bowling presented as a form of toil rather than of art:

43Nyren, 73.


45Nyren, 91.

46 Ibid., 116.

47John Arlott, *From Hambledon to Lord’s*, 10.
And now for those anointed clod-stumpers, the Walkers, Tom and Harry. Never sure came two such unadulterated rustics into a civilised community. How strongly are the figures of the men (of Tom’s in particular) brought to my mind when they first presented themselves to the club upon Windmilldown. Tom’s hard, ungain, scrag-of-mutton frame; wilted, apple-john face, (he always looked twenty years older than he really was), his long spider legs, as thick at the ankles at the hips, and perfectly strait all the way downs. They both came to play in their clumsy hob-nailed boots, laced halfway to the knee. Tom was the driest and most rigid-limbed chap I ever knew; his skin was like the rind of an old oak, and as sapless... This rigidity of muscle (or rather I should say of tendon, for muscle was another ingredient economised in the process of Tom’s configuration) this rigidity, I say, was carried into every motion. He moved like the rude machinery of a steam-engine in the infancy of construction, and when he ran, every member seemed ready to fly to the four winds. He toiled like a tar on horseback. The uncouth actions of these men furnished us, who prided ourselves upon a certain grace in movement and finished air, with an everlasting fund of amusement...48

What seems to be emerging in Nyren was an ideal of masculine beauty that was realised through a sense of leisured bodily movement. Whereas James Hogg’s *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (a text published in 1824 but set in the early eighteenth century) described cricket as “that violent and spirited game,” Nyren’s writings consistently euphemised the sport’s violence through a process of aestheticisation.49 Historians and sociologists have noted the effect of law changes in minimising violence in the game (thus rendering the sport totally non-contact, and creating a boundaried division between players and spectators50) but, at the same time, such discourse could render the sport more respectable in distancing it from any residual connections to the old popular folk culture. Indeed, the discursive

48Nyren, 85-86.


aestheticisation of cricket typifies Bourdieu's assertion that a sport can be adopted by a social class according to the degree to which its violence can be euphemised. 51

The issue of the aesthetic took on an even more urgent task in James Pycroft’s 1851 re-writing of Nyren, The Cricket Field. As the processes of industrialisation and urbanisation continued to transform Britain at an unprecedented pace, Pycroft wrote cricket into the aesthetic category in such a way that attempted to endow it with the ability to transcend the historical ground of modernity. Cricket writing is again shown to be part of a broad aesthetic critique of modernity that, as Jurgen Habermas showed, originated in Schiller, and was popularised in literary Romanticism. 52 In the following passage, as with Keats’s Grecian Urn, cricket is placed at the meeting point of the actual and the eternal. Whereas modernity is the transient and the mutable, the aesthetic, as represented by Pycroft’s cricket field, is the eternal, and thus an image of a settled national culture opposed to the destructive powers of modernity. Pycroft’s grand valedictory, presented in a highly stylised and painstakingly archaic mock-heroic mode, introduces another significant trope of cricket discourse: the image of the spectral. Here cricket literature is self-consciously endowed with the compensatory function of reproducing Englishness, with the written word explicitly afforded the function of reproducing England’s past in the present and the future:

Farewell, ye smiling fields of Hambledon and Windmill Hill! Farewell, ye thymy pastures of our beloved Hampshire, and farewell, ye spirits of the brave who still hover over the fields of your inheritance. Great and illustrious eleven! Fare ye well! in these fleeting pages at least, your names shall be enrolled. What would life be, deprived of the recollection of you? Troy has fallen, and Thebes is a ruin. The pride of Athens is decayed, and Rome is crumbling to the dust. The philosophy of Bacon is wearing out; and the victories of Marlborough have been overshadowed by fresher laurels. All

51Bourdieu, Distinction, 216-217.

52Habermas, 47.
is vanity but CRICKET; all is sinking in oblivion but you. Greatest of all elevens, fare ye well! 53

The text’s obsessive preoccupation with matters of style defines cricket as a non-purposive practice, utterly uncontaminated by any taint of utility value. For Pycroft, a “manly, graceful style of play is worth something independently of effect on the score” and that “without elegance nothing counts.” The logic of this gendered discourse is to allocate a circumscribed, non-participatory role to women, who should “quiz, banter, tease, lecture, never-leave-alone, and otherwise plague and worry all such brothers or husbands as they shall see enacting these anatomical contortions, which too often disgrace the game of cricket.”54 The passage suggests that as literaturisation positioned cricket within a discourse of moral manliness, women were increasingly positioned beyond the boundary of the cricket field. As one of the most popular literary mediums through which normative masculinity was being textually constructed, and as an important means by which a symbolic community based upon strict demarcation of gender roles was imagined, cricket writing played a major part in producing the discursive context in which women were regarded as subordinate to men. 55

53 A arlott, ed. From Hambledon to Lord’s, 127.

54 Ibid., 68-69.

55 Although it would be misleading to trace some pre-patriarchal moment in cricket history, there is evidence to establish that many women played cricket in the eighteenth century. However, with the subsequent discursive interpellation of women into domestic roles, feminine cricketing prowess was increasingly represented as a divergence from normality. In Jane Austen’s novel, Northanger Abbey (1818), for example, Catherine Morland’s penchant for the game denotes her status as a tomboy, as not normatively feminine. As the narrator ironically notes, Catherine “was fond of all boy’s plays and greatly preferred cricket not merely to dolls, but to the more heroic enjoyments of infancy, nursing a dormouse, feeding a canary bird, or watering a rose bush” (Jane Austen, Northanger Abbey [London: J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd, 1962], 1). Typically, Charles Box’s The English Game of Cricket (1877) included only a few brief paragraphs on the women’s game in a chapter entitled “Curiosities of Cricket”
At the same time, the literaturisation of cricket was occurring on the pages of the novel, the most bourgeois of literary genres, and one whose development was intimately linked to constructions of national identity in the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{56} In the novels of Charles Dickens, for example, cricket was quite frequently afforded an important symbolic and scene-setting function. Although Dickens' famous depiction of the Dingley Dell versus All Muggleton match in his first novel, \textit{The Pickwick Papers}, has frequently been criticised for its technical inaccuracies, David Smith has argued "the narrative is a celebration of a free encounter, a celebration of enjoyment, in which rules are kept to a minimum." As Smith has shown, in later novels such as \textit{Oliver Twist}, \textit{The Old Curiosity Shop}, \textit{Barnaby Rudge}, \textit{Martin Chuzzlewit} and \textit{Bleak House}, brief references to cricket, where the game "has still something of the aura of a pre-industrial folk game", are emblematic of "uncorrupted innocence or of a nostalgic past still just enduring."\textsuperscript{57}

\footnotesize{(Charles Box, \textit{The English Game of Cricket} [London: The Field Office, 1877], 349-351). In the 1890s, in a short parody of Coventry Patmore's apotheosis of the spiritualised domestic role of women, \textit{The Angel in the House}, E.B.V. Christian's Honoria expressed the view that cricket was only for "Girls who ape the man". (E.B.V. Christian, "Love and Cricket" in \textit{At the Sign of the Wicket: Essays on the Glorious Game} [Bristol: J.W. Arrowsmith, 1894], 86-87). Such attitudes to women's cricket need to be placed in the wider context of the role and status of women in Victorian society; however, they were not merely symptomatic of that context but had a socially productive function.

\textsuperscript{56}Raymond Williams, \textit{The Country and the City} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

Fig. 3. Drawing of Dingley Dell versus All Muggleton cricket match by R.W. Buss. Charles Dickens, *The Pickwick Papers* (1836-7), (London, 1999), p.102.

So, in the first half of the nineteenth century, the marriage of cricket and print culture was interpellating the game into a discourse of English pastoral remembrance. At the time when print culture, as Anderson has shown, was creating a sense of national consciousness, cricket was being written into the national culture.58 Perhaps this is best exemplified by the immodest claim made by the editor of *Bells Life* in 1844:

I attribute the Extension of the Game of Cricket very much to the Paper of which I am the Editor. Having been the Editor Twenty Years, I can recollect when the Game of Cricket was not so popular as it is at the present Moment; but the Moment the Cricketers found themselves the Object of Attention almost every Village had its Cricket Green. The Record of their Prowess in Print created a Desire still more to extend their Exertions and their Fame. Cricket has become almost universal ...  

The essayist Charles Lamb may have ironically lamented the feminising influence of literature on young men (who were no longer “play-goers, punch-drinkers and cricketers ... but Readers!”), yet the printed word was clearly an agent in promoting the playing of cricket. The game’s textual paraphernalia also had a major influence in the national spread of cricket. When, in the late eighteenth century, pen on paper replaced the notch on wood as a means of scoring, henceforth the details of matches were more readily reproduced and disseminated, as the contemporary emergence of statistical cricket literature shows. It was now possible to follow and write about cricket across distances of time and geographical space. The emergence of the genre of coaching manual was also significant. William Lambert’s *Instructions and Rules For Playing The Noble Game Of Cricket*, first published in 1816, had sold 300,000 copies by 1865. Lambert’s technocratic approach to standardising and reproducing cricket law and bodily practice was quintessentially modern, and echoed that of those

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61 See for example W. Epps, *Cricket: A Collection Of All The Grand Matches Of Cricket Played In England Within Twenty Years From 1771 to 1791* (Rochester: by the author, 1799).

contemporaries advocating the drive towards a standard form of English over vernacular variations:

The object of this Work is to reduce Cricket Playing to a system, with as little variation as possible. It is intended as a help to young beginners, and also as a guide to older players who have accustomed themselves to habits inconsistent with good playing.63

Fig. 4. Frontispiece to the first book of cricket technique, Thomas Boxall’s *Rules and Instructions for Playing at the Game of Cricket* (1801). Source: E.V. Lucas, *The Hambledon Men*.

Such texts were crucial in increasing mass understanding of cricket’s cultural codes, language and performative grammar and this discourse was projected onto the bodily practices of vast numbers of young British males. That accusations of plagiarism followed the publication of Lambert’s book is itself testimony to a degree of

standardisation of cricket technique and discourse by this time. Not only did such texts regulate the way cricket was played nationally, to play cricket correctly according to the technical example of these books was to adopt certain bodily postures and particular economies of movement that were becoming characteristic of a decidedly bourgeois ideology of the body. As Ian Clarke’s research on early Cornish cricket has revealed, even in the more geographically remote parts of the country (indeed, perhaps even more so) the local press was an important agent in the dissemination and literaturisation of cricket. Apart from match reports, pastoralist cricket poems and advertisements for books such as Lambert’s regularly appeared in the mid-nineteenth century Cornish press. With the emergence of national discourses enabled by the growth of print culture, to play cricket on a village green was no longer to merely partake in a localised practice, but to be part of a highly ritualised element of the national culture.

Cricket as Pedagogic Discourse

Although cricket had been written into existence as a legacy of a fast-disappearing folk culture, from the middle of the nineteenth century, as the literaturisation of cricket intensified, another significant act of inscription occurred that located the game within the pedagogic field. Cricket now became an integral element in the middle class reform and expansion of the public schools and in what both Ian Baucom and Raymond Williams have described as the ability of these

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64 Allen, 20.

institutions to "discipline a hegemonic representation of English cultural identity." Again, the printed word was a major agent in the location of cricket within the pedagogic field and in its transformation into a symbol of hegemonic Englishness. One novel, Thomas Hughes's *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, was particularly significant in this process. In the seven months after its publication in 1857 it went through five editions and within twelve months had sold 11,000 copies. It subsequently went into numerous additional reprints, and spawned countless imitations, many of which culminate in a formulaic valedictory cricket match. The novel's impact on the middle class reading public was so great, believed C.L.R. James, that it was nothing less than "the sacred text" of Victorianism. To some extent the novel is an autobiographical account of Hughes's schooldays at Rugby School under the headmastership of the pioneering educationalist, Thomas Arnold, and a glowing testament to the reforms that Arnold had put in place. As well as exorcising Rugby of the often anarchic behaviour typical of the unreformed public schools, Arnold was concerned that the education of the sons of the ruling class should be a moral and spiritual, rather than a merely intellectual, process. Though Arnold had little interest in sport (indeed, in the novel the headmaster is not even present at Tom's valedictory "Last Match"), Hughes's text became something of a blueprint for the later elevation of cricket to the head of a curriculum designed to foster moral and spiritual qualities in inextricable conjunction with the strengthening of sinew on the playing field. If the novel traces the rites of passage of its main characters, Tom, Arthur and East to moral maturity and manhood, and if Arnold's pedagogic ideals were inscribed upon their bodies, here

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67 James, *Beyond a Boundary*, 165. Later the novel had an enormous influence on the founder of the modern Olympic movement, Baron Pierre de Coubertin, who treated it as nothing less than a veridical document.
cricket too undergoes a process of re-inscription crucial to evolving hegemonies of English cultural identity.

Several writers have commented upon the significance of sport within school life in the novel but have overlooked the references to folk games that occur at the beginning of the narrative when Tom has yet to leave his native rural Berkshire for Rugby. Consistent with Hughes's interest in folk customs and culture as evidenced in his *The Scouring of the White Horse* (1859), Hughes presents a description of the old country games of the "Veast" - the ancient yearly feasts that were the occasion for a range of pastimes including back-swording and wrestling. Although Hughes comments that the "Veasts" were sometimes accompanied by "a good deal of drinking and low vice in the booths," on the whole, he believed, "the effect was humanising and Christian" and brought the social classes together. Hughes then contrasts the "Veast" with the "new amusements" organised along class-exclusive lines. Yet cricket, Hughes claims, represented a continuation of the ideal of games as a site of cross-class encounter and can therefore form the basis of a national culture:

> Class amusements, be they for dukes or ploughboys, always become nuisances and curses to a country. The true charm of cricket and hunting is, that they are still more or less sociable and universal; there is a place for every man who will come and take part.\(^\text{68}\)

In the wake of Chartism, Hughes and other Christian Socialists were searching for symbols that would provide a potentially revolutionary working class with images of national cohesion. So, although Hughes's novel became a seminal text with regard to the transformation of cricket into a central part of the public school curricula, this class-binding ideal of cricket shows how the sport was being inscribed to serve two discreet, yet ultimately interconnected hegemonic functions. Within the elite schools

it was to become an agent of an athletic and moral pedagogy through which socially
privileged young men were trained to become leaders of both nation and empire.
However, whilst cricket was in this sense being articulated as a form of elite culture,
its construction as a cultural form with recreational, educational and ethical attributes
made it a crucial component in a collective national culture that could cut across class
divisions and bind together the English body politic. A discourse emerged from mid-
century onwards that defined the game in terms of this collective social outlook. In his
*Practical Hints on Cricket* (1851), for example, in “language” aimed to be intelligible
not just to “the Peer and the Squire, but also to the Artisan, the Peasant, and my
Brother Cricketers,” William Clarke praised what he regarded as the civilising
efforts of his own All England eleven whose nationwide cricket tours were seemingly
fostering understanding and fellow feeling between spectators of disparate social
backgrounds:

> These matches bring all classes together; men of all shades congregate, folks
of all ages meet ... The wealthy and great derive advantage from them, as well
as those inferior in station: they have an opportunity of seeing that there is
good sense as well as good dispositions amongst their poorer neighbours,
while these, by mixing in better society, gain an improvement in manners and
morals. 70

In this text cricket is afforded a decidedly civilising imperative (thus euphemising the
commercial imperatives of the All England XI) that foreshadows the rhetoric of
cricket and empire of the later nineteenth century. In a revealing reversal of the
ruralist mythology of cricket, Pycroft likewise praised the cultural work of Clarke,
acknowledging that cricket often spread from the urban centres to the more remote
regions of the countryside via the new railway network. Cricket, like English

69Quoted in E.V. Lucas, *The Hambledon Men*, 158.

70Ibid., 174.
literature later in the century, was being inscribed with a social and nation-building mission, with the image of the vigorous body signifying a healthy body politic: “This tends to a healthy circulation of the life’s blood of cricket, vaccinating and inoculating every wondering rustic with the principles of the national game.”71

As well as constructing cricket as a cultural practice symbolising a nation bound together by what Anderson has called “deep horizontal camaraderie”72 (a social structure often imagined in the anachronistically feudal terms of “Peer and Peasant”), Hughes and other writers placed great emphasis on cricket as a residual element of the pre-industrial past. However much this formulation of cricket was actually a literary construction, the sport was thus afforded a humanising and de-alienating function that was believed to provide an antidote to the neurosis-inducing conditions of modernity. Literaturisation was providing images of the cricket field as a common place of engaged belonging which many literary figures perceived as disappearing in the course of the nineteenth century. In this sense the compensatory role of cricket’s literaturisation developed in response to the social fragmentation created by industrialisation and thus consistently prioritised images of national cohesion. For example, a passage from Pycroft’s *Cricketana* (1865) is self-consciously Wordsworthian in inscribing cricket as unifying and restorative, causing the dispersed gazes of the disparate national community to converge on one place:

> How crowded is the field! You can hardly find standing room. The ring is three or four deep all round the ground. – Four or five thousand men are there, each man’s visual rays converging, as intently as at Epsom or at Ascot, to one single point; and there they stand, and have been standing, many of them three or four hours without moving, every man with mind as abstracted as in sleep,

71Quoted in ibid., 63.

72Anderson,103.
from all business cares, and with a stream of thoughts wholly new, and health-restoring vital current passing through the brain. 73

Tom Brown’s Schooldays has often been misunderstood as a text that celebrates games-playing philistinism over intellectual achievement. It was, as James has noted, the Victorian middle class who replaced Thomas Arnold’s emphasis on learning and the cultivation of the intellect with an obsession for organised sports, and particularly cricket. 74 Yet the novel was a seminal text in the emergence of the Victorian ideology of Athleticism. Whilst Tom’s friendship with the physically fragile and scholarly Arthur is crucial in his passage to manhood, the latter is first presented as needing “some Rugby air, and cricket.” 75 By the end of the novel Arthur is thoroughly assimilated into the cricket code, and as he, Tom and a young classics master watch the match between the school and a visiting M.C.C. team, they discuss the meaning of the game:

“Come, none of your irony, Brown,” answers the master. “I’m beginning to understand the game scientifically. What a noble game it is, too!”
“Isn’t it? But it’s more than a game. It’s an institution,” said Tom. “Yes,” said Arthur, “the birthright of British boys old and young, as habeus corpus and trial by jury are of British men.”
“The discipline and reliance on one another which it teaches is so valuable, I think,” went on the master, “it ought to be such an unselfish game. It merges the individual in the eleven; he doesn’t play so that he might win, but that his side may.” 76

Having, as James put it, “organised into a whole the elementary tensions and stresses of back-swording, wrestling, racing and the other games of the ‘veast,’” 77 as an

73 James Pycroft, Cricketana (Clacton-on-Sea: George Marshall, 1987), 2. This book was compiled from a series of articles contributed to London Society in 1863 and 1864.

74 James, 162.

75 Hughes, 221

76 Ibid., 354-355.

77 James, 166.
apparent residual element of the organic community, cricket can here become the synecdoche of an entire cultural system. As James Bradley has noted, Tom's use of the words "noble" and "institution" draw the reader into a generalised web of English meanings. Arthur then becomes more specific: cricket's Englishness is so profound that it can be compared to habeus corpus – commonly regarded as the basis of the English legal system – and this comparison endows it with the aura of an equally ancient institution. The master then presents the practical benefits of the game: cricket provides the nation with the pedagogical means of inculcating discipline and teamwork and thus could lie at the heart of a collectivist social project. Played in a tranquil and elegiac atmosphere, the cricket match episode indicates a sense of moral maturity that was lacking in earlier descriptions of sport in the narrative, and is the newly inscribed quality, not only of the boys, but also of the game of cricket itself.

_Tom Brown's Schooldays_ was a seminal text in the creation of the hegemonic cult of "Muscular Christianity". Although the endemic philistinism of the creed was a misinterpretation of Hughes and Charles Kingsley (who particularly disliked the term) there is little question of its significant cultural influence. As an integral element of the pedagogical philosophy of the Public Schools, the intention was that it be diffused through all strata of mid and late Victorian society. According to Keith Sandiford:

Briefly stated, this doctrine revolves around the basic notion that there is something innately good and godly about brute strength and power, so long as that energy is directed to noble purposes. Physical weakness is unnatural since it is only a manifestation of moral and spiritual inadequacy. It could be overcome by prayer, upright living, discipline and exercise.

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Muscular Christianity was very much a literary phenomenon. Not only was its influence palpable in all forms of English literature during the second half of the century; but all forms of print culture (including the now fast expanding sporting press) were active in producing and reproducing this hegemonic sporting ideal. For

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80Although evangelicals had initially been sceptical about cricket because of its links with the old popular culture, the print-driven explosion of interest in sport from the 1850s onwards left them with little choice other than to follow the flow and...
example, the coachman in George Meredith’s novel, *The Adventures of Harry Richmond* (1871), quaintly summarised the creed in relation to cricket, the sport with which it was becoming most closely associated:

Cricket in cricket season! It comprises - count: lots o’ running; and that’s good; just enough o’ taking it easy; that’s good: a appetite for your dinner, and your ale or your port, as may be the case; good, number three. Add on a tired pipe after dark, and a sound sleep to follow, and you say good morning to the doctor and the parson; for you’re in health body and soul, and ne’er a parson’ll make a better Christian of ye, that I’ll swear.81

Though there were notable voices of dissension, such as Matthew Arnold who was particularly anxious to distance himself from what he regarded as the philistine distortion of his father’s educational theories, Muscular Christianity and the cult of athleticism were becoming dominant hegemonics in Victorian society. Although very much a creed created by the ruling class, the ideal – as Meredith’s coachman attests – was that it was unquestioningly assented to by the ruled who were thus bound into the existing power structure.

By the 1890s this discourse had been, to a degree, secularised and inscribed upon the bodies of a large number of iconic first-class cricketers, particularly W.G. Grace. As much a literary phenomenon as a cricketer, the imposing bulk of Grace was identified as the embodiment of normative English masculinity in the press, in numerous poetic tributes, in essays by notable writers such as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle rearticulate sport towards religious ends. This evangelical articulation of cricket occurred in sermons and in a number of tracts, extended allegories in which cricket became the metaphor of a Godly life. Examples of this curious sub-genre are Henry Drummond’s “Baxter’s Second Innings” (1892), Gerald Duff’s “At the Nets or Lessons from Cricket” (c.1900), Archibald Mackray’s “The Parable of the Cricket Field” (c.1905) and Thomas Waugh’s “The Cricket Field of the Good Christian Life” (1905). See also Patrick Scott, “Cricket and the Religious World in the Victorian Period,” *Church Quarterly* III (1970): 134-144.

and in a string of “ghosted” books by Grace himself.⁸² Though in reality he frequently bent the laws of the game to gain an advantage over an opponent, the literary images of Grace (described by one rhymester as “The straightest bat that England ever saw”⁸³) and the game he had mastered symbolised the hegemonic ideals of moral manliness. In literary terms “The Yellow Book” - a literary and art periodical considered decadent to many – stood at the opposite pole from another publication with a distinctive yellow cover, *Wisden Cricketers Almanack*, which since its inception in 1864 had gradually become the solid textual embodiment of cricket’s dominant position in the national culture and an important medium for the reproduction of Englishness through cricket. In 1895 the forty-seven year old Grace became the first player to score one hundred centuries (even now a feat achieved only by a select number of great batsmen). By the end of May he had scored one thousand runs and by the end of the summer 2,346 runs – achievements that prompted the *Daily Telegraph* to launch a successful national testimonial for Grace (worth over £250,000 in today’s money).⁸⁴ In the same year in which Wilde’s *The Importance of Being Earnest* was first produced and its author famously put on trial, Grace’s achievements in the legitimate field of cricket were represented as embodying solid Victorian respectability and aesthetic orthodoxy over and against the loose morals and decadence associated with Wilde and the avant-garde. After Wilde’s trial *Punch* wrote:

> Reaction’s the reverse of retrograde,  
> If we recede from dominant excesses,  
> And beat retreat from novelists who trade

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On ‘sex’, from artists whose chefs d’oeuvres are messes,
‘Tis time indeed such minor plagues were stayed.
Then here’s for cricket in this year of Grace,
Fair play all round, straight hitting and straight dealing
In letters, morals, arts, and commonplace
Reversion into type in deed and feeling
A path of true Reaction to retrace.\(^8^5\)

Although Muscular Christianity was the dominant discourse surrounding the cricket field, the processes of literaturisation and aestheticisation of cricket could be marked by a set of negotiations or agonistics as to the legitimate meaning of this cultural practice within the overall national culture, an often subtle set of negotiations that positioned the sport within competing discourses of masculinity and nationhood. This reveals that the simple opposition between athleticism and aestheticism constructed by a number of cultural historians of the late nineteenth century elides any sense of the negotiation and cross-pollination that could exist between the two. Though Pateresque aestheticism stood at the opposite cultural pole from Muscular Christianity, the Reverend Edward Cracroft Lefroy, for example, composed sports sonnets that uneasily attempted to reconcile the two positions by projecting cricket and other sports into the middle ground of a moralised Hellenism. Much influenced by John Addington Symonds and the Greek cult of male beauty, Lefroy’s sonnets uneasily synthesised the Greek homoerotic worship of masculine beauty with Muscular Christianity. Described by Andrew Lang as the “first sonneteer on cricket”, he claimed that athletics had made him a poet and described sportsmen as “shapes

more sinuous that a sculptor's thought.\textsuperscript{86} After watching a cricket match, Lefroy enthused:

> My poetic soul gets into an infusion of red blood whenever I am brought into contact with vigorous, energising humanity. There is something idyllic about the pastime. Given a bright day and a green sward, with a company of lithe fellows scattered over it in picturesque attire — what could the artistic eye desire in addition? "Earth has not anything to show more fair."\textsuperscript{87}

In lines infused with such homo-erotic enthusiasm, Lefroy described young footballers, oarsmen, wrestlers and cricketers in such a way that aesthetic beauty became emblematic of moral purity, a quality identified as specifically English, as the octet from his sonnet, "A Cricket Bowler" suggests:

> Two minutes's rest till the next man in!  
> The tired arms lie with every sinew slack  
> On the mown grass. Unbent the supple back,  
> And elbows apt to make the leather spin  
> Up the slow bat and round the wary shin,—  
> In knavish hands a most unkindly knack;  
> But no guile shelters under this boy's black  
> Crisp hair, frank eyes, and honest English skin.\textsuperscript{88}

Lefroy was conscious that his poetic worship of the male body and the wistful hedonism that inspired it was at odds with his role as functionary of organised religion. He often retrospectively expressed moral revulsion at the homoerotic enthusiasm of his moments of poetic ecstasy, but such discourse vied with a conventional Muscular Christianity in which “the whole edifice of the Christian virtues could be raised on a basis of good cricket.”\textsuperscript{89}


\textsuperscript{88}Frewin, 143-144.

\textsuperscript{89}Quoted in Looker, 17.
As Lefroy's poetry demonstrates, the ability of the image of the Gentleman cricketer to embody an ideal of English masculinity could involve the absorption and re-articulation of emergent literary and aesthetic challenges to athleticism. A series of discursive tensions – though ones less explicitly concerned with the idea of cricket as a vehicle for religion – are found in a slightly later fictional text - the Raffles stories of Conan-Doyle's brother-in-law, E.W. Hornung. Raffles, "The Amateur Cracksman," is a debonair ex-public schoolboy who inveigles a former school pal, Bunny, into his life of jewel theft. With its ironic echoes of the Sherlock Holmes and Dr.Watson relationship, Bunny is the comparatively unimaginative and conventional narrator of the stories. Cricket is an important subject and metaphor in these fictions: Raffles and Bunny's shared class background is mirrored by their membership of the same team, whilst more finely graded social distinctions render Raffles an accomplished and stylish cricketer, willing to take the same risks on the cricket field as he does in his crimes, whereas Bunny is an unwilling and vastly inferior cricketer ("Bunny" is still used as a term to describe unskilled lower order batsmen). In a story called "Gentlemen and Players", Raffles is described as observing the amateur convention of feigning not to take cricket too seriously, whilst being clearly anxious to thoroughly prepare himself for the encounter against the professionals the next day. In a similar way that a number of religious tracts of the period represented the conflict between good and evil in terms of righteous batsmen against satanic bowlers (imagery replete with class assumptions⁹⁰), here the professional "net" bowlers are figured as demonic mercenaries whose grubby avarice associates them with the most sordid aspects of the cash-nexus:

I remember how he went to the nets, before the first match of the season, with his pocket full of sovereigns, which he put on the stumps instead of bails. It

⁹⁰See Scott, 140-142.
was a sight to see the professionals bowling like demons for hard cash, for whenever a stump was hit a pound was tossed to the bowler and another balanced in its stead, while one man took £3 with a ball that spread-eagled the wicket. Raffles’s practice cost him either eight or nine sovereigns; but he had absolutely first-class bowling all the time; and he made fifty-seven runs next day. 91

In a text full of ironic homologies between the fields of crime and sport, Raffles’ principle of disinterestedness leads him to regard the idea of playing cricket for money as more shabby than theft. After receiving an invitation to play in a country house match, he complains, “nothing riles me more than being asked about my cricket as though I were a pro. myself.” 92 This desperation to position himself at the autonomous pole of the fields of cricket and crime lends Raffles an almost decadent and Bohemian persona: “Art for art’s sake is a vile catchword”, he tells Bunny, “but I confess it appeals to me.” 93 Although a less eroticised figure, Raffles is analogous to Lefroy’s cricketers in being something of a compound of the public school sportsman and the foppish aesthete. In him the fin de siècle cult of the “Beautiful Boy” embodied in literary characters such as Wilde’s Dorian Gray is conflated with the athletic ideals produced in representations of contemporary amateur batsmen such as A.E. Stoddart. This ubiquitous discourse of cricket posited a particular ideal of embodied performance that was integral to the sport’s ability to produce and reproduce Englishness and was manifest in all forms of discourse surrounding it. P.G. Wodehouse’s Mike, for example, was a public school cricketer whose mode of performance registered his class status and the indelible inscription upon his body of cricket’s pedagogic and aesthetic discourses:


92 Ibid., 45.

93 Ibid., 26.
Mike, on the cricket field, could not have looked anything but a cricketer if he had turned out in a tweed suit and hobnail boots. Cricketer was written all over him – in his walk, in the way he took guard, in his stand at the wickets.94

That this late nineteenth and early twentieth century aesthetic of amateur batsmanship, with its constitutive conflation of heredity and embodiment, emerged from a series of negotiations between literary discourses of athleticism and aestheticism is encapsulated in a description of another amateur in one of the Raffles stories: “Keen breed. Oh, pretty, sir! Very Pretty!”95 The inter-war cricket narratives of Neville Cardus discussed in the subsequent chapters of this project draw upon and elaborate this late Victorian negotiation of discourses.

Because literaturisation had so indelibly linked cricket to notions of moral manliness, at times when war or invasion threatened, discourse surrounding cricket codified Anglo-Britain’s military vigour and stressed the role of cricket in producing men capable of defending the nation and its empire in war. Though Nicholas Wanostrocht’s Felix on the Bat (1845) was replete with swordfighting and military analogies, his second book, The Cricket Bat and How to Use it (1860), registers contemporary international tensions by being discernibly more jingoistic. Wanostrocht regarded cricket as a vital element in military training and a symbol of British military and naval superiority:

The youth who has been trained in the cricket-field will be more easily trained for the army; he will make the better soldier, the more active swordsman and more nimble sailor. When the native sons of old England are all driven from their native land by foreign foes, then – and not until then – will the bat be laid aside and forgotten; but so long as British sports and manly exercises are practiced and encouraged, there will be no deterioration in strength, activity and courage among the defenders of our land and foremost in the ranks, in the event of invasion, among those who are most skilful in the use of warlike


95 Hornung, 41.
Weapons will be the boys who ...were most skilled in the use of the cricket bats ...It is, therefore, of vast national importance that encouragement should be given, and favour shown towards this widely popular diversion.  

In the late Victorian and Edwardian periods the military role of cricket increasingly became a theme in the game’s literature. Significantly, the saying that “The Battle of Waterloo was won on the Playing Fields of Eton” dates from 1889 and not from the time of Napoleon. For Ranjitsinhji, so successful were cricket and football in producing athletic and courageous model citizens that the English love of these sports rendered the European concept of compulsory military service unnecessary.  

“Vitai Lampada” (1898), the Tory poet of public schools and empire, Henry Newbolt, famously linked the image of the schoolboy cricketer to the manly ideal of the imperial soldier:

There’s a breathless hush in the Close tonight –
Ten to make and the match to win –
A bumping pitch and a blinding light,
An hour to play and the last man in.
And it’s not for the sake of a ribboned coat,
Or the selfish hope of a season’s fame,
But his Captain’s hand on his shoulder smote –
“Play up! Play up! And Play the game!”

In the second stanza the former schoolboy cricketer, now a serving army officer, exhorts his troops who are now besieged by natives:

The sand of the desert is sodden red –
Red with the wreck of a square that broke;
The Gatling’s jammed and the Colonel’s dead,
And the regiment blind with dust and smoke;
The river of death has brimmed its banks,
And England’s far, and Honour a name;
But the voice of a schoolboy rallies the ranks:
“Play up! Play up! And play the game!”

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Though the notion that the cricket field was the ideal training ground for military service had its notable detractors such as Rudyard Kipling, it was not until the carnage of the First World War – a war many of the British ruling class approached as little more than a “Great Game” – when it was exposed as a fiction.

In the years between 1899 and 1902 a shortage of fit recruits for the second Boer War had raised concerns regarding the physical condition of working class men, and as a result the government established a Physical Deterioration Committee. Despite the efforts of sporting evangelicals, there were doubts that cricket and other sports were effectively countering this apparent physical and moral decline of the working class. One of the more liberal cricket writers of the period, Albert Knight, doubted that enough provision existed for cricket to do so. The “ache of modernity,” wrote Knight, was responsible not only for a joint state of physical debilitation, but of collective neurosis. More access to the cricket field, not military conscription, was the answer:

*We do need a great deal more playing: the looking on of the crowd is not so important a matter. We need many more playing fields in our larger towns. As a nation we suffer greatly by our neglect of an active athleticism. It was not of the great bulk of our people that Matthew Arnold could say that they didn’t read books and lived almost wholly out of doors. As a matter of unfortunate fact, the great majority of our townsfolk have not reasonable opportunities to join in the great outdoor game; never have the opportunities to become familiarised with the great emergencies of the cricket field; never have the sight trained and tested, the muscles hardened and developed, the nerves strengthened, the hearing proved, which is the way of making honest and healthy Englishmen.*

Knight’s personal views on the vexed issue of military conscription are less important than the emphasis he places on the cricket field as a place of pedagogy and identity.

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100 Quoted in Benny Green, *A Cricket Addicts’s Archive* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1977), 227
formation. Knight associates the playing of cricket with "the enthusiasms of nature [and] of our primitive ancestry" and to "drink[ing] eagerly of the draughts which the childhood of our race knew so well."¹⁰¹ Like Ruskin, who perceived the urban environment as de-anglifying, and was thus concerned with how particular auratic places of Englishness could discipline the identities of the English working class,¹⁰² the cricket field is here identified as an antidote to racial degeneration and as a remarkably efficacious site for the production of an atavistic and racially-defined Englishness.

Although, as Raymond Williams has observed, pastoralism is a consistent feature of the English literary tradition, there was a marked proliferation of such discourse in the late Victorian and Edwardian period.¹⁰³ According to Martin Wiener, for the urban bourgeois, literary visions of the countryside offered escape from the tyranny of industrialism and the ideological tensions of modernity.¹⁰⁴ Cricket literature formed part of this broader cultural context because it was a now well-established literary medium through which reassuring images of the rural could be disseminated. In his poem "Ecstasy" (1898), Lucas elevated the rural and ancient associations of the game to the level of apotheosis by figuring village cricket as a ritualised act of pagan nature worship. Muscular Christianity has here given way to the hedonistic literary cult of the "Gospel of Joy", with nature becoming the source of an English masculine cultural identity, "Stout of heart, clean of limb, steady of eye":

Twenty-Two Englishmen, blithesome and vigorous,
On with your flannels, and hast to the game;

¹⁰¹Ibid., 228.
¹⁰²Baucom, 71.
¹⁰³R. Williams, The Country and the City, 1.
Greet the Earth-Mother, and meet the sun face to face,
Offer your brows for the kiss of his flame!
Children of Midsummer, Sons of the Open Air,
Here in this meadow, this fair summer day,
Here 'mid the song o' birds, here 'mid the hum o' noon,
Here will we play! 105

Another significant variant of this contemporary literary ruralism located the essence of Englishness in the country house. In the 1890s, a period of economic downturn and serious social unrest, the cult of the country house provided reassuring romantic images of the countryside for a middle-class urban readership. In this literature the country squire was usually portrayed as the human embodiment of Englishness and the benevolent head of a harmonious quasi-feudal social order. His house – “mellow, dignified, creeper clad, lawn encompassed, and bathed in perpetual sunshine”, as Martin Weiner puts it – was the physical focus of this national imaginary. 106 The contemporary fashion for country house cricket amongst the social elite was both fed and produced by this prevailing literary conceit. For Knight (an ex-professional cricketer later tellingly described by Benny Green as the “only professional with an amateur’s pen” 107), the ease and luxuriance provided by country house cricket not only contrasted with the sordid commercial realities of county cricket, it pointed to nothing less than a Morrisian rural utopia. In contrast to the Muscular Christian version of the sport, as a symbol of “Merrie England”, cricket is here projected both forward and backwards into a future that magically recaptures a pre-Puritan society, free from the religious pieties and work ethic that underpinned the creation of modern industrial Britain:

106Wiener, 50.
107Green (1977), 234.
Country House cricket reminds one of days spent in eating apples under an old tree, reading the "Earthly Paradise" of William Morris. It is the cricket of an Eden future when we shall saunter through the fields, "without tomorrow, without yesterday", nor scent laziness in ease, nor distrust good-humoured chaff as incompatible with seriousness.\(^{108}\)

The editor of *The Clarion* newspaper, Robert Blatchford, advocated an open-air socialism inspired by Morris that sanctioned cricket, which he believed to be among "the mental needs of life", as a suitably organic pursuit.\(^{109}\) First published in 1891 and aimed at a lower middle-class and upper working-class readership, *The Clarion* gave extensive coverage to county cricket and included articles by Blatchford himself on the game. The coverage tended to be conservative, although one moderately radical feature was the departure from the convention of referring to amateur cricketers (who were usually from the higher social ranks as opposed to the mainly working class professionals) as "Mr" every time their name appeared. As Derek Birley has shown, the paper's cricket coverage conformed to, and perpetuated, a stereotypical account of working class identity, romanticising working class males whilst rendering their speech and habits for humorous effect.\(^{110}\) A typical Blatchford article from 1898 foreshadowed the inter-war writings of Neville Cardus in its patronising reduction of a Northern professional to the status of a stage rustic:

That theer Humpire gev me’ t wrong block. Aw said “Give us middle and leg.” But awm sure he gev me middle and hoff. Ah played t’ball with a bat straight as a rush, but it copped summat on t’ground, ran up my bat, hit me on t’bacca box and went I’ me sticks.\(^{111}\)

\(^{108}\)Ibid., 118. Ironically, Morris himself did not write about cricket and was contemptuous of the working class watching or participating in sport for fear of its effect on productivity. See Stephen G. Jones, *Sport, Politics and the working class: Organised labour and sport in interwar Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 59.


\(^{110}\)Quoted in Birley, 154.

\(^{111}\)Ibid., 154.
Despite the conservatism of Blatchford’s cricket writing, he saw compatibility between a politically moderate socialism and cricket that few other writers of the period shared. Cricket could figure thus because Blatchford’s “Merrie England” socialism was ultimately merely part of a more general attempt to develop what Brian Doyle has described as a new collective sense of Englishness at this time.\textsuperscript{112} Despite the synoptic discourses which surrounded it, the late Victorian cricket field replicated the iniquitous social distinctions and harsh economic inequalities of British society. Amateurs and professionals had different dressing rooms and entered the field through separate gates. Though professional cricketer’s salaries compared quite favourably with those in industry, in 1903 the social reformer, Charles Booth, commented:

> Cricketers, especially first-class men, may be ranked among the lowest paid of all professional men. In power of drawing a paying crowd, a well-known eleven probably more than equals any music hall combination, and yet their remuneration will at best be but one quarter of that given to artistes.\textsuperscript{113}

The amateur/professional divide rendered the cricket field a microcosm of a profoundly unequal society. However, within its discourses cricket was constructed as a crucial element of a common culture, a national way of life in which political struggle was dissolved. In most cricket discourse, therefore, the revolutionary demands of socialism were inscribed as anathema to the game. Although the moderate, “open-air” socialism of Blatchford endorsed cricket, the majority of the sport’s cultural gatekeepers were hostile to any perceived manifestations of socialism.


both in cricket itself and in wider society. Whilst cricket literature provided an implicit critique of unfettered capitalism by positioning the sport at the autonomous pole of the cultural field, cricket discourse produced a sense of the sport’s social relations as inherently inimical to socialism. However, tensions between the discourse of cricket and perceptions of its bodily performance emerged in the 1890s when some writers began to use the image of cricket as a metaphor for a nation that was becoming too democratic and egalitarian. The cricket field could be used to codify social change in a way that clearly demonstrates Bourdieu’s idea that political discourse can be transposed into the specific logic of [a] field.

In 1893 Andrew Lang linked a decline in attacking and adventurous off side play (the hallmark style of the gentlemen amateur batsmen) to the political climate: “we are all tired … of the Fabian policy which leaves balls to the off alone, in a scientific cowardice.”

To Lucas social egalitarianism was stifling individuality: “Not only has cricket lost many of its old simplicities, it has lost its characters too. In the late process of levelling up, or levelling down, individuality has suffered.”

As is shown in chapter three, such projections of political discourse into the logic of the cricket field characterised writings on first-class and Test cricket in the inter-war period and therefore produced and mediated a broader context of socio-economic, political and cultural crisis.

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115 Pierre Bourdieu, Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste, 123.

116 In Daft, Kings of Cricket, 11.

117 Lucas, 55.
As has been shown, with its already strong pastoral literary associations, cricket writing closely articulated with what Alun Howkins has described as the contemporary “discovery of rural England”. In the context of contemporary fears about racial degeneration and the survival of England’s pre-industrial structures, the intensification of cricket’s literaturisation in the 1890s therefore closely related to the broader revival of folk-custom and culture typified by Cecil Sharp’s folk-dance movement, and was thus part of broader cultural shift towards the notion of Englishness at this time. Cricket books were published by influential and popular ruralist publishing houses such as Country Life, and the canon of cricket literature became an even more recognisable and clearly defined entity through the work of influential anthologists, editors and bibliographers. The canon preserved and valorised particular national narratives, providing cultural continuity and stability at a time of significant socio-economic uncertainty. Accordingly, cricket writers yearned to be part of an established tradition and consciously positioned themselves in an apostolic line of literary succession to canonical figures, and particularly to Nyren.


121 Thomas Hutchinson, Cricket (London: Country Life, 1905).

Writers such as Frederick Gale and Lucas recounted literary pilgrimages to Hambledon, where Lucas walked on the hallowed turf with Nyren’s book in hand, just as Hillaire Belloc undertook pilgrimages to parts of Southern England in search of the true meaning of Englishness and a rooted sense of identity. As the following passage by William Sinclair shows, there was an increasingly self-conscious sense of cricket literature as a medium possessing the ability to wistfully recuperate a vanishing rural past. Though disappearing, this pastoral idyll could be constantly reproduced in such literature:

A book on cricket is a key which opens innumerable galleries rich with such happy pictures and stored with such wistful memories. But whether we play or not, we can all enjoy the glorious game of England, and welcome a book which does it due honour from experienced and sympathetic hands.

Cricket literature itself was being afforded the status of a national fetish in such a way that related closely with the broader shift towards Englishness at the time and the concomitant invention of national symbols and institutions identified by Hobsbawn and Ranger. Furthermore, that the contemporary literary construction of Englishness was a complex imbrication of patriotism, pastoralism and romanticism is evidenced by the willingness of both “bardic” poets such as Newbolt and Alfred Austin, and “nature” poets such as G.K. Chesterton and A.E. Housman to eulogise cricket – this multi-faceted symbol of Englishness and empire.


The cricket field's crucial cultural work demanded that it be afforded ancient origins and unimpeachable patrimony, particularly as it was now a transportable location of English identity-formation within the empire as well as the nation. As has been argued, since the 1820s literaturisation had been instrumental in producing the “Englishness” of English cricket. Nyren began *The Cricketers of my Time* with the following unequivocal statement: “The game of cricket is essentially English. Its derivation is from the saxon ‘cryce’, a stick.”\(^{127}\) Preoccupied with saving “from oblivion the records of Cricket,”\(^{128}\) Pycroft’s *The Cricket Field* produced a more xenophobic construction of Englishness through the sport and piously registered cricket's colonial and international spread:

> Hence it has come to pass that, wherever her Majesty’s servants have “carried their victorious arms” and legs, wind and weather permitting, cricket has been played. Still the game is essentially Anglo-Saxon. Foreigners have rarely, very rarely, imitated us. The English settlers and residents everywhere play; but of no single cricket club have we ever heard dieted either with frogs, sour crout or macaroni.\(^{129}\)

During the later Victorian era, as cricket was increasingly being endowed with a hegemonic role within the national and imperial cultures, many cricket writers expended vast amounts of toil and ink in claiming a distinctly English and Anglo-Saxon ancestry for the game. Such historical work sometimes led to a degree of rhetorical confusion. Nicholas Wanostrocht, writing in 1860, explicitly rejected attempts “to trace the word to the Saxon tongue [and] erroneously endeavouring to give the ancients the credit of inventing the game,” but still believed “one fact, however, is pretty certain - its birth is purely English,” before unaccountably referring

\(^{127}\)Nyren, 53.

\(^{128}\)Quoted in Lucas, *The Hambledon Men*, 57.

\(^{129}\)Ibid., 63.
to cricket as an “Ancient game.”¹³⁰ In 1877, Charles Box regarded the writing of his
*The English Game of Cricket* as an exercise in defending the game from aspersions
regarding its conception, and, more specifically, from a particularly scurrilous recent
type proposing that cricket was originally Spanish. Box’s entire historical agenda is
thus to prove cricket as untainted by any foreign influence: “In the compilation hereof
one great object has been kept steadily in view - viz. that of proving cricket to be
purely of English origin.”¹³¹ Box used the silences and gaps in cricket historiography
as a convenient proof of cricket’s Englishness on the basis that no strong evidence can
prove otherwise.

From this rapid glance at ancient, as well as modern countries, it will be seen
that from the most civilized to the most savage the same silence is preserved
with respect to cricket. In fact, not the faintest analogy is anywhere
encountered. The conclusion of this is irresistibly enforced, that cricket is pre­
eminently an English game - English in its origin, English in its character -
just as the vigorous game of curling is entirely Scottish in its attributes...

Such passages are important reminders that the supposedly self-evident
“Englishness” of cricket was actually the product of literary endeavour and discourse
emerging from a broader context of cultural nationalism. Even when writers departed
from theories of the English origins of cricket, emphasis was placed on the game’s
antiquity. Writing in 1912, the Anglo-Scottish poet, scholar and man of letters,
Andrew Lang, argued that cricket was played as far back as 100 B.C. basing this on
evidence supposedly provided by the ancient Irish epics and romances. According to
Lang, cricket was played by the ancestors of Cuchulain, and by the Dalraid Scots

¹³⁰Nicholas Wanostrocht (“Felix”), *The Cricket-Bat; And How to Use it*
(London: Baily Brothers, 1860), 2-5.

¹³¹Box, iii.
from northern Ireland who invaded and annexed Argyll in about 500 A.D.\textsuperscript{132} Although Lang's idiosyncratic view of the Celtic origins of cricket contradicted most late nineteenth and early twentieth century accounts of the game's history, this passage from his introduction to a book enshrining and celebrating the bonds of empire through cricket nevertheless afforded the sport heroic status and a mythological past. As the anthropologist, Bronislaw Malinowski would point out, the use of such mythology is significant because it strengthens a sense of cricket's traditions, endowing it with value and prestige and tracing it back to a higher and better reality of initial events.\textsuperscript{133}

The interest in cricket of many figures involved in literary production is often evidenced by the reliance of such theories on the spurious interpretation of scattered and often ambiguous references to primitive ball games in English and European literature. There are many examples of these dubious discoveries of references to cricket in the literary canon, from \textit{Mockett's Journal} in 1836 proclaiming that Virgil had described a cricket match,\textsuperscript{134} to the notion that cricket appeared in a poem by Joseph of Exeter dating from 1180.\textsuperscript{135} However questionable these claims may have been, in seeking a spurious textual history to validate itself, cricket was afforded what Benedict Anderson has termed "that image of antiquity so central to the subjective idea of the nation."\textsuperscript{136} In the latter part of the nineteenth century essays even began to

\begin{flushright}

\textsuperscript{133}Brennan, 44-45.

\textsuperscript{134}Allen, 8.

\textsuperscript{135}Bell's Life (London), 29 September 1850.

\textsuperscript{136}Anderson, 44.
\end{flushright}
appear on the seemingly unlikely subject of Shakespeare and cricket. The literary construction of cricket as a national game coincided with the valorisation of Shakespeare as a major component of the national culture in such a way that could mutually reinforce the “Englishness” of both constructs (see figure 6 below).

Fig. 6. “Two Gentlemen of Warwickshire”. Print by F.H. Townsend, 1907.

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Within this context of heightened cultural nationalism it is no coincidence that the rhetoric surrounding the early English studies movement closely resembles that of English cricket at the same time. In his recent book on the subject, Eric Midwinter has correctly shown that both cricket and literature were deeply woven into the fabric of English society during the Victorian period. However, the significance of the inter-relationship between these two privileged and valorised elements of the national culture lies in the hegemonic work that both were very self-consciously attempting to achieve. Both cricket and English Studies were crucial institutional manifestations of an attempt to create a new collectivist idea of Englishness at the time; both were invested with the ability to represent a sense of ritual community; both were elements of what Brian Doyle has defined as “the collectivist social outlook which would be immune equally from the mechanical vulgarities of statism and the revolutionary demands of socialism.” In the late Victorian period both English Literature and English cricket were constructed as two of the main cultural practices able to bear this hegemonic burden. It is significant, therefore, that English as an academic subject was first institutionalised not in the universities, but in the working men’s colleges and Mechanics institutes and that some of its earliest proponents such as Charles Kingsley and Thomas Hughes were equally active in propagating the cultural work of cricket and other sports in these same institutions. There was also a strongly nationalistic element in these enterprises based on the “Englishness” of both cultural practices. It is significant that when the English Association was formed in 1907 to advance the teaching of literature within the national culture, one of its main figures was Sir Henry

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139 Doyle, 19.
Newbolt, jingoist celebrant of cricket as the symbol of public school imperial masculinity.

Though, as Bourdieu has correctly noted, the contemporary emphasis on sport as character-building contained an implicit anti-intellectualism,\(^{140}\) in the late Victorian period discursive constructions of the two fields show a remarkable degree of similarity. Had critics of the cult of athleticism such as Matthew Arnold and his followers been prepared to stoop low enough to read some of the cricket books that since the 1860s were being published in abundance, they would have found many of their ideological pieties given eloquent expression. Just as a Victorian handbook for English teachers constructs the subject as “humanizing pursuit” that would counter ideological extremism, a pursuit able to “promote sympathy and fellow feeling amongst all classes,”\(^{141}\) so Andrew Lang wrote cricket into part of this collectivist social outlook:

> Cricket is a very humanising game. It appeals to the emotions of local patriotism and pride. It is eminently unselfish; the love of it never leaves us, and binds all the brethren together, whatever their politics and rank may be.\(^{142}\)

As these examples suggest, discourses surrounding the fields were characterised by an “innocent language” that supposedly side-stepped social conflict. Whereas a Victorian promoter of English Studies argued the subject opened “a serene and luminous region of truth where all may meet and expatiate in common”, above the “smoke and stir, the din and turmoil of man’s lower life of care and business and debate.”\(^{143}\) for A.E.

\(^{140}\)Bourdieu, “Sport and Social Class,” 825.


\(^{142}\)Lang, op. cit., 14-15.

\(^{143}\)Quoted in Eagleton, 25.
Knight, “the camaraderie and good-fellowship of the cricket field, the tendency to forget social or class distinctions, and to ascend beyond diffracted rays to the primal light shed by the united love of the game …” allowed him to inscribe upon cricket an equally hegemonic function.¹⁴⁴ For writers such as Ranjitsinhji and Lang, cricket - like Literature for Arnold - was an antidote to ideological dogma, embodying timeless and universal truths that somehow transcended the sordid demands of politics.

By the late Victorian period cricket had been re-inscribed and rearticulated to become a hegemonic cultural practice and a privileged element in a dominant discourse of Englishness. The sport’s long-standing interpellation within discourses of pastoral remembrance could make it a symbol of a nation that was essentially rural; its diffusion throughout the British empire symbolised cultural bonds and supposedly provided evidence of the superiority and civilising efficacy of the coloniser’s culture (see chapters four and five); its importance in the curricula of the elite schools endowed it with a vital pedagogic function and a role in fashioning hegemonic masculine identities; and its inscription as an element of a national culture made it an emblem of social cohesion and living proof of the supposed benefits of the existing, unequal, social order. There had been several factors in cricket’s transformation: its incorporation into the public school curricula; the development of the railway network; the processes of industrialisation and urbanisation and the resultant effects on leisure patterns; and the emergence of the ideologies of rational recreation and Muscular Christianity (both of which heavily relied on print culture). But cricket’s transformation and the achievement of its cultural work was also effected through the written word. As Keith Sandiford has explained:

Throughout [the] formulations of ideology, class relations and institutionalisation of cricket, the printed word was a major vehicle for

¹⁴⁴Quoted in Green (1977), 78.
acculturisation. During the last twenty years of the nineteenth century advances in telegraphy and printing spawned a massive sporting press of which cricket literature constituted a major part. Manuals, histories, biographies and match reports all underlined the philosophical objectives of cricket. 145

Although a number of cricket books were aimed at an elite readership, the publication of cheaper books and the high degree of cricket coverage in the popular press made the literaturisation of cricket a hegemonic process enabling all sections of the increasingly literate population to follow and learn about cricket and become subject to its hagiology and to its social and ideological codes. As the enterprises of profitable publishing houses such as J.W. Arrowsmith show, much of the literaturisation of cricket was fully implicated in commercial patterns around the sport. 146 Cricket books, including the quasi-Biblical *Wisden*, were in most cases commercial ventures and frequently included advertisements for sporting goods and other sports publications. 147 In Bourdieu’s terms, cricket was by now a recognisable sub-field within the space of sporting practices constituted not only by its players and spectators, but by a nexus of interested agents such as equipment manufacturers and vendors, writers, publishers and journalists. 148 At the same time, literaturisation strengthened cricket’s ability to disavow its economy. The relationship between cricket and its varied textual representations was therefore a particularly heightened instance of the role of modern print capitalism in the making and re-making of a

145 Sandiford, 26.

146 J.W. Arrowsmith of Bristol published a significant number of the most popular cricket books of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries such as E.B.V. Christian’s *At the Sign of the Wicket* (1894), E.V. Lucas’s *Willow and Leather* (1897), W.G. Grace’s *Cricket* (1891), Richard Daft’s *Kings of Cricket* (1893), F.S. Ashley-Cooper’s *Gentlemen v Players* (1902) and C.W. Alcock’s *Cricket Stories* (1901). See *Wisden Cricketer’s Almanack* (1914), 177.

147 See for example E. Lyttelton, *Cricket* (London: George Bell & Sons, 1890).

national and imperial cultural symbol. At the level of cultural reception, in the anonymity of their Andersonian reading spaces readers “could turn to find represented the fetish of their national culture.”\(^{149}\) Cricket could define a hegemonic national and imperial community because, as Ranjitsinhji - one of its most popular players and literary figures - put it, whether played, watched or read about, it “puts many very different people on a common ground.”\(^{150}\)

However, though the meaning of cricket within the national and imperial cultures was notably stable by the turn of the twentieth century, the next two chapters will explore the effect of a series of synchronic socio-economic, political and cultural tensions on representations of cricket in the inter-war years, representations that mediated anxieties and insecurities about the strength and future of the imagined communities of nation and empire.

\(^{149}\) Baucom, 152.

\(^{150}\) Ranjitsinhji, 445.
CHAPTER TWO

"ENGLAND OVER"? :
CRICKET AND LITERATURE IN THE INTER-WAR PERIOD

A time will come a time will come,
(Though the world will never be quite the same)
When the people sit in the summer sun,
Watching, watching the beautiful game.1

By the first decade of the twentieth century the discursive meaning of cricket within the national culture had been produced through the three interconnected processes of literaturisation, aestheticisation and canonisation. These processes were instrumental in enabling cricket to produce and reproduce Englishness, and were integral elements in the sport’s ability to fulfil its national and imperial hegemonic cultural work. This and the following chapter will argue that these processes were intensified during the inter-war period as the organic and socially homogenous national culture symbolised by the literary cricket field was perceived to be increasingly threatened by series of significant socio-economic, political and cultural factors. They suggest that narratives of cricket arose from this context which mediated many of the contemporary fears surrounding the stability, unity and cohesion of the national community.

In order to emphasise that contemporary cricket discourse was a mediation of, and a response to, the widely perceived context of cultural crisis identified by a

number of historians and literary critics of the period, the chapter will be structured as follows. First, the personal and collective traumas caused by The Great War are shown to have had a significant effect on the ways cricket was written about as a cultural symbol and practice in the 1920s and 30s. This very literary-critical exercise nevertheless has historical implications, for it suggests that emergent senses of English identity (constituted by issues of class and gender) began to be produced through cricket in the wake of the war. These often-nuanced literary constructions of Englishness were distinct from dominant pre-war formulations, and were constituted in response to the war, and subsequently, to events such as the 1926 General Strike. Second, the chapter argues that cricket's literaturisation, aestheticisation and canonisation intensified in the period as contemporary perceptions of socio-economic, political and cultural crisis produced an even greater emphasis on the reconciliatory powers of the idea of Englishness. In the third, and closely related, section, the cult of the rural in the cricket literature of the period is discussed as a particularly heightened contemporary mediation of the same contextual factors.

Cricket, Literature and the Great War

As was shown in chapter one, from the middle of the nineteenth century cricket was inscribed with the intrinsic ability to train and discipline young British males for the battlefield. Consistent with these hegemonic and pedagogic ideals of the cricket field, in the immediate build-up to the Great War images of cricket frequently served as readily-understood metaphors for the ensuing conflict and codified Anglo-British military strength. Many writers posited a simple Newboltian equivalence

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between the fields of cricket and battle. For example, a few months after the beginning of the war E.W. Hornung wrote,

No Lord’s this year: no silken lawns on which
A dignified and dainty throng meanders
The Schools take guard upon a fierier pitch
Somewhere in Flanders.\(^3\)

According to Paul Fussell, “[I]n nothing …is the initial British innocence so conspicuous as in the universal commitment to the sporting spirit …”, and he has also noted that many of the public school-educated combatants who sent correspondence from the front often represented the conflict in the very sporting terms in which it had originally been imagined. \(^4\) Hornung’s son, Oscar, who had been captain of games at Eton, wrote to his Uncle, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and compared his experiences in the trenches to “putting your left leg to the ball at cricket”, or playing in a house match, “only the odds are not so much against us here…”\(^5\). Oscar Hornung was killed soon after.

Proving the extent to which the images and symbolism of sports literature had become thoroughly linguistically and culturally assimilated, the Great War produced a great deal of doggerel verse that figuratively reduced the conflict to a series of sporting events. The following poem by American-born Royal Fusilier (and later, co-author of *Mutiny on the Bounty*), James Norman Hall, suggests that such rhetoric was believed to reassure and uplift the non-combatant population. In “The Cricketers of Flanders” the most able and courageous soldiers are those trained on the cricket field:

Full sixty yards I’ve seen them throw
With all that nicety of aim

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\(^3\)Quoted in Birley, *A Social History of English Cricket*, 206.


\(^5\)Quoted in Birley, 206.
They learned on British cricket-fields.
Ah! Bombing is a Briton’s game!
Shell-hole, trench to trench,
“Lobbing them over”. With an eye
As True as though it were a game,
And friends were having tea close by.6

Still inflected with Newboltian symbolism, images of the cricket field were nevertheless utilised antithetically to gauge the full horror of the war, and to represent the possibility of future peace and the reproduction of the old world. Arnold Wall’s “A Time Will Come” begins,

A time will come a time will come,
(Though the world will never be quite the same)
When the people sit in the summer sun,
Watching, watching the beautiful game.

Even here, in this Arcadian setting, the construction of the cricket field as the aesthetic antithesis of the trenches dutifully accommodates the old Newboltian pieties:

A time will come, a time will come,
When the people sit with a peaceful heart,
Watching the beautiful, beautiful game,
That is battle and service and sport and art.

There was also the problem of how to remember and honour the dead. Again, the image of the cricket field could be projected into a peaceful future and utilised as a site of memory and mourning in which to

Dream of the boys who never were here,
Born in the days of evil chance,
Who never knew sport or easy days,
But played their game in the fields of France.7

Wall’s poem verifies Fussell’s claim that the frequent use of Arcadian images in much wartime literature was a means of measuring, or providing contrast to, the preternatural horrors of the conflict. According to Fussell:


7Ibid., 85
Recourse to the pastoral is an English mode of both fully gauging the calamities of the Great War and imaginatively protecting oneself against them. Pastoral references, whether to literature or to actual rural localities and objects, is a way of invoking a code, to hint by antithesis at the indescribable; at the same time, it is a comfort in itself ...

One public school-educated combatant, Siegfried Sassoon, was later to lovingly recall his youthful hunting and cricketing exploits as a means of therapeutically communing with a lost, pre-war Golden Age. However, Sassoon used images of cricket in a number of his war poems to provide ironic commentary on the horrors that surrounded him. Its angry and disdainful echoes of Newbolt’s “Vitai Lampada” notwithstanding, Sassoon’s “A Subaltern” (1917) looks back to the pre-war cricket field and its literature as a place of contrast and mental reassurance:

He turned to me with his kind, sleepy gaze  
And fresh face slowly brightening to a grin  
That sets my memory back to summer days,  
With twenty runs to make, and the last man in.  

Fussell has shown that in Sassoon’s war poems short “pastoral oases” such as these register the pastoral norm against which the horrors of the war were to be measured. In Sassoon the image of the cricket field is never used according to the Newboltian method as a simple metaphor of war; instead, the implements of cricket, although aids to memory and thus a therapeutic contrast to life in the trenches, are utilised to render the battlefield as what Fussell has described as the ultimate “anti-pastoral”. The ironic juxtaposition of cricket images with the reality of the trenches in no way euphemises the violence of war, rather it intensifies the sense of horror and alienation:

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8 Fussell, 235.
10 Fussell, 236.
11 Ibid., 231.
I see them in foul dug-outs, gnawed by rats,
And in the ruined trenches lashed by rain,
Dreaming of things they did with balls and bats.12

In Sassoon's *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*, on a spring day George Sherston and his company encounter a "shattered relic" of a village and a bleak landscape strewn with mutilated bodies. However, the time of year evokes "April evenings in England and the Butley cricket field" which contrasts with the "life-denying region" they find themselves in.13 What Fussell describes as the "ironic and dichotomising structures"14 of Sassoon's war poetry expose the symbolism of war as sport as dangerously specious. This brief analysis of Sassoon's use of cricket imagery and metaphors in his war poems therefore reveals him as a counter-hegemonic writer. Sassoon occupied a cultural space from which he could critique and destabilise certain conventions of representation so integral to the reproduction of a hegemonic value system he believed to be discredited by the events of the Great War.

The estranging articulations of cricket imagery in Sassoon's war poetry are important because they suggest the potential fluidity of the meaning of cricket as a cultural sign. Yet, after the armistice, the literary cricket field was frequently reproduced as the symbol of a powerful and successful military nation. According to Janes, the game preserved "its special connotations in the public schools, despite the sniping of the Waughs, the Graveses, the Sassoons".15 The following passage from a 1924 coaching manual testifies to the veracity of James's statement:


14 Fussell, 91-92.

15 James, *Beyond a Boundary*, 185.
Can it be disputed ...that the magnificent endurance, heroism, self-sacrifice, even to the point of death, of hundreds and thousands of young Englishmen in the awful European war were largely owing to the habits fostered on our playing fields?\textsuperscript{16}

Likewise, a popular boys' novel such as Herbert Hayen's \textit{Play Up Queens} (1920) recalled the Great War in the exact literary terms it had been anticipated and, according to John Lucas, Ernest Raymond's \textit{Tell England} (a novel with significant cricket content) exemplified

How deeply large numbers of people wanted to believe not only that the war had been a good war but that the public school values so inextricably associated with it were inherently worthwhile, and had survived untarnished.\textsuperscript{17}

However, despite the degree of collective denial suggested in the production and consumption of such texts, the hegemonic values signified by the literary cricket field were cast under a more critical eye in the wake of the war. The remainder of this section contends that a number of narratives arose from this context that, though fundamentally conservative, sought to re-examine and re-articulate hegemonic notions of Englishness through cricket.

\textbf{The Cricket on the Hearth}

As Reginia Gagnier has argued, "hegemony appears in autobiography in the form of master, or broad cultural 'narratives' that determine how people see their lives," and notes that such narratives are constituted by ideologies of class and gender.\textsuperscript{18} Significantly, in the aftermath of the Great War, many public school educated male writers who had survived the conflict became preoccupied with issues


\textsuperscript{17}John Lucas, \textit{The Radical Twenties: Writing, Politics, Culture} (Nottingham: Five Leaves Publications, 1997), 36.

of individual and national identity.\textsuperscript{19} Often guilt-ridden, depressed, traumatised and angry, a generation of writers from privileged backgrounds reacted with hostility to the system which had produced them, and to the values that had fostered what they now saw as the needless carnage of war. These alternative cultural narratives eschewed the unreflecting, “objective” modes of pre-war male autobiographies and presented more introspective and subjective self-representations. Robert Graves’s \textit{Goodbye to All That} (1929) for example, was one of several cathartic autobiographical critiques of the public school system (including its compulsory games ethos) that were published during the period.\textsuperscript{20} Richard Binns’ \textit{Cricket in Firelight} is essentially a conservative work that is nevertheless equally preoccupied with issues of identity in the aftermath of the war. Although not published until 1935, the text uses the seemingly unlikely genre of cricket writing to register a sense of the Great War as a watershed in English national self-identification. In utter contrast to the militaristic rhetoric of a writer such as “An Old Hand” (quoted above), the book begins with a poignant and deeply melancholy prologue bearing the following epitaph from Pascale’s \textit{Meditations}:

\begin{quote}
When I set myself sometimes to consider the divers agitations of men and the troubles and danger to which they expose themselves ... I see that all their misfortunes come from one thing only, that they know not how to dwell at peace in a room.\textsuperscript{21}
\end{quote}

In a manner analogous to that adopted in Rebecca West’s \textit{The Return of the Soldier} (1918), the prologue avoids any direct recall of the war, yet still vividly conveys a sense of it as a cataclysm and of its narrator as a victim at the end of an epoch.

\textsuperscript{19}Ibid., 172-190.

\textsuperscript{20}Robert Graves, \textit{Goodbye to All That} (London: Jonathan Cape, 1929).

Written whilst Binns was recovering from a long and serious war-induced illness, with its quietism and its loving evocation of the domestic pleasures of the hearth, it is an example of what Alison Light has identified as the contemporary "literature of convalescence", of a meditative and introspective literature emerging in the period in which there was a retreat from "old-fashioned notions of the heroic." Binns goes on to recall an old friend called Jerry Murgatroyd with whom he had enjoyed many hours of fireside cricket talk in the years before the war. But Murgatroyd, once a fine cricketer, had returned from the war a physical and mental wreck, "shattered, prematurely old, the cricket and the zest for living gone out of him." The pain of the recollection is too much and is hence hastily sublimated into a series of cricket images:

How poignant is the cricketer's premature farewell in the prime of life to his gear ...only those who have taken such a farewell can know. Summer Days yet to be, each year's full circle; hot shining days, tree-leaves rustling round the boundary's edge, the smell of the close-cropped grass and the beautiful sight of it; wickets pitched and creases whitewashed; tails of the umpires' white coats flapping in the breeze; white-flannelled players casting sable shadows on the sward as they run; crack of bat on ball; laughter and applause of friends – and not to be there again, save as a looker-on chafing in spirit, or just a remembered name!

Binns' adoringly reconstructed cricket field connotes both loss and compensation. The pain of bereavement is partially alleviated by the comforting certainty that cricket can reproduce itself in such a setting, summer after summer. Furthermore, forms of cricket discourse (memories of cricket conversations and the game's written records) are cited as mediums through which therapeutic acts of memory can be enacted. The remainder of the narrative is thus established not only as a pleasurable reconstruction


23 Binns, 9.

24 Ibid., 14.
of Edwardian cricket, but as an act of recuperation through which the reader can imaginatively recreate a series of aesthetic and emotional experiences. Through such literature cricket becomes a domestic discourse of remembrance, with the nostalgic glow of the Edwardian era providing balm to war-inflicted mental and bodily wounds. Binns is conscious that books like his can open the storehouse of English memory and thus provide reassurance, healing and catharsis to the troubled English imaginary.

A Site of Memory and Mourning

Binns’ only cricket book is a reminder of Homi Bhabha’s argument that as well as the contemplation of the “unheimlich pleasures of the space or race of the Other”, cultural nationalism simultaneously involves the contemplation of the “heimlich pleasures of the hearth.” Furthermore, in accordance with Light’s thesis, it suggests that an emergent domestic paradigm was becoming more dominant in the inter-war period as a means of defining Englishness. Such texts also implicated cricket literature in a cult of the dead that was equally a part of its ability to reproduce Englishness during the period. Indeed, Binns seems to suggest that one must be a cricketer or a cricket writer to fully comprehend the meaning of loss. The many obituaries of former public school cricketers in the pages of the emaciated Wisdens of the war years and afterwards testified to the frailties of an entire cultural system. However, these class-exclusive lists of fallen cricketers had a significant cultural use. The field of English Literature had Rupert Brooke and Wilfred Owen; the English musical establishment had George Butterworth and (later) Ivor Gurney; and cricket had long lists of British and colonial men, such as the Kent slow bowler, Colin

Blythe, killed near Passchendaele in 1917. For Neville Cardus, Blythe’s “nervous sensibility”, “woman’s” guile, musical talent and unlikely cockney origins, allowed for his posthumous construction as a frail Keatsian figure:

War broke out when Blythe was in his maturity. There had been days when this delicate artist was too ill, too sadly overstrung to bowl and win honours for England in Test matches. But he lost his life fighting for England, one of the first to join up. A shell made by somebody who had never known cricket and directed by eyes who had never seen a Kent field, fell on Blythe and killed him.

Though these post-war martyrologies show how English cultural nationalism utilised war losses to reify its causes, writers such as Binns and Cardus were drawing upon an established discourse of loss that had inflected cricket writing from its very origins. One of the defining paradoxes of English cricket literature is that it constantly evokes a lost past as a means of reproducing an “authentic” rural Englishness in the present and future. As was shown in chapter one, the elegiac was a constitutive aesthetic element of cricket writing as far back as Nyren, and during the later nineteenth century continued to form part of a broader retrospective discourse of English remembrance within the game’s literature. The most famous and canonised cricket poem, Francis Thompson’s “At Lords” (1897) begins:

It is little I repair to the matches of the Southron Folk,  
Though my own red roses there may blow;  
It is little I repair to the matches of the Southron folk,  
Though the red roses crest the caps, I know.  
For the field is full of shades as I near the shadowy coast,  
And a ghostly batsman plays to the bowling of a ghost,  
And I look through my tears on a soundless – clapping host


As the run-stealers flicker to and fro,
To and fro: -
O my Hornby and my Barlow long ago!28

Thompson had spent six years in Manchester as an unsuccessful medical student before moving to London where he became closely associated with the aesthetic movement and fatally addicted to opium. He contributed to the canonisation of Ranjitsinhji’s Jubilee Book with a highly digressive review, and composed several other cricket poems which, according to his biographer, Everard Meynell, “are all lamentations for the dead.”29 As well as the profoundly elegiac quality of Thompson’s “At Lord’s”, it is significant that the match he reconstructs was not actually played at Lord’s, but at Manchester’s Old Trafford ground between Lancashire and Gloucestershire in 1878. Meynell recounts that the young Thompson “was much at the Old Trafford ground, and there he stored memories that would topple out over one another in his talk at the end of his life.”30 With its deliberately archaic diction, the text is an act of wistful recollection that plays upon the image of the “shadowy coast” (“coast” being an obsolete term for a borderland or frontier) as a temporal, and not merely a spatial, concept. The “coast” is a metaphor of death, yet its shadowy quality implies only a vague or illusory boundary between the dead and the living, between past and present. Equally, although the substitution of Lord’s with Old Trafford could be attributed to the unreliability of an opium-addled memory, it follows the logic of a poetic schema in which temporal and spatial boundaries are deliberately ambiguous. This schema enables both the nation’s past and present, and the geographical disparity of nation and empire figured by the

28Francis Thompson, “At Lords,” in Frewin, 209.
29Everard Meynell, The Life of Francis Thompson (London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1926), 34.
30Ibid., 31.
names of its individual, yet metonymically interchangeable cricket grounds, to merge into a single, ordered place of Englishness.

Other cricket writings of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had likewise constructed the cricket field as a generic space of English memory inhabited by spectres of England’s cricketing past. For example, a humorous poem appeared in Douglas Moffat’s *Crickety Cricket* (1897) in which a startled W.G. Grace is confronted by a host of ghostly Hambledonians and challenged to a match (see figure 7).

![THE GHOSTS](image)

Fig. 7. “The Ghosts”. Source: Douglas Moffat, *Crickety Cricket* (1897), p.87.

As has been suggested, the image of the spectral was not simply a literary device to create and invoke the national sport’s traditions and hagiology. In conjunction with the metonymically interchangeable cricket field, the generic figure of the spectral cricketer was an integral aesthetic feature of cricket literature’s ability to reproduce Englishness in the past, present and future. The ghosts haunting this generic English cricket field represent a national community that can constantly imitate itself in a
process of what Baucom has called "spectral seriality". 31 According to the deindividuating logic of this schema of representation, the lost rural past can be constantly recreated and so return these itinerant ghosts to the authentic rural England represented by the village green.

As the example of Binns suggests, the literary construction of the generic cricket field as a place of English memory was intensified and endowed with even more elegiac intensity in the wake of the Great War. Contemporary cricket writing was thus an important mediator of individual and collective trauma and bereavement. As Jay Winter has shown, after the 1914-18 conflict remembrance increasingly became part of the European cultural landscape as people sought to commemorate the unimaginable loss of human life. Therefore a recurring, closely related theme in post-war European literature was "the return of the dead": images of the fallen returning home as a literary means of transcending the brutal separations of unprecedented mass slaughter. 32 This theme is evident in a brief text written by the author of Peter Pan, J.M Barrie. It is a transcript of a short speech given at a dinner to mark the arrival in England of the Australian Test team in 1926 and was subsequently reprinted in The Times. It was conventional for major literary figures to speak at such events (part of the elaborate ritualism of empire which surrounded colonial cricket tours) in order to culturally validate cricket and sanctify the bonds of empire it represented. As well as producing the most famous narrative of perpetually-arrested adolescence (a fiction that had profound resonances after the truncation of so many young lives in the war), Barrie frequently wrote on cricket and sought to enshrine the links between the sport and the literary field by organising a writers' cricket team known as the

31Baucom, 150.

Allahakbarries which, before the war, had regularly included authors such as Arthur Conan Doyle and P.G. Wodehouse. The Australian players may have been surprised to learn from Barrie that “the great glory of cricket does not lie in Test Matches, not county championships, nor Sheffield Shields, but rather on village greens, the cradle of cricket.” Like many inter-war cricket writers, Barrie’s speech implicates the contemporary practice of Test Cricket into a broader discourse of cultural crisis by defining it as little more than a part of ephemeral modernity: “As the years roll on they become of small account; something else soon takes its place, the very word may be forgotten.” Against this fallen image of impermanence, village cricket signifies sameness, not only through history, but across geographical space, a quality that endows this auratic English locale with an imperial dimension: “...but long, long afterwards, I think, your far-off progeny will still of summer afternoons hear the crack of the bat and the local champion calling for his ale on the same old bumpy wickets.”

This generic location possesses not only an ability to transcend imperial space, but can enforce a diachronic conformity in which past and present merge into one. The aestheticised space of the rural cricket field can thus imaginatively obviate the violent separations of war:

It has been said of the unseen army of the dead, on their everlasting march. that when they are passing a rural cricket ground the Englishman falls out of the ranks for a moment to look over the gate and smile. The Englishman, yes, and the Australian.

As is discussed in chapter four, such synoptic imperial imagery had specific resonances at this time. In Australia a series of economic and political factors, in conjunction with perceptions of the serious shortcomings of British leadership in the

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war (particularly at Gallipoli) were hastening and intensifying calls for the devolution of imperial power. Barrie’s speech articulates with this context, for although it eschews the blatant empire-binding rhetoric of much late nineteenth century and early twentieth century cricket discourse, the village green is nevertheless a symbol of an imperial culture that’s past, present and future would be fundamentally the same.

The writing of the cricket field as a cultural site of memory and mourning after the Great War is particularly pronounced in Dudley Carew’s *England Over*, a historically significant but marginal text in the cricket canon. The following discussion of the text also considers the mediation in cricket writing of the political turmoil of the 1920s and particularly the General Strike. Carew was a one-time associate of Evelyn Waugh at Lancing College and later became a leader writer for *The Times*. *England Over* was dedicated to the conservative cricketo-literary figure, J.C. Squire, and, as with all three of Carew’s cricket books, positions the reader within an elegiac frame of reference by borrowing its title from the deeply nostalgic pastoral poetry of A.E. Housman. The book was published in 1927 but set in the summer of 1926 - the culmination of what Martin Jacques and James Cronin have shown was a period of “aggressive labour insurgency” and “unprecedented militancy.” Like *Cricket in Firelight*, this is a narrative of male introspection that uses the literary image of the cricket field as a potentially healing space of

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Englishness able to restore a sense of stable personal and collective identity at a time of national trauma. The sense that the war and the political climate of the early 1920s have had a profoundly fragmenting effect upon the national psyche is registered at the level of narrative form with an Eliotian sense of dislocation between the subject of the narrative and the narratorial "I". This conscious flaunting of realist convention has the effect of emphasising the sense of narrative de-centeredness. Having thus distanced itself from the conventions of traditional autobiography (and, it should be said, of cricket literature), the narrator goes on to describe the subject of the narrative as a young, upper middle-class man, one who "belonged to that generation which, with Rupert Brooke as its hero, stood for a moment Narcissus-like, amazedly aware of its own beauty, before it plunged into the terrible ordeal of battle"38; or, as Alison Light puts it, the generation born in the 1890s who shared a common experience of "dislocation".39 But the trenches, we are told, provided a form of compensation, for here he experienced the warm glow of camaraderie with men of the working class. His awareness of the potentially radicalising power of this experience was then heightened by the realities of his prosperous post-war civilian life, a life that leads to a guilty hatred of his own social class. This anxious sense of disillusion and dislocation is intensified by what he perceives as the in-authenticity of his class and its "stupidity and fear." A sense of the oppressive "dead weight" of his situation becomes so intense during May 1926 (the time of the General Strike and its collapse after ten days, a collapse partly due to middle-class willingness to carry out essential work) that he


39Light, 38.
fears he will experience a “bad nervous breakdown.” However, as he looks at his own image in the mirror one night, he experiences a moment of epiphany:

...he would spend the summer watching cricket in different parts of England. In common with all men of his type, he was always harking back to the memories and emotions of his childhood, and cricket had always held and honoured place among those memories. The smell of a newly-oiled bat, the thrill of his first visit to Lord’s, the pennies spent on different evening papers when Kent were playing – all these evoked in him a desire to sit and see cricket and hear the talk of those who watch and love her.

Carew’s fictional “I” does not so much wish to find his own personal identity through the act of cricket pilgrimage but, initially at least, to lose it in cricket through its liberating powers of de-individuation. He wishes to merge into and identify with the crowd, to champion the perspective of the ordinary spectator by recording “what the average man” sees and feels – that which has hitherto been “neglected by writers on cricket.” At this moment of acute political tension the act of writing cricket betokens the need for greater social and cultural inclusiveness. This act of recuperative literary communion with cricket, a sport he identifies as antithetical to the sordid commodification of post-war England, will, he hopes, provide a residual aesthetic of Englishness that will eventually restore his sense of national identity and pride. Carew’s use of third person narration exposes the ideological operations of cricket discourse and explicitly connects the need for cricket’s narratives and symbolism to contemporary socio-economic conditions. Such imagery of organic interaction between performers and spectators was later elaborated and theorised by the Marxist, C.L.R James (see chapter 5):

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40Carew, 9.

41Ibid., 9-10.

42Ibid., 11.
The "I" of this book was ...interested not only in the game, but the players of the game, not only in the players of the game but in the England which he saw dazzlingly real and beautiful through the drifting smoke of war, but which has eluded him in the clear light of peace. To sit in the shade of that elm-tree inside the boundary at Canterbury in the company of soft-spoken Kentish men and watch Woolley charm away the afternoon with the lazy beauty of his bat, to stand amid the cloth-capped thousands of Manchester and hear their muttered, uneasy exclamations ...would be to know something of England and of the men and women who live and work in her. It might, he thought, give him back that sense of unity, of being English ... and assure him that England is not altogether betrayed into the hands of those that buy and sell.43 [Author’s emphasis]

In many respects the remainder of the book resembles much of the popular travel writing of the period in which authors created a strong sense of regional diversity amidst overall national unity. Carew’s quest takes him to the cricket grounds of Bradford (where he communes with “the splendid ghosts of dead ones”44), Hastings, Nottingham, Canterbury, Manchester and Scarborough. Each ground is described in terms of its rich individuality, yet as metonyms of one another they are essentially the same. Even in Manchester, a city he describes as a nightmarish industrial hell, and a place where he fears violent political upheaval because of the terrible poverty of its inhabitants, Old Trafford is an oasis of residual rural Englishness in which “everything is very green and ‘crickety’.”45 Through the logics of metonymy and synecdoche, and despite the individual features of each ground and its surroundings, each is an aestheticised place that represents rural England.

This sense of unchanging seriality, elsewhere in the text evoked largely in terms of geography, is given a specifically historical dimension in a chapter on Lord’s

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43Ibid., 12-13.
44Ibid., 97.
45Ibid., 162.
– in cricket literature the ultimate place of veneration and pilgrimage\textsuperscript{46} - where Carew’s speaker watches the Eton and Harrow match. Here he encounters a mysterious female spectator, anachronistic in appearance (“her black dress spoke of another age”) with whom he eventually strikes up conversation. In another gesture towards high literary modernism (rare in cricket literature), the spectral woman is invoked in language recalling Ezra Pound’s “Petals on a wet black bough”\textsuperscript{47}:

I do not know whether it was her voice or her actual words that startled me most. She spoke as though, leaning out of a crystal tower, she cast her words as white petals on to clear, dark water below.\textsuperscript{48}

This section of \textit{England Over} exemplifies the Proustian character of much reflective cricket literature and to some extent echoes Walter Benjamin’s reading of that author. The bereaved women encountered by Carew’s cricket pilgrim is engaged in what Benjamin termed “The Penelope work of recollection.” In this narrative the unreliability of memory (figured by Benjamin as a tapestry in which “remembering is the woof and forgetting the warf”\textsuperscript{49}) necessarily places greater individual and collective emphasis on certain auratic sites of memory or, as Pierre Nora called them, “\textit{Lieux de mémoire}”.\textsuperscript{50} Because, as Benjamin put it, “our purposeful activity and, even more, our purposive remembering each day unravels the web and the ornaments of forgetting … Proust finally turned his days into nights … so that none of those


\textsuperscript{48}Carew, 66-67.


\textsuperscript{50}Winter, 10; Baucom, 5.
intricate arabesques might escape him.\textsuperscript{51} Accordingly, the following day Carew’s pilgrim returns to Lord’s to find the strange spectral woman “motionless, inscrutable, looking indeed as though she had sat all through the night.”\textsuperscript{52} As the match progresses towards a stalemate, he turns to the woman and addresses her with a banal comment on the state of play:

“Another draw, I wish Harrow could win, it would do them a lot of good.” Slowly, reluctantly, she turned her eyes from the cricket, and in her exquisite voice there was a faint note of rebuke. “There are years to come,” she said slowly. “Years and years, years and years.” It seemed as though as she spoke she saw in her words a vision of those years to come which upheld and elated her.\textsuperscript{53}

On learning that the women lost her son in the war he proffers stammered condolences but is admonished because he fails to understand the “Penelope work of forgetting” and thus the individual and collective importance of certain lieu de mémoire:

...after a moment or so her face, seeming grotesquely large now, bent near mine. “You are not old enough, young man, to know how easy it is to forget, not half old enough.” She paused, and then with a weary air of one explaining something familiar and understood she went on, “When you are old it is difficult to remember, to remember clearly. Memory lives not in the brain but in places, young man. You must go out and find memory if you want her, she waits but does not come.”\textsuperscript{54}

As a post-war place of memory and mourning, the features of Lord’s are then described in terms of their ability to evoke the past, as mnemonic signs:

She stopped gazing at me, and took in, in a slow and comprehensive glance, the pavilion, the coaches, the stands, the scoreboard as though to illustrate to

\textsuperscript{51}Benjamin, 198.

\textsuperscript{52}Ibid., 69.

\textsuperscript{53}Ibid., 74.

\textsuperscript{54}Ibid., 75.
me how, in this ground at any rate, memory waited for her faithfully and enduringly.\textsuperscript{55}

For Carew’s speaker the experience of Lord’s and the mysterious spectral spectator has been a salutary lesson in the nature of memory and of the places in which it resides.

“Memory waits,” she had said, and I know that I shall never enter Lord’s again without finding her ghost there, tragically and pitifully evoking the memories of her dead son.\textsuperscript{56}

As in Cardus’s deeply melancholy essay, “Ghosts at Lord’s,”\textsuperscript{57} Carew’s Lord’s is a storehouse of English memory, a spiritualised and aestheticised place where the ghosts of England’s past reside and will remain, yet metonymically it is a generic space of English memory and so promises to return these spectres, these timeless images of the English populace, to the lost village green of authentic Englishness.

The texts discussed so far in this chapter strongly suggest that the Great War had the effect of heightening the elegiac quality of cricket writing and consecrating the image of the cricket field as a site of collective memory and mourning. Furthermore, although the dominant Muscular Christian ideology associated with cricket continued to be reproduced in much of the sport’s literature, in the aftermath of the war, and in the context of the political tensions of the 1920s, forms of cricket narrative emerged in which residual/dominant Muscular Christian ideals of nationhood mutated to form a more introspective and feminised paradigm of Englishness. Although these patterns of re-articulation were decidedly conservative, such texts testify that the “Englishness” of a cultural practice such as cricket is a

\textsuperscript{55}Ibid., 76.

\textsuperscript{56}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{57}Neville Cardus, “Ghosts at Lord’s,” in \textit{A Cricketer’s Book} (London: Grant Richards, 1922), 42.
matter of constant renegotiation, and that these negotiations derive both from
genealogy (the recurring themes and imagery of cricket writing) and specific
historical context. However, whilst it is necessary to draw attention to the synchronic
tensions imposed upon literary representations of the cricket during the period, it is
clear that the idea of the cricket field was utilised by a range of writers as an
aestheticised place of Englishness in which contemporary political, cultural and social
tensions could be symbolically resolved. As a constantly reproducible synecdoche of
a lost, authentic England, the rural cricket field thus took on an even greater weight of
symbolic significance in the inter-war period. The next two sections give further
consideration to the importance of the image of the village green in inter-war cricket
writing, and suggest that the preservation and reproduction of this archetype became a
literary obsession in the ideologically fraught period of the 20s and 30s.

The Inter-War Literaturisation of Cricket

During the inter-war years the intensification of cricket's literaturisation was
embodied in a number of literary cricket elevens such as J.C. Squire's *The Invalids*,
famously portrayed in A.E. Macdonnell's popular novel *England Their England*
(1933). Squire's team included writers such as Alec Waugh, Clifford Bax, Hugh de
Selincourt and Edmund Blunden, all of whom were significant figures in the inter-war
literaturisation of cricket. As the England figured in synecdoche by the rural cricket
field was perceived to be increasingly threatened by a series of cultural, political and
economic factors, cricket called upon a loyal literary entourage to defend its integrity
and pleasures. An intense literaturisation of cricket ensued through which the
boundary between the two fields became as vague as Thompson's "shadowy coast".
The narrator of Somerset Maugham's *Cakes and Ale* wryly described the 1920s as
“the period when men of letters, to show their virility, drank beer and played cricket...”, and noted that the name “Authors XI” frequently appeared in the fixture lists of a number of minor public schools and southern village sides.58 This retreat to the village green in order to recapture a sense of pre-war social and gender relations suggests deeply conservative currents within the literary culture of the period. In 1940 George Orwell recalled that:

...even more than at most times, the big shots of literary journalism were busy pretending that the age-before-last had not come to an end. Squire ruled The London Mercury, Gibbs and Walpole were the gods of the lending libraries, there was a cult of cheeriness and manliness, beer and cricket, briar pipes and monogamy.59

As an occasional playing member of The Invalids, G.K. Chesterton was fully implicated in this cult, and his poetic tribute to Squire and his fellow author-cricketers humorously parodies the literariness of cricket so manifest in their exploits. Here both fields are timeless utopian spaces which enforce diachronic continuity and merge in a mutual celebration of their shared Englishness:

Are all the penmen players all?
Did Shakespeare shine at cricket?
And in what hour did Bunyan wait
Like Christian at the wicket?

When did domestic Dickens stand
A fireside willow wielding?
And playing cricket – on the hearth,
And where was Henry Fielding?60

As Chris Baldick has shown, the Newbolt report of 1921 had led to the consolidation of English literature as a central part of the national culture. The report


59 Quoted in J. Lucas, 35.

was highly conscious of factors such as the formation of the Communist Party of Great Britain and trade unionism, and commented that literature had been far less successful in appealing to the working class than had sport. 61 In the wake of the report, literature was given a more urgent social and cultural task. As a result, the idea of the English literary canon was solidified as a timeless, utopian space of Englishness. 62 T.S. Eliot described the job of the critic accordingly:

It is part of his business to preserve tradition – when a good tradition exists. It is part of his business to see literature steadily and see it whole; and this is eminently to see it not as consecrated by time, but to see it beyond time. 63

As Eliot might have admired, the creation and preservation of its traditions, including its literary canon, was a major preoccupation of cricket bellestrists in the period. The same factors identified by Newbolt as posing a threat to the British class system produced a literary cult of the hegemonic practice of cricket. The metadiscourse of cricket literature which had emerged before the war now became a recognisable literary endeavour in its own right in the form of many essays on cricket literature, on cricket in literature, on cricket poetry and on particular cricket writers. 64

The important figure of F.S. Ashley-Cooper embodied the bookishness and increased canonicity of cricket in the period. Later described by Irving Rosenwater as “the

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62 Baldick, 211.


Herodotus of cricket,” 65 Ashley-Cooper was a tireless and prolific editor, cricket writer and historian. A decidedly un-athletic figure, he was described by Sir Home Gordon as “fragile, almost albino, wearing large spectacles and a chronically perplexed expression.” That “it was rare for him to trouble to watch a match,” suggests that for Ashley-Cooper, cricket was pure discourse, a space of constant canonical inter-textuality rather than a cultural practice. 66 As his example suggests, there was a strong sense of the need to organise and preserve cricket discourse in the face of contemporary pressures. In the preface to a 1926 anthology of cricket writing, Eric Parker attributed the venture to “an effort to rediscover and revive what had seemed in danger of disappearing ...” 67 Such utterances had the effect of producing an almost religious sense of the sport and its discourses as a part of the national culture. In E.V. Lucas’s 1927 anthology of verse, The Joy of Life, a section of sports poems were included alongside sections on subjects such as “Birds”, “The Garden”, “Travel” and “The Sea”, whereas four cricket poems are included in a separate section simply entitled “The Game”. 68

In a cultural context in which writers of both political left and right feared that a tide of American mass cultural forms would dilute or render extinct aesthetic standards, literaturisation was an important means of endowing cricket with cultural validation. Many cricket writers constructed a discourse that bestowed aesthetic status on the game simply through a remarkable density of literary allusion. This process

65 Allen, Early Books on Cricket, 38.


67 Eric Parker, Between the Wickets: An Anthology of Cricket (London: Philip Allen, 1926), xvi.

reminds us that the aesthetic is often no more than a process of analogy, of what Bourdieu has described as “[a] play of academic or urbane references [that] has no other function than to bring the work into an interminable circuit of inter-legitimation.” Because the literary canon was a timeless utopian space, R.C. Robertson-Glasgow could invent a “poet's limbo” where literary giants such as Shakespeare, Milton and Wordsworth passed the time by composing cricket verse. Edmund Blunden’s highly digressive and overwritten Cricket Country, one of a number of cricket books produced during the Second World War celebrating an element of English culture in the cause of the war effort, embodied the culmination of the intense inter-war literaturisation of cricket. Written whilst simultaneously working on his biography of Shelley, in Cricket Country literary allusions and belletristic musings merge into a seamless unity with the author’s cricket reflections to the extent that any boundary between the fields becomes almost totally obscured. In earlier Blunden poems such as “The Pride of the Village” (1925), dead cricketers are recalled by explicitly evoking their play as a form of textuality (“Tom’s cricket was the text” and “He made his poems out of bat and ball”). For Blunden the restorative power and pleasures of English cricket imitated those of English Literature.

The intensification of the cult of Hambledon was another closely related aspect of cricket’s inter-war literaturisation. As was shown in chapter one, Nyren and Cowden-Clarke’s Hambledon was a literary construction of a lost agrarian and

69 Bourdieu, Distinction, 53.


“organic” rural community produced in the wake of the second major wave of land enclosures of the early nineteenth century. However, the fictiveness of Hambledon notwithstanding, the heightened sense of cricket’s canonicity in the 1920s and 30s was apparent in an obsessive preoccupation with this textual space as offering solace and imaginary resolution to contemporary pressures. The inter-war cult of Nyren thus emerged from a discursive context that included texts such as Clough Williams-Ellis’ *England and the Octopus* (1928) – a damning indictment of modernity in which contemporary fears of social transformation were given expression:

> There are such things as “Dangerous Ages”, and the most dangerous ages are those at which the normal rate of change is most abnormally accelerated ... we are surely living more dangerously now that at any other time. 73

Described by one inter-war rhymester as “Deathless across the years,” 74 Hambledon was venerated by many influential authors, historians, poets and musicians as a place of pilgrimage that represented the strength and continuity of English organic traditions. For example, on New Year’s Day, 1929, Squire’s *Invalids* played a special match against the *Hampshire Eskimos* at Hambledon as a protest against the increasing encroachment of the football season into that of cricket. The involvement in the match of the composer Philip Heseltine (Peter Warlock) is revealing as to cricket’s cultural politics. As cricket’s proletarian and “modern” cultural “other”, football had not been deemed worthy of the attention of the leading contemporary pastoralist composer, Sir Ralph Vaughan Williams, whose music attempted to represent musically the eternal verities of the English landscape. In his 1909 setting of Housman’s *A Shropshire Lad*, entitled *On Wenlock Edge*, Vaughan Williams had deliberately omitted the crucial stanzas describing a football match because he

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73Quoted in Matless, 25.

74Anon., “Cricket Story,” in Frewin, 513-516.
regarded the subject matter as unworthy for the concert-room. Hambledon cricket however, was a suitably traditional and organic subject for Warlock, a musician profoundly interested in the revival of English folk-song and the expression of Englishness in music. To mark the occasion of this literary protest match, Warlock composed a song in the traditionally heroic key of E flat major with lyrics provided by Bruce Blunt. In this hearty drinking song Squire’s literary cricketers protest against the commercial imperatives of modernity by “drinking to the dead” and occupying the same hallowed and auratic place of Englishness as did Nyren’s cast of sporting heroes:

Then up with every glass and we’ll sing a toast in chorus:
The Cricketers of Hambledon who played the game before us,
The stalwarts of the olden times who rolled a lonely down
And made the king of games for men with Hambledon the crown.

As a key figure in the literary cult of Nyren’s Hambledon, Lucas’s Joy of Life anthology predictably contained two poems that celebrate this important site of English memory. The second of these, William Kerr’s “Past and Present”, typifies the literary construction of Hambledon as a place of Englishness that can be constantly recreated. The poem uses a standard rhetorical schema of cricket poetry in which initial feelings of loss triggered by the image of the rural cricket field (which, through the logic of metonymy, is located both in Hambledon and somewhere in Kent) are replaced by a sense of compensation. The poem begins:

Daisies are over Nyren, and Hambledon
Hardly remembers any summer gone:
And never again the Kentish elms shall see
Mynn, or Fuller Pilch, or Colin Blythe.

75Hughes and Stradling, 186.

-Nor shall I see them, unless perhaps a ghost
Watching the elder ghosts beyond the moon.

Having established the idea of the generic cricket field as a place where the ghosts of cricket's past (the Hambledon players, Alfred Mynn and Fuller Pilch, and Kent's Colin Blythe) will meet in a condition of spectral seriality, the speaker then considers that Hambledon is a generic place in which cricket's present merely imitates its past. As a site in which Englishness can ceaselessly reproduce itself, its aesthetic and compensatory pleasures mirror those of that other national tradition, English Literature:

But here in common sunshine I have seen
George Hirst, not yet a ghost, substantial,
His off-drives mellow as brown ale and crisp
Merry late cuts, and brave Chaucerian pulls;
Waddington's fury and the patience of Dipper;
And twenty easy artful overs of Rhodes,
So many stanzas of the Faerie Queen.77

In his 1929 "A Cricket Pilgrimage", James Thorpe likewise visited the sacrosanct ground of Hambledon and was initially impressed to find it unscarred by the marks of commercial modernity that many contemporary commentators saw as infecting the countryside at this time:78

Apart from its picturesqueness, its charm lies in its apparent unconsciousness of its fame. There are no notice boards, no tea shops bearing the names of past cricket heroes, and, I believe, no char-a-banc trips.79

Yet he discovers that even Hambledon is not immune from change, and he notes with distaste the modernisation of the "Bat and Ball Inn", its mahogany countered bar, revolving peep holes and parquet floor (see figure 8). He argues for a restoration of the inn and calls for it to be adorned with cricket relics and memorabilia in keeping

78See Matless, Landscape and Englishness.
79Thorpe, 132.
with its status as a shrine of cricket’s past: “Its history fully warrants this veneration ... It should be the Valhalla of Cricket.”\textsuperscript{80} As is shown in the next chapter, Thorpe’s Hambledon is symbolic of the state of the national culture as perceived by many professional cricket journalists of the period: it simultaneously signifies both the strength of English tradition and the insidious marks of modernity that threaten it. By the 1930s the cult of Nyren’s Hambledon was sometimes revealed in curious and unannounced ways. For example, in the 1936 edition of R.C. Sheriff’s 
\textit{Badger’s Green} (a contemporary play set in rural Hampshire in which village cricket is a significant theme), the entire text of \textit{The Cricketers of my Time} is appended with no explanation. Through a process of metonymic substitution between the two Hampshire cricket fields, and between the two texts themselves, this edition positions \textit{Badger’s Green} in the canon of cricket literature and implies continuity of the rural traditions cricket supposedly represented.\textsuperscript{81}

As this suggests, though Hambledon was constructed as a particularly sacrosanct place of veneration in cricket discourse, through the logic of metonymy it was a generic place of Englishness that could be transported through time and across geographical space. Therefore, as Carew’s \textit{England Over} showed, cricket pilgrimages could be undertaken to other destinations in quest of a stable sense of English identity. In these pilgrimages the aesthetic variations in the nation’s cricket grounds and their surrounding environments were described in such a way as to convey a sense of regional diversity within overall national unity. The schema of such cricket writings thus resembled contemporaneous travel writing such as John Betjeman’s \textit{Shell Guides}, Batsford’s \textit{Face of England} series and Morton’s \textit{In Search of England}.

\textsuperscript{80}Ibid., 134-135.

Indeed, many of these books included representations of cricket as an integral part of the rural scene.\textsuperscript{82}

"There was high feasting held on Broad-Halfpenny during the solemnity of one of our grand matches. Oh! it was a heart-stirring sight to witness the multitude forming a complete and dense circle round that noble green. . . . Little Hambledon pitted against All England was a proud thought for the Hampshire men. . . . How those fine brown-faced fellows of farmers would drink to our success! . . . The ale, too! . . . and this immortal viand (for it was more than liquor) was vended at two pence per pint."

\textit{John Nyren.—The Cricketers of My Time.}

Fig. 8. James Thorpe's illustration of "The Bat and Ball Inn", Hambledon juxtaposed with a passage from Nyren. Source: James Thorpe, \textit{A Cricket Bag}, p.134.

In these texts the itinerant writer catalogued the unique characteristics of a specific region, or of a succession of geographically various landscapes and environments.

These books placed particular emphasis on the countryside and connected it to English heritage and national character. Whether the writer travelled on foot, bicycle or car (as manifest in the new genre of motoring pastoral) such narratives were immensely popular: as Morton noted, “Never before have so many people been searching for England.” One such cricket pilgrimage was undertaken by the cricket correspondent of the *Yorkshire Post*, J.M. Kilburn, in the mid-1930s. Indeed, his cricket pilgrimage was subsequently given a Mortonesque status with the title, *In Search of Cricket*. The close affinity between much inter-war cricket literature and ruralist writings enabled more “literary” professional cricket journalists such as Kilburn to masquerade as disinterested bellettrists and thus disassociate their branch of sports journalism from its economic imperatives. Having transposed the journalistic work of covering County cricket into the trope of pilgrimage, Kilburn invented a fellow pilgrim - a Wordsworthian figure named “Michael” - who was in fact the cricket correspondent of the *Evening Post*, John Bapty. Closely resembling an Arthur Mee travelogue, the text uses cricket imagery to construct strong senses of local diversity within overall national unity by merging regionally-specific aesthetics of body and landscape:

To know Woolley at the crease is to know the calm sunlit Kentish meadows, to watch Tate shambling to the wicket is to meet the sunburned countryman plodding a brave way across the Sussex Downs, to contemplate Arthur Mitchell in the acquisition of an unsmiling, purposeful century is to appreciate the hard, unyielding Yorkshire hills which stand so sure of themselves and of their strength.

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Hegemony and the Aesthetics of the Cricket Landscape

Although texts such as Kilburn’s *In Search of Cricket* registered the aesthetic variations in the nation’s various cricket landscapes, as John Bale’s analysis of the geographical settings of a sample of cricket fictions dating from the 1820s to the 1980s shows, the sport’s literature more frequently located this constantly reproducible cricket field within a specifically southern English rural landscape:

![Diagram](image)


This literary structuring of cricket’s symbolic geography produced a generic place that was imaginatively transportable to wholly alien socio-economic and geographical locations. As the following short poem by George Rostrevor-Hamilton suggests, cricket was represented as a hegemonic component of the national culture that had the power to inscribe itself upon the most irretrievably urban and socially deprived of environments:

Where else, you ask, can England’s game be seen
Rooted so deep as on the village green?
Here, in the slum, where doubtful sunlight falls
To gild three stumps chalked on decaying walls. ⁸⁶

Within the game’s discourses, the durability and cultural influence of this literary archetype had the remarkable ability to harmonise north and south, affording distinct regional geographies a shared sense of Englishness. When the poet, Norman Nicholson, reconstructed his boyhood in the Cumbrian mining town of Millom during the 1920s, the town’s cricket field was initially described as “a sour/flat landscape shaped with weed and wire.” This alternative cricket landscape, along with the fierce competitiveness and un-tutored techniques of the players, contravenes cricket’s ethical and aesthetic *doxa* (“...no Wisden pitch; no plea; For classic cuts and Newbolt’s verse ...”). However, with an increasing concentration of natural images, the poem concludes with a statement in which geographical and socio-economic particularity are subsumed into a timeless image of the generic village green:

Here in a small-town game is seen
The long-linked dance of the village green:
Wishing well and maypole ring,
Mumming and ritual of spring. ⁸⁷

As “A Country Vicar” put it, whether played at Lord’s “or on some rough corner of a patch of waste-land,” cricket was always “the same game.”⁸⁸ Despite its construction of distinct regional identities and senses of place, the literaturisation of cricket produced an image of temporal and spatial conformity in which the various manifestations of the sport were essentially the same, and, as such, enforced an idea of Englishness that was both hegemonic and based upon a principle of de-individuation. In a survey of fictional village cricket landscapes (many taken from

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inter-war texts⁸⁹) Bale has constructed a model of “the mythical English cricket landscape” that accurately summarises the archetypal features of the scene (figure 10):

Fig. 10. “A model of the mythical English cricket landscape”. Source: John Bale, *Landscapes of Modern Sport*, p.158

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The sheer weight of symbolic and political significance placed upon literary images of the rural cricket field meant that cricket’s inter-war literaturisation involved a meta-fictional obsession to comply with certain prescribed formulas of representation. In a poem called “The Season Opens” Blunden listed the necessary features of the cricket landscape:

A tower we must have, and a clock in the tower,
Looking over the tombs, the tithe barn, the bower;
The inn and the mill, the forge and the hall,
And the loamy sweet level that loves bat and ball. 90

The individual features of the cricket landscape are then detailed in four stanzas until the scene is transfigured into a place of unchanging seriality in which past and present can merge into one:

Till the meadow is quick with the masters who were,
And he hears his own shouts when he first trotted there;
Long ago; all gone home now; but here they come all!
Surely these are the same, who now bring bat and ball?

As in Morton’s travel guides, Blunden’s construction of the cricket landscape has a strong sense of staged authenticity in which every feature is a sign of itself, an archetype rather than a unique element in a geographically-specific location. 91

Likewise, at the beginning of A.E. Macdonnell’s fictional portrayal of a match played by Squire’s Invalids XI, the scene is set so as to reveal it as a construction by ironically over-determining the description of the cricket landscape, a scene he describes as “perfect to the last detail ... as if Mr Cochran had ... brought Ye Olde Englyshe Village straight down by special train from the London Pavilion”:

It was a hot summer’s afternoon. There was no wind, and the smoke from the red-roofed cottages curled slowly up into the golden haze. The clock on the flint tower of the church struck the half-hour, and the vibration spread slowly across the shimmering hedge rows. ...Bees lazily drifted. White butterflies

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91Matless, 67.
flapped their aimless way among the gardens. Delphiniums, larkspur, tiger-lillies, evening primrose, monk’s hood, sweet peas, swaggered brilliantly above the box hedges, the wooden palings and the rickety gates. The cricket field itself was a mass of daisies and buttercups and dandelions, tall grasses and purple vetches and thistledown, and great clumps of dark red sorrel, except, of course, for the oblong patch in the centre – mown, rolled, watered-a smooth, shining emerald of grass, the pride of Fordenden, the Wicket.92

With its bizarre, almost surreal, ending, England their England resembles the contemporaneous anti-pastoral of Stella Gibbons’s Cold Comfort Farm in its ironic treatment of the conventions and stereotypes of inter-war English rural fictions. But the meta-fictional register of the writing testifies to the cultural and political significance and popularity of such representations. Macdonnell’s novel ends with a dream-like evocation of “the muted voices of grazing sheep, and the merry click of bat and ball, and the peaceful green fields of England, and the water-meeds, and the bells of the Cathedral.” The reader is left with the ironic statement that “rural England is the real England.”93

The Politics of the Aesthetic

The literary elevation of village cricket to iconic status in the 1920s and 30s articulated closely with contemporary perceptions of the period as one of rapid and threatening social, political and economic change. Through literaturisation, the aestheticised space of the rural cricket field was so indelibly inscribed with a synoptic sense of Englishness that it united figures of disparate political persuasions such as the left-wing socialist Morton and the twice Conservative Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin. In the context of the political tensions of the 1920s, Baldwin frequently used images of cricket to represent the ideals of his organic Conservatism: “Lord’s changes

93Ibid., 207.
but Lord’s remains the same” he wrote, “how unchanging is each phase of the everchanging game!”94 As President of the English Association, Baldwin was a firm advocate of the healing and class-binding capacities of both literature and cricket. At the other end of the political spectrum, George Sampson, an “immaterial communist” who was also active in the English studies movement, likewise constructed cricket as emblematic of a national culture in which social tensions could be resolved: “You get real communism and ‘brotherhood of man’ at a concert or a theatre or a cricket match ... and that is the only kind of equality worth seeking for.”95 Squire, who stood as a Labour candidate in the 1918 general election and as a Liberal in 1924, claimed that “few men ... would not rather play on a field surrounded by ancient elms and rabbit-haunted bracken than on a better field with flat black lands or gasworks around.” He believed in the utopian idea of the cricket field as a symbolic space free of social tension because here “the distinctions in life are temporarily forgotten: for the time being we live in an ideal republic where Jack is as good as his master, but may be a little better ...”96 Even Sassoon, who had attempted to disturb the dangerously complacent English imaginary by radically estranging cricket imagery in his war poems, recalled a dream in which Blunden and he scored centuries together, wrote a poem celebrating the unchanging and “apolitical” quality of Lord’s (“though the Government has gone vermillion ... Lord’s will endure”) and produced one of the most idealised of inter-war cricket narratives, “The Flower Show Match” (1928).97


95George Sampson, “Introduction” to England for the English, quoted in Baldick, 161.

96Quoted in Midwinter, 135.

J.B. Priestley later provided a variation on the political symbolism of the cricket field in his anti-statist manifesto for Britain, *Out of the People*. Priestley used the image of village cricket (in which there are “more in the field than round it”98) as a metaphor of a more participatory and less centralised politics, of what Kevin Davey has described as Priestley’s “radically democratic antipathy to state socialism.”99

Such political metaphors of village cricket had already been elaborated in the deeply nostalgic form of specialist cricket fiction that had emerged in the 1920s as a response to the highly charged political atmosphere. Novels such as Hugh de Selincourt’s *The Cricket Match* (1924) and its sequel, *The Game of the Season* (1931) apotheosised the literary conventions of the rural cricket field, constructing it as place of Englishness in which the idea of the “team” signified organic social order under the benevolent authority of the local gentry. Rendered in quasi-biblical rhetoric, the village cricket field, as the text itself notes, is a hegemonic place of Englishness which transcends class politics and modernity:

And each man, as he came on to the ground, got slowly caught up in the spirit of the game, emerging, each in his own way, from the habits of worry and care; as each man was given the chance not too frequently offered in modern life of living for a time outside himself, with a common purpose, in which he took genuine interest; and nearly every man, each in his own way, availed himself of this great, good thing, unconsciously of course, for the most part, but eagerly.100


These fictions were part of wider literary context in which all aspects of village life were simultaneously elegised and celebrated as embodying the survival of the “organic” amidst the social and cultural carnage of the present. Constructed in such a way that the idea of organic custom was a symbol of organic social order, the rural cricket field was represented as possessing remarkable powers of political conciliation. In the 1930s de Selincourt exploited the popularity of his earlier cricket fiction by producing two books of reflective essays on cricket. Now haunted by fears of fascism as well as communism, these books rearticulated the literary ideal of the “team” as an antidote to political extremism. According to de Selincourt, what is needed to cure the ills of the time are not “Men in brown shirts, men in black shirts, men in red shirts, marching about, being immensely manly, saving the nation …”, but “…men in white shirts.”

Amid the extreme ideological tensions of 1930s Europe, cricket for de Selincourt represented a pacific, spiritualised masculine collectivity that could transcend the dogmas of political master narratives.

At the end of Dudley Carew’s cricket pilgrimage in search of English identity, some of the working-class men and women encountered on his travels are recalled. Though Carew’s portrayal contains a degree of class stereotyping, they are characters with genuine and deeply held grievances against the political system. He describes the environs of Old Trafford as a place of “privation and poverty”; a man in Sheffield tells him, “It’s the moral effect of being out of work wot’s bad …the moral effect.”; another in Manchester tells him, “We’ve been cheated, that’s what it is, we’ve been cheated.” The concluding chapter of Carew’s national cricket pilgrimage belies deep fears that this pervading sense of betrayal has revolutionary potential: “Whether

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101 Ibid., 180.
102 Carew, 201.
they are right or wrong matters little - what matters is the shape and form of action the
spirit generated by that word will take."103 *England Over* was thus one of number of
fictions appearing in the 1920s that, according to John Lucas, "were contemplating
the likelihood, even the inevitability, of violent revolutionary change."104 But Carew
was merely making explicit that which was simultaneously repressed and encoded in
much cricket literature of the period. Rather than seriously question the validity of the
hegemonic values underpinning the British class system, inter-war cricket writers
utilised more introspective modes of representation in order to analyse and subtly
renegotiate the reconciliatory concept of Englishness. The intense contemporary
literaturisation of cricket suggested both a retreat from the harsh actualities of history,
and an enduring faith that the hegemonic practice and discourse of cricket could bind
the nation and the empire together.

The contemporary intensification of cricket’s literaturisation - the
retrospective organisation of its discourses and the use of the category of literature as
a means of cultural validation – produced an aesthetic construction of village cricket
in which the sport, in its properly rural setting, could somehow transcend the modern
and continue to provide reassuring images of tradition and organic social order. That
politicians of all persuasions could utilise the imagery of village cricket in their
appeals to “national cohesion” meant that this literary landscape resonated with large
sections of the populace who were familiar with the features and symbolism of such
representations. As such, the inter-war literaturisation of cricket was an element of a
wider (re-) construction of Englishness that promised to provide a reconciliation of
the ideological tensions of the period at the level of the aesthetic. Although the

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103Ibid., 204.

104J. Lucas, 160.
oblique signs of modernity occasionally spilt out into these representations, they were fundamentally akin to a closed linguistic system, a space of constant inter-textuality in which the village green, as a synecdoche of the national culture, could metonymically reproduce itself nationally and imperially as an unchanging place of Englishness. However, as the product of this closed system of signification, the village green rarely had to contend with the potentially destabilising power of the body. By contrast, the professional cricket journalists of the time were faced with the problem of theorising the performative in cricket, and their interpretations of this increasingly disrupted the literary ideal of simple metonymic equivalence between village green and Test arena. The embodied performance of County and Test cricket thus became explicitly implicated into a discourse of cultural crisis. This is now discussed in relation to the work of a number of inter-war cricket journalists, and particularly that of the most critically celebrated English cricket writer, Sir Neville Cardus.
CHAPTER THREE

"GUILTY, M'LUDD, TO FICTION":
NEVILLE CARDUS AND "THE MOMENT OF SCRUTINY"

The Critical Construction of Neville Cardus

Since 1920, when Neville Cardus began writing on cricket for the Manchester Guardian under the *nom de plume* of "Cricketer", his profoundly nostalgic and stylistically florid representations of cricket have afforded him a revered status in the sport's literary canon. More than any other cricket writer, Cardus has become a construct who transcends the fields of "Cricket Literature" and "Literature" to become a component of the "National Culture". If Nyren's position at the beginning of the apostolic tradition of English cricket writing have made him cricket's Chaucer, the valorisation of Cardus as a major and highly influential literary figure in the sport have afforded him a Shakespearian status. The valorisation of Cardus started soon after the beginning of his career when the influential organicist literary figure, H.J. Massingham, invited him to contribute an article to the *Nation* in 1921. Subsequently, Cardus’s "William Gilbert Grace" appeared in Massingham’s *The Great Victorians; “Cricket Fields and Cricketers” in A Hundred Best English Essays*, and "Cricket and Cricketers" and "A Sentimental Journey" in two English prose text books for schools,

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1Neville Cardus, "Guilty, m'ludd, to fiction if it serves higher Truth," *The Guardian*, 20 October, 1967.
one of which was published by the English Association. In his *Autobiography* Cardus acknowledged the support he had received in the 1920s from a number of influential conservative literary figures such as Squire and Hugh Walpole. His first three books were published by A.E. Housman’s friend and publisher, Grant Richards, and his fourth, *Cricket* (1930), appeared as part of Squire and Viscount Lee of Fareham’s Longmans’ *English Heritage Series* with an introduction written by Squire himself. Other titles in the series included *The English Constitution, Shakespeare, Fox-hunting, English Music,* and *English Folk Song and Dance.* Equally implicated in the contemporary literary construction of Englishness, *English Cricket* (1945) was published in *Writers’ Britain* alongside titles such as Blunden’s *English Villages* and Vita Sackville-West’s *English Country Houses.* Cardus later contributed a chapter on cricket to a book published to mark the 1951 Festival of Britain. Clearly Cardus’s literary constructions of cricket provided a number of influential cultural gatekeepers and publishing institutions with images of how they believed England and Englishness should be reproduced. Cardus’s cricket writings have frequently been reprinted, anthologised and edited, and all recent English anthologies of cricket prose include at least one Cardus essay. Furthermore, forms of literary criticism have been a major constitutive discourse in the making of Neville Cardus. The figure of Cardus (the first cricket writer to be knighted) has been formed and canonised as the supreme celebrant of cricket (and particularly the cricket of the inter-war period) and from there constructed as a central figure in an ideological discourse of the national culture.

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His death in 1975 prompted a flurry of tributes from journalists and literary figures. For John Arlott (himself an important figure in the making and re-making of the cricket canon as both critic and writer), Cardus created modern cricket writing:

The first writer to evoke cricket; to create a mythology out of the folk hero players; essentially to put the feelings of ordinary cricket watchers into words ... There can never be a greater cricket writer that Neville Cardus. He created it. Others performed what he showed them. There is not one of his juniors who has not been affected by him, and few who have not, shamelessly, copied him.5

There are a number of problems which arise from the critical construction of Cardus in its present form. First, the notion that Cardus created modern cricket writing elides any sense that his writings draw upon, and elaborate, an already well-established formula of literary representation. As the previous two chapters have argued, a rhetorical template was already in existence before the First World War that was an integral element of cricket literature's ability to produce and reproduce Englishness. Second, the emphasis on Cardus as cricket's only truly “literary” figure, although largely an aesthetic judgement, has tended to obscure the historical significance of other contemporary cricket literature and establish the name “Cardus” as synonymous with all the cricket writing of the 20s and 30s. For example, in two recently published academic anthologies of the literature of “Englishness”, Cardus’s cricket essays “represent” to students the whole idea of cricket as an expression of a heightened form of Englishness.6 As Matthew Engel perceptively points out in an

5Quoted in Christopher Brookes, His Own Man: The Life of Neville Cardus (London; Methuen, 1985), 6.

edition of the writings of one of Cardus’s lesser-known contemporaries, J.M. Kilburn:7

It has become rather fashionable to read cricket reports and essays of the 1930s, or at least to read the reports of one man: Sir Neville Cardus. The Cardus nostalgia industry, which has just stopped short of selling souvenir knick-knacks and T-shirts, has reached almost alarming proportions; for modern readers his brilliant but idiosyncratic view of the ‘30s has become received wisdom.

However, the object of this chapter is not to challenge Cardus’s status as the keystone of the cricket canon, nor to make any aesthetic or literary claims on behalf of his more marginalised contemporaries. The biggest problem that arises from Cardus’s canonical status is that his valorisation as a transcendental literary figure (one who nevertheless supposedly defines what is meant by cricket in the inter-war period) elides any sense that his work arose from, reacted to, and attempted to provide an aesthetic solution to, a particular set of cultural, political and socio-economic circumstances. Arlott was correct in claiming Cardus “created” cricket, or at least a particularly culturally significant literary construction of it, but Cardus’s highly-influential literary version of the cricket field was a complex mediation of a widely held sense of cultural crisis at the time. According to Francis Mulhearn:

The condition of British society in the 1920s was ... one of crisis, defined at the economic level by a complex unity of innovation and decay, and politically, by a related dislocation of the inherited political order ... Within the national culture, the effects of this crisis were pervasive.8

Using the particular perception and identification of this crisis provided by the Scrutiny group in the early 1930s, this chapter will place the cricket writings of Cardus and other contemporaries into context, and suggest that inter-war

7 J.M. Kilburn, *In Search of Cricket*, i.
representations of County and Test cricket in the inter-war period registered, and attempted to reconcile, a number of the cultural and ideological tensions of the period.

Cardus in Context

The juxtaposition of the Scrutiny Group with Cardus and the enterprise of cricket writing may appear theoretically ludicrous and historically questionable. There are obviously dangers in drawing parallels between a fundamentally academic, petit-bourgeois intellectual formation such as Scrutiny, and the writing of a working-class autodidact such as Cardus, which at one level at least, was a highly individual manifestation of the liberal and aesthetic ideals of the Manchester Guardian.9 Scrutiny's construction of a quasi-scientific discourse of cultural criticism as a means of saving civilisation arose, in part, in direct opposition to a tradition of Romantic subjectivism into which Cardus had consciously positioned himself. Equally, though Cardus used cricket to deliver high-minded cultural statements, his journalism and books were examples of the emergence of middlebrow literary pulp so detested by the Scrutiny coterie. Indeed, when Derek Birley later likened Cardus's cricket writings to "bad advertising copy", the judgement had distinct Leavisite overtones.10 Conversely, Scrutiny's emphasis on professionalism and theoretical analysis in criticism was for Cardus symptomatic of the contemporary degradation of aesthetic standards. For example, he regarded the more professionalized music criticism of the period as "all the result of education and middle-class breeding; there was no hint that these people, these dilettantes, ever felt deeply or were impelled riskily by imagination."11

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However, the particular remedies to cultural crisis offered by *Scrutiny* and Cardus are less important than their perceptions and anatomisations of that crisis. This chapter contends that Cardus and other inter-war cricket writers shared many of *Scrutiny*’s cultural perceptions, and that his work, like that of *Scrutiny*, emerged from, and attempted to reconcile, many of the ideological contradictions of the period.

As much an Arnoldian as the leading figure in the *Scrutiny* group, F.R. Leavis, Cardus’s writing of cricket into the category of the aesthetic mediated both his perceptions of the causal effect of modernity on cultural production and his uneasy relationship with sport. In Cardus’s reconstruction of his early life, he produced his aestheticised identity through a narrative of Smilesian self-help and a relentless and systematic quest for cultural capital. Then, at the *Manchester Guardian*, Cardus discovered a cultural high-mindedness that suited his own ambitions and self-image. Like Binns’s *Cricket in Firelight* and Carew’s *England Over*, Cardus’s early cricket writings typify what Light has termed as the contemporary post-war “literature of convalescence.”¹² After Cardus suffered what he later described as “a breakdown”, the editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, W.P. Crozier, suggested he write a few reports on cricket as a form of therapy.¹³ Already working as a music critic, becoming a cricket correspondent forced Cardus to examine the increasing contemporary opposition between “high” and “popular” culture, a tension that he attempted to reconcile by projecting the language and register of Victorian literature and cultural criticism onto the sport. Cardus’s early essays, therefore, represent a historically significant intensification of cricket’s aestheticisation. In these early, immediately

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¹²Light, 69.

post-war essays of recuperation, there is frequently a Pateresque perception of the shadow of death, and of the melancholy sense of a brief day of sun:

Why should it ever happen to a cricketer that a June morning comes on which the sun begins in the old comfortable way to climb the sky, and Lord's stands in the light, full of summer-time animation, and he no longer there to know of it. 14

The sense of transience consistently lends a poignant intensity to the perception of aesthetic form:

And as the sun shone more and more aslant, the light seemed to put this batsmanship of Woolley's under a glass; we had cool and polished contours given to it, the hard outlines of reality were lost in soft shades. 15

A major figure in the inter-war literaturisation of cricket, Cardus consistently utilised the logic of distinction in order both to aesthetically validate the sport, and to fashion himself into what Bourdieu has termed “Homo Aestheticus”. 16 Like Leavis, Cardus proposed a narrow Arnoldian definition of “culture” as that which had historically been preserved and transmitted by an elite minority. For both these writers, the traditional relationship between the separate, but mutually-reliant categories of “culture” and “civilization” (the totality of social relations) was being placed under inordinate pressure by the values of the “machine”. 17 Accordingly, Cardus’s cricket writings mediated this traumatic cultural context by writing the sport and its literature into the categories of “Art” and “Culture”. By so doing, the hope was that it could somehow resist and transcend the contemporary evil of commodification. Although most famous for his many references to classical music, Cardus also aestheticised cricket by way of literary allusion. For example, in his essay “Walter

14Cardus, “Cricket Fields and Cricketers,” in Days in the Sun, 15.


16Bourdieu, Distinction, 143.

17Mulhearn, 35.
Brearley”, Cardus proposed the idea that a particular individual cricketing style can be rendered by using an apposite literary style or mode:

The man who would write of great cricketers must look to his choice of language; his theme might call one day for prose and another for poetry, and for all sorts of prose and poetry. Dr Johnson himself could not have weighed words with a keener nicety than a discussion of, say, Grace’s batsmanship demanded, but fugitive loveliness from a Herrick is needed to tell of the poised, fleeting charm of a Spooner. For an innings by a Joe Darling ... let us have a little of the rolling thunder of a page by Carlyle, with smoke in the track of the sentences. And if Ranji is your theme, call on the muse that sent Coleridge his visions of Kuble Khan ... In the making of a pen-picture of the imperial Maclaren a minor sort of Gibbon must unloose a majesty of cadence; flashes of Meredith epigram – or reflections of them – and nothing less are likely to reveal for us Macartney as he breaks shins over the wit of batsmanship; while a large Rabelasian vigour will blow through the book that tells the tale of Armstrong. And where is a better prose for Walter Brearley than that in Dickens which tells of the wind that roared ‘Ho! ‘Ho! over the countryside ...  

In this literary pièce de résistance, Cardus suggested that the cricket writer must be part of an Arnoldian elite, thoroughly assimilated into the English literary tradition and fully versed with the models of the canonical writers. The ideal cricket writer (presumably Cardus himself) is thus both thoroughly immersed in this tradition and something of a literary chameleon, able to draw upon a suitable stylistic or generic model in order to satisfactorily convey a sense of an individual cricketing style. As an art form, cricket warrants the attention of the elevated activity of “Literature”, and, by explicit comparison with literature, gains further aesthetic credibility. Significantly, all the cricketers referred to in the passage are from the elite pre-war “Golden Age” pantheon while, with the exception of Rabelais, the corresponding authors are all well-established figures in the English literary canon. Yet the passage mediates some of the profound cultural contradictions of the period. On one hand it eschews a quasi-modernist pluralism of reference and allusion along the lines of T.S. Eliot’s temperate idea of “traditionality”19; on the other hand it presents a series of retrospective

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19Mulhearn, 16.
discourses and images of bodily performance that challenge both modernist theories of the instability and contingency of individual identity, and the contemporary standardisation of commodities.

Such heightened acts of literaturisation and aestheticisation also had the more mundane function of disavowing Cardus's role as a professional sports journalist. As John Hargreaves has explained, in the 1920s cricket was becoming more fully implicated within the consumption patterns of popular culture:

Spectator sports expanded, taking their place alongside radio, the cinema, and the dance-hall as a main component of a more commercialised, popular mass-entertainment industry. This was the golden age of football and cricket attendances: professional football had ceased to be so strongly associated with the North and spread southwards in popularity; County Cricket became a truly more popular game; the Amateur Athletic Association Championships enjoyed a boom in attendances. New highly commercialised sports appeared in the 1920s, for example greyhound-racing, speedway, and Tourist Trophy (T.T.) motor-cycle racing, which gained in popularity with working-class people.20

Though literaturisation attempted to disavow cricket literature's commercial imperatives, cricket books were a significant part of such consumption patterns. During the period all forms of cricket literature were highly popular. As one contemporary noted, "[T]hose who are enthusiasts never tire of reading of the National game."21 According to Jack Williams, the sheer number of cricket books published suggests that more people wanted to read about cricket than any other sport. Padwick's bibliography states that at least 10 statistical annuals were published in the period, 8 adult and over 170 children's novels in which cricket was the major theme, 50 books concerned with Test Match cricket, 30 cricketing autobiographies, over 60 coaching books, 5 general and 11 county histories, about a dozen books dealing with

20 J. Hargreaves, Sport Power and Culture, 86.

cricket as part of the "English scene," 3 collections of cricket poetry and about 20 collections of poetry containing some cricket verse. For many in the period, cricket was a discourse as much as a practice, and this literature both fed and drew upon the game's continued popularity. As has already been argued, it also suggests that the more reflective cricket literature, including poetry, provided readers with healing images of the stability of England's rural, pre-industrial structures and traditions.

Fig. 11. Cricket Week at Hudson's bookshop in Birmingham, 1934. The shop's stock included titles by famous cricketers such as Ranjitsinhji, Donald Bradman and Harold Larwood. Prices ranged from around half-a-crown to seven-and-six. Source: David Frith, Pageant of Cricket (London, 1987), p.333.

With economic factors reconfiguring the field of first class cricket, discourses surrounding it critiqued its contemporary commodification, and interpreted it as a symptom of broader cultural decline. In 1922, reconstructing and misinterpreting cricket history in order to make a reactionary political point, Alec Waugh widened his critique of contemporary society through cricket by taking in communism. Here the

22J. Williams, Cricket and England: A Cultural and Social History of the Inter-War Years, 68-70.
gendering of cricket as feminine contrasts the field to the rapacious forces of Bolshevism:

...how quickly that world has passed, and how effectively the machinery of our industrial system has already taken cricket for itself. Nyren's game is no longer entertainment for a few. It has become part of the national life, and probably, if the Bolsheviks get their way with her, it will become nationalised with the cinema and the theatre and Association Football.23

Such images of a pristine and organic national culture being ravished by political, economic and technological processes were elaborated by influential contemporary cultural gatekeepers such as Eliot and Scrutiny. The Scrutineers saw the influence of the "machine civilisation" as manifest in every aspect of cultural life. In Culture and Environment, for example, Leavis and Denys Thompson sought to show the causal connections between industrial mass production and the decline in contemporary culture.24 Cardus's cricket writings equally produced a sense of this causal connection. Like Scrutiny, his analysis mediated the contemporary reconfiguration of class forces because he consistently identified an apparent mechanisation of first class cricket with the increasing dominance of professional players over "Gentlemen" amateurs. Already, in the early 1920s, Cardus argued that cricket was hopelessly implicated in the same industrial and technocratic processes later identified by Scrutiny as so culturally damaging. These processes reflected an emergent reconfiguration of power within the cricket field away from the relatively autonomous towards the heteronomous pole:

Cricket never knew so great a craving for amateur cricket as to-day. Since the war the professionals have had the field largely to themselves, and, frankly, they have in the main turned a game into a real industry.25


24 Mulhearn, 58.

25 Cardus, Days in the Sun, 87.
Cardus and *Scrutiny* saw the new technocracy as infiltrating all levels of cultural life. For Leavis and Thompson, the cinema, like the new mass circulation popular press, radio, and motoring, was akin to "the machine". Cardus also interpreted the rise of the cinema as a popular form as a perfidious sign of Americanisation and standardisation. In a manner strictly comparable to Eliot's, Cardus contrasted cinema unfavourably with the old "organic" working class culture of the pre-war music hall.

For both *Scrutiny* and Cardus the entire musical culture of the period had also been infiltrated by technological processes in the shape of various forms of modernism. To Bruce Pattison, the first Scrutiny music critic, industrialism had spawned jazz, a form that in its unashamed popular appeal resembled the popular press and cinema. Cardus admired jazz as a spontaneous form of musical expression but, as Jeff Hill has noted, when he described the Lancashire bowler, Cec Parkin, as "the first jazz cricketer," he implicated the sport in a broader debate as to the cultural effects of modernity.

Wilfred Mellors, another *Scrutiny* music critic, saw jazz's esoteric polar opposite, high musical modernism, as equally a symptom of the same underlying cultural malaise. The present "environment" was antithetical to genuine subjective musical expression, hence Stravinsky's "callously discarded phrases" or Schoenberg's "desperate shilly-shallying pastiche and experimentalism." In his guise as music cricket of the *Manchester Guardian*, Cardus was an influential celebrant of the Austro-German classical and romantic tradition, and, at best, reticent about musical expression.

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26 Mulhearn, 52.


29 Mulhearn, 52.
modernism. The many analogies that appear in his cricket writings between music and cricket reveal the cultural politics through which the crisis of modernity is mediated. Whereas the stylistic modalities of pre-war “Golden Age” batsmen such as R.H. Spooner were rendered by reference to Mozart, the oblique signs of modernism he detected in the bodily performance of contemporary batmen such as the Australian, Ponsford, were compared to the “formalism” of the twentieth century Soviet composer, Dmitri Shostakovich.30

Such judgements were indicative of contemporary perceptions of modernity in which a standardisation of processes led to a standardisation of persons, mediated in cricket discourse through bodily practice. Many inter-war cricket writers produced a critical discourse of mechanisation around the first class and international cricket field that was a projection into the logic of the field of broader cultural and political concerns. Such processes of standardisation were frequently figured in terms of the “over-coaching” of cricketers into mere clones of one another. According to one of cricket’s most influential cultural gatekeepers, Pelham Warner:

This is the age of machinery, but you cannot turn such a beautiful and subtle game as Cricket into an affair of machinery; temperament and psychology must be allowed free play.31

For A.G. Gardiner, “[T]here are dull, mechanic fellows who turn out runs with as little emotion as a machine turns out pins”32; and, in the early 1930s, Hugh de Selincourt used a literary analogy to suggest that cricket had by then become fully mechanised:

30Cardus, English Cricket, 14.


No game calls more loudly for initiative and personality or makes greater demands on the individual genius of the player: and yet in no game are there so many machine-made performers in evidence. Cricket resembles an art to which we have attained no more closely than a well-made copy of Greek iambics approaches poetry.  

Cardus created a generic professional cricketer called "Bloggs of Blankshire" as the embodiment of the levelling technocratic processes and the post-war social mobility that he and other conservative writers perceived as so aesthetically impoverishing. He also registered the fallen aesthetic present by noting that cricket writing itself had become expressive of a prevalent intellectualism:

Look at the literature of cricket in the eighties and at that of the moment. A.G. Steel's essay on bowling ...is good schoolboy thinking in comparison with E.R. Wilson's brainy masterpiece in the latest Badmington. Pass from "W.G." on batsmanship to D.J. Knight on the same subject in his excellent little book and you pass from the easy fresh air to the dim study. "Theory, dear friend," said Mephistopheles to the student, "is grey, and green the golden tree of life".  

The intellectual environment so apparently hostile to Cardus's form of subjective criticism led him to project onto Oxbridge cricket the contemporary influence of Freudianism and the "psychological novelists". Here Cardus's judgement forms part of a discursive context in which English masculinity was being reconstituted in the aftermath of the war. It is rendered by the construction of an opposition between pre-war "young bloods" ("readers not of Freud but of Paul de Kock") and a new generation of intellectuals, a sort of cricketing Bloomsbury set who play "the cricket of men fond rather of analysis than of action." At a very class-specific level, the loss and gain of an aesthetic is here related to a range of historical factors: the effects of


34Cardus, Days in the Sun, 188.

35Ibid., 135.
the war, the emergence of critiques of the hegemonic cult of athleticism so central to the production of pre-war masculinities, and the apparent intrusion into cricket of a theoretical discourse, a discourse that challenged the entire concept of the centred individual so crucial to Cardus's aesthetic schema.

The "Two-Eyed Stance" and Cultural Discipline

The discursive agonistics surrounding the aesthetics of bodily performance in cricket during the period are manifest in the discourse of the "two-eyed" stance. In *English Cricket* Cardus retrospectively identified a significant change in the bodily performance of cricket in the early 1920s. He then went on to relate this to a broader cultural and economic context in which cultural authority was no longer in the hands of an aristocracy:

> It was an age of some disillusionment and cynicism; the romantic gesture was distrusted. "Safety First" was the persistent warning. We saw at once on the cricket field the effect of a dismal philosophy and a debilitated state of national health. Beautiful and brave stroke-play gave way to a sort of trench warfare, conducted behind the sandbag of broad pads. 36

This last sentence posits two closely-related causes of the perceived aesthetic malaise in cricket: “Beautiful and brave strokeplay” signifies the stylistic mode of the amateur batsmen of the pre-war period, and connotes their cultural authority; “the sandbag of broad pads” is clearly an image of the war, a conflict that had seemingly taken away that authority. Cardus was specifically referring to a particular re-working of cricket’s performative grammar that emerged after the war known as the “two-eyed” or “two-shouldered stance.” This “fashion” was disapprovingly described in a coaching manual of the 20s as:

> When the batsman stands “wide open,” as it is called, i.e. with his left foot so far to “leg” and so far out of line with his right, that he is standing almost

square to the bowler. Now this cannot be sound policy, because it is practically an impossibility, when you are in this position, to put your left leg to the off side, maintain your balance, and drive the ball with your left shoulder well over it. Try it and see. You can’t get there quickly enough can you? 37

As the passage explains, the stance was regarded as precluding the execution of the off-drive - the hallmark stroke of the pre-war amateurs, and led, its critics believed, to batsman accumulating runs on the leg side rather than stylishly scoring them on the off (still occasionally referred to in cricket discourse as the “posh side”). The “two-eyed” stance thus became a technical and aesthetic issue that mediated politics.

As was shown in chapter one, in producing and disseminating models of performative grammar, the technical discourse of cricket had facilitated the standardisation and regulation of bodily practice in the sport since the early nineteenth century. The production, dissemination and consumption of such literature also informed the body-related fantasies of many young British and colonial males. However, as figures 12, 13 and 14 suggest, in the inter-war period aesthetic issues such as the apparent extinction of the off drive and the emergence of the “two-eyed” stance produced a discourse through which a number of cricket’s cultural gatekeepers attempted to regulate and control the bodily practice of cricket in a more consciously corrective manner.

Many of the most vehement critics of the “two-eyed stance” were pre-war amateurs now active as cricket writers, such as Gilbert Jessop and A.C. MacLaren (himself an imposing aristocratic text in the emerging discourse of the “Golden Age”). In MacLaren’s technical discourse, political and aesthetic judgements were always inextricably intertwined: the “modern style” of “getting in front and facing the bowler …” may gain “the applause of the vulgar” … but is “against the spirit of

37 Henley, 8-9.
cricket".\textsuperscript{38} One remedy for the stylistic malaise in cricket proffered by MacLaren was for cricketers to immerse themselves in Pycroft’s \textit{The Cricket Field}, which, in an adoring essay, he canonised as a stable literary receptacle of timeless technical and aesthetic truths.\textsuperscript{39}

\begin{center}
\textbf{PLATE I}
\end{center}

A. THE ORTHODOX STANCE

If you study the positions of batsmen who play what may be termed “old-fashioned” cricket, i.e. those who still use the off drive, you will see that nearly all of them adopt a stance somewhat similar to that shown in Plate I (A).

Notice particularly the positions of the left shoulder and the left leg. Both are instantly ready to move into the correct place in order to make an off drive. Both eyes, too, are watching the bowler, so that the expression “the two-eyed” stance is incorrect, since everyone who is blessed with the sight of two eyes invariably makes use of both of them.

B. THE TWO-SHOULDERED STANCE

The difference between the positions of the left shoulder and left leg in this picture and those in Plate I (A) is at once apparent. Here the bowler has a good view of both shoulders of the player as well as of both his eyes. Also the position in which the feet—and more particularly the right one—have been placed makes it impossible to plant the left leg quickly across, get the left shoulder well over the ball, keep the bat straight, and yet maintain perfect balance. Since many more balls are bowled on the off stump than on the leg, it follows that scoring must necessarily be slow and cricket unattractive to watch if this two-shouldered stance is adopted.

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\textsuperscript{39}“A Cricket Classic” in MacLaren, 39-50.
In a sense this is the pièce de résistance of all cricket strokes. The satisfaction which you feel when you have hit the ball "plumb off the meat" is a thing to dwell upon and wipes out many previous failures.

It is therefore the duty of everyone who has the interests of cricket at heart to prevent this beautiful stroke from dying out. So long as you stand properly, i.e. with the left foot and left shoulder well in front, you will always be ready to make it when the chance occurs, but if you stand "wide open," you won't!

The Saturday afternoon crowd loves the high "ballooner," but those "in the know" sigh nowadays for the old-fashioned, honest off drive for four, and care but little for the pushes off the legs for ones and twos.

The position in the photograph opposite is good. Notice the balance at the finish of the stroke, the full follow through, the point of the right toe—and last, but not least, the secret of it all, viz. the straightness and correct placing of the left leg.
Fig. 14. The Wrong Finish Of An Off Drive. Source: Henley, p.61

PLATE XII

THE WRONG FINISH OF AN OFF DRIVE

This picture, compared with the previous one, is horrible to look upon and is best forgotten!

Here again it is the left leg which tells its own tale!

Moreover, there is no determination about the stroke.

The bat is crooked and has been "hung out to dry," nor can the weight of the body possibly be brought forward without knocking over the photographer.

The best thing to do is to turn back again and get the taste out of your mouth—quam ederitne.
As a bodily contravention of the aesthetic doxa of cricket discourse, and a symbol of "the spread of democratic ideas in cricket," Cardus was a particularly vehement critic of the stance.\(^4^0\) However, the writer who most obviously implicated the practice of cricket into a discourse of cultural discipline was the idiosyncratic E.H.D. Sewell. One of only a few public school educated professional cricketers of the pre-war period, Sewell became a prolific writer of books on cricket and rugby characterised by their trenchant views and forthright prosody. Whereas Cardus's aesthetic of cricket was partly constituted by the variety and floridity of his prose style, Sewell was stylistically highly limited, and, as a result, none of his books have been reprinted and no commercially-produced anthology published. However, despite Sewell's extreme marginality in the canon, his inter-war writings were as preoccupied with aesthetics as were those of Cardus. Sewell proposed a critical practice of cricket (seemingly deriving both from Arnold and the utilitarianism of J.S. Mill) based on the concept of an elect who had experienced the cricket of both pre and post war periods. He positioned this elite remnant of cricketer/critics against a new, de-classé type of cricket writer who "spring mainly from a section of our community which has arrived in our midst since the war." their work seemingly redolent of "the querulous spirit of the age which is the progenitor of such trash as Bolshevism ..."\(^4^1\) In contrast to these socialistic arrivistes of cricket writing, Sewell's critical sensibility, deriving from his class background and playing experience, apparently qualified him to pronounce judgement on the contemporary cricket scene, and thus cast himself as an upholder of cricket's aesthetic standards. Sewell perceived that the same socio-economic forces that had produced the "Bolshevist" school of cricket writing had infiltrated the cricket

\(^4^0\)Cardus, "Lessons from Lord's: The Two-Eyed Stance." in *A Cricketer's Book*, 80-85.

field, and were busy insinuating themselves on the bodily practices of young English cricketers. As figure 15 suggests, Sewell’s entire output therefore attached a political and moral imperative to the modalities of bodily performance in cricket:

STYLE IS A GREAT DEAL, IF NOT EVERYTHING.

J. IREMONGER (Notts).

H. ASHTON (Winchester and Cambridge).

H. ASHTON
(Winchester and Cambridge).

KUMAR SRI DULEEP SINGH
(Cheltenham and Cambridge).

Jimmy Iremonger’s ideal bowling action is a pattern for all youngsters. In catching and getting to the pitch, Ashton’s footwork is ideal. Throughout, Duleep’s offensive cannot be faulted.

Though taken from a book published in 1947, the following passage from an essay called “A Plea For The Off-Side”, exemplifies the style and content of Sewell’s disciplinary discourse:

The time has come to put in a word to try and save Cricket from Ugliness.

To make an effort to at least stay its downward progress on the slope atop of which Beauty sits enthroned.

More bluntly, but no less fervently put, I would ask all coaches and captains henceforth to ponder their rudiments; and, doing all in their power to stifle on-side [leg-side] dibs and dabs and pushes and general full-chested inelegance, to let the coming-on generation realize to the full that (1) there is an off-side; and (2) that about ninety per cent of all the grace and beauty in stroke-play reigns there.

It is a most regrettable but an undeniable fact that one seldom hears or reads the names mentioned of more that at most about half a dozen batsmen of the post-1920 cadres when the topic is elegant or attractive batting. [Author’s italics] 42

Sewell also transposed this political logic into the practice of bowling by emphasising the “numerous awkward, badly-brought up actions” that he saw in inter-war cricket. 43

In his critical diatribe against the “two-eyed” stance, Sewell explicitly linked such contemporary modalities with the details of the playing surface, suggesting that “the ‘knuckles and naval stroke’...besmirched the landscape.” 44 Such imagery implicated the practice of cricket into another dimension of the contemporary cultural crisis. As David Matless has shown, the question of access to, and the arrangement and management of, the landscape, were matters of cultural, aesthetic and political authority at this time. 45 Indeed, the dialectic between discourse and bodily practice surrounding the issue of the “two-eyed stance” suggests that the dislocation of the

43 Sewell, Cricket Under Fire, 192.
44 Well Hit! Sir, 58.
45 Matless, 47.
inherited political order was a major factor underlying such critiques of contemporary cricket. In a more codified form than Dangerfield, cricket writers were anatomising "the strange death of liberal England" by transposing their perceptions of the loss of organic political order into the logic of bodily practice.

In intersecting with broader contemporary critiques of the shifting balance of class forces, discourses surrounding the practice of cricket also contributed to the literary construction of an emergent, philistine middle-class. As Ross McKibben has shown, members of this class were frequently attacked for their pretensions, for their conspicuous consumption, for their suburban bungalows and their "bungaloid" accents. In George Orwell's novel, Coming up for Air (1939), for example, a sustained attack on new forms of middle-class housing became "an attack upon inauthentic and pretentious values, and upon the society and the class which held them."46 In Cardus this class formation was represented by the more affluent and socially-mobile post-war professional cricketers such as Walter Hammond and Herbert Sutcliffe. Ironically, the popularity and canonisation of Cardus was part of a process of mediatisation by which such cricketers became, according to Richard Holt, "symbols and role models of a new suburban England."47 Literary images of professionals such as Hammond, Jack Hobbs, Frank Woolley and Herbert Sutcliffe formed part of a broader cultural accommodation between residual aristocratic and emerging democratic principles during the period. Yet in Cardus's inter-war writings these professionals displayed modes of bodily performance that were interpreted as stylistic markers of dangerously democratising social and economic forces. At the


same time however, these relatively affluent professional cricketers disrupted cricket literature’s feudal social vision by playing in a style very close to the aesthetic ideals of the pre-war aristocrats. Cardus thus developed a spurious critical practice in which qualified praise was undercut by a damning series of assumptions concerning social class and masculinity. For Cardus such professionals lacked social breeding, were hopelessly caught up in the cash nexus, and were thus aesthetically deficient:

There have been “stylish” professionals, of course ... But the average “pro’” usually hints at the struggle for existence in mean grasping places. Hammond is majestic, no doubt; but not in the inherited way that MacLaren was majestic. 48 [Cardus’s italics]

Like the much-vilified middle-class suburban housing of the period, Hammond’s bodily performance is presented as lacking authenticity, and this is attributed to a habitus structured by the cash-nexus and not hereditary principles. When Cardus wrote in his 1947 Autobiography that “between 1926 and 1936 our cricket was as stereotyped as the council houses and flats and ribbon roads which more and more ...symbolised post-war England,” 49 he again connected perceptions of the bodily performance of cricket in the period to a broader set of agonistics around the issues of national culture and identity. He later implicated this critical practice in the contemporary reconfiguration of gender relations and masculinity by complaining such professionals, unlike W.G. Grace, “wore feminine shoes of patent leather.” 50

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48 Neville Cardus, English Cricket, 70.
49 Cardus, Autobiography, 123.
50 Cardus, Good Days (London: Jonathan Cape, 1934), 117.
Cardus and the Garden of England

Various textual representations of Frank Woolley also suggest that the cricket writings of the period mediated many of the cultural and ideological tensions of the period. Woolley was a professional left-handed batsman for Kent and England whose career spanned the Great War. Cardus and other contemporary cricket writers, such as R.C. Robertson-Glasgow, interpreted Woolley’s batting as the embodiment of a residual aesthetic of Englishness comfortably at odds with the degraded stylistic modes of contemporary professional cricket. However, in doing so they faced a theoretical problem. When a professional batsman such as Woolley played with an apparently effortless aristocratic poise, it was a bodily disruption to an established aesthetic schema, the projection into the logic of the cricket field of rigid social distinctions. Cardus’s textual re-enactments of Woolley’s bodily performance echoed Bagehot’s theory of the authentically aesthetic; whereas the philistine middle class were drawn not to “pure art but to showy art ... glaring art which catches and arrests the eye for a moment, but which in the end fatigues it,” Woolley’s batting embodied the ideal of the modest and unself-conscious revelation of beauty:

Woolley made gentle movements with his bat. His body would fall a little forward as he flicked a ball to the off-side; there seemed no weight in him when he negligently trotted down the pitch. And as the sun shone more and more aslant, the light seemed to put this batsmanship of Woolley’s under a glass; we had cool and polished contours given to it, the hard outlines of reality were lost in soft shades. Woolley’s batting is frequently called “brilliant”; it is the wrong word for his art at any time. Brilliance hints at a self-conscious gesture, of some flaunting of ability. And nobody ever has seen the touch of the braggart, or even the coxcomb, in Woolley. The condition whereby grace has its being is a perfect unawareness to the fact that it is graceful. And in grace there is always a sense of modesty: the arrogance that masterfulness breeds does not go with grace, which is one of the gentler virtues. 52

In the cricket discourse of the 1920s the conceptual problem posed by Woolley’s bodily performance was effaced by strongly identifying him with his Kentish background. As figure 16 suggests, Woolley iconography of the period consistently located him within a pastoral frame of reference. Even though the mock-Tudor half-timbers and leaded windows of this photograph are redolent of the very fabricated authenticity so loathed by many contemporary commentators, Woolley’s attire (including his leather shoes) signify his status as a honest English yeoman:

![Frank Woolley on his own threshold in Kent](image)

Fig. 16. Source: E.H.D. Sewell, *Who Won The Toss?* (London: 1944), facing p. 81

Safely situated within the impervious walls of the “Garden of England”, Woolley was supposedly aesthetically autonomous, and thus immune to wider social and economic

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52 Cardus, *Days in the Sun*, 55-56.
forces. He could thus embody the survival of an idea of "culture" later defined by Leavis as "the finest idiom." According to Cardus:

Woolley is the most stylish professional batsman in the country; his style carries the Tonbridge stamp... Kent have rarely, in fact, had an uncultivated professional batsman. They consider in Kent that a boy needs to be taught to use his blade in the way that a boy with music in him is taught in other places to use a violin; batsmanship at Tonbridge, in short, is regarded as an art and a science and therefore a matter of culture.54

Such passages reiterate that for Cardus and many other contemporary writers, recourse to the pastoral contained an implicit critique of modernity. Although Cardus's role as professional cricket writer necessarily distanced him from the particular cultural space occupied by Squire and his cricketo-literary cohorts,55 he was a skilful and highly influential manipulator of the pastoral mythology of cricket.56 Like Mary Mitford in the 1820s, Cardus was highly conscious of the fictiveness of such imagery. On a number of occasions he openly identified that the highly formulaic village cricket green was an urban idealisation: "Frankly I think the village green has been overdone in recent writing on cricket; it seems in danger of becoming

53Mulhearn, 39.
54Ibid., 62.
55Cardus, Autobiography, 193.
56The sheer weight of symbolic capital inscribed upon the village cricket green led publishers, in the interests of verisimilitude, to favour submissions from writers who regularly retreated there such as Squire, Blunden, et al. Correspondence dating from 1941 between Neville Cardus and the editor of the Manchester Guardian, W.P. Crozier, is revealing in this respect. Then living in Australia, Cardus submitted a short story to Crozier in which a village cricket match was disrupted by a German bomb, a story supposedly based on an event that occurred the previous year ("Bomb Stopped Play", 1941, TMs (photocopy), Special Collections, John Rylands Library, University of Manchester) In his rejection letter Crozier explained that an account of village cricket "written by someone about 12,000 miles away ...wouldn't ring true" (W.P. Crozier, Manchester, to Neville Cardus, 22 May 1941, Special Collections, John Rylands Library, University of Manchester).

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a literary conceit; a product of Chelsea rather than of Chipping Campden;"57 indeed, the reality of rural life was one of "empty villages which only the townsman can see romantically nowadays."58 At the same time, Cardus understood the salutary potential of such images and could rhapsodise about the aesthetic pleasures of the rural cricket scene as much as any author. Like so many of his contemporaries, including Scrutiny, Cardus’s radical disaffection with modernity found imaginative resolution in a form of literary ruralism. For a commentator particularly despondent about what he perceived as the mechanisation of first class and Test cricket, such scenes provided a Platonic essence of the game against which the fallen present could be contrasted. In a passage from “Cricket Fields and Cricketers” (a piece first published in The Empire Review in the early 1920s) Cardus described the style and ambience of cricket as played in different locations around the country. Though, like any organism, cricket responded to its environment, it was quintessentially rural:

... whoever would appreciate cricket rightly must have a sense, as he sits in the sun (there can be no real cricket without sunshine), that he is simply attending to one part, and just one part, of the pageant of summer as it slowly goes along, and yet a part as true to summer as villages in the Cotswolds, stretches of gleaming meadow-land, and pools in the hills. Cricket in high summer is played with the mind of the born lover of it conscious the whole time that all this happy English life is around him – that cricket is but a corner in the teeming garden of the year.59

As was argued in the previous chapter, for writers such as Cardus, cricket, in its properly rural setting, stood against, but was also deeply threatened by, the headlong rush towards a modernity that would annihilate the culture and symbols of organic rural Englishness. Hence each evocation of a village cricket match was

57 Cardus, The Summer Game (London: Grant Richards & Humphrey Toulmin, 1929), 8.

58 Cardus, Days in the Sun, 89.

59 Ibid., 27.
already a bitter-sweet act of documenting a passing way of life. However, an important ideological element of Cardus’s rural cricket writings (and one that is all but obscured by his elevated position in the canon) is a denial of the idea of cricket as an ethical category. In this respect Cardus’s work is a significant post-war critique of cricket as an imperial discourse, and signals something of a shift towards a more inward-looking, non-imperial view of Englishness. In the following passage, the village green is a place that both transcends the cash-nexus and symbolises a retreat from England’s imperial role. For Cardus there were:

   dangers of taking cricket too seriously by thinking too “imperially” of it. The real cricket that provides the continuity of English tradition is to be found on the village green where it can not be contaminated by professionalism and “imperialism”.60

Such utterances problematise the judgements of cricket historians such as Ric Sissons, who have straightforwardly placed Cardus in a nineteenth century imperialist tradition.61 On the contrary, in this respect Cardus is revealed as inhabiting the alternative, anti-imperialist nationalist tradition of writers such as Chesterton, Nevinson and Belloc, who believed that the national preoccupation with empire had neglected and betrayed the “true England” of the countryside.62 Cardus’s usually unacknowledged anti-imperialism was also a product of his intense aestheticisation of cricket in which the sport was recast as a form of pure art-for-art’s-sake with no extraneous ethical or utility value. The canonisation of Cardus as the defining figure in the discourse of “English Cricket” has successfully effaced the fact that his writings were partially implicated within the major post-war literary critique of Victorianism

60Cardus, A Cricketer’s Book, 13.


62Wiener, 59.
identified by Alison Light. As is discussed in the next chapter, this particular re-articulation of cricket shaped and informed Cardus's influential and canonised representations of a number of colonial cricketers and cricket tours.

The Construction of the "Golden Age" of Cricket

As has been argued, the inter-war literaturisation of cricket constructed aestheticised sites in which contemporary ideological tensions and contradictions could be symbolically resolved. As in the work of Scrutiny, this took two major forms: a sideways displacement of contemporary anxieties into the healing space of the English countryside, and the construction of a prelapsarian past, a literary image of the "organic community" that could provide a critique of the socio-economic, political and cultural present. As Mulhearn has explained, the Scrutiny version of this construction was predominantly situated in the 16th century. For the Scrutineers, the reign of Elizabeth I provided an image of a shared and settled, psychologically whole, naturally ordered agrarian society. As was shown in the previous chapter, the contemporary literary obsession with Nyren's Hambledon was a comparable process through which an idealised construction of the past was used as a means of critiquing modernity. Although Cardus's work contributed to the rural mythology of cricket literature, his response to modernity (registering its presence through the bodily practice of County and Test cricket) was largely manifest in his major contribution to the literary construction of a late Victorian and Edwardian "Golden Age" of cricket. The Golden Age was a temporal utopia situated between about 1890 and 1914, a pristine point of contrast to the inter-war practice of cricket, and, by implication, the

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63Light, 11.

64Mulhearn, 58.
politics, industrial processes and aesthetics of the contemporary national culture that it was apparently mediating. Cardus’s construction of the Golden Age presented a naturally hierarchical social order in which the aristocracy display their natural superiority through elegant and effortless bodily performance:

During the golden age of English cricket, the public school flavour could be felt as strongly as in any West End club. When Spooner or K.L. Hutching batted on a lovely summer day you could witness the fine flowerings of all the elegant cultural processes that had gone to the making of these cricketers; you could see their innings as though against a backdrop of distant playing fields, far away from the reach of industry, pleasant lawns stretching to the chaste countryside, lawns well trimmed and conscious of the things that are not done.  

Golden Ages, as Raymond Williams has noted, constantly reoccur throughout literary and cultural history as retrospective critiques of the loss of feudal or aristocratic social orders. Clearly Cardus was not only celebrating the bodily performance of pre-war batsmen such as Spooner and Hutching, but the economic conditions and social relations that supposedly enabled such displays of aristocratic style to arise. Like Scrutiny, Cardus elegised the loss of a social hierarchy that was seemingly uncomplicated by the economic transformations and social mobility of the interwar years. Indeed, the construction of cricket’s Golden Age formed part of a broader literary rewriting of the late-Victorian and Edwardian eras as an image of a less complex, “depoliticised” national community.

Cardus’s textual figure of R.H. Spooner was one of the most important constitutive elements in the discourse of the Golden Age of cricket. Spooner was a public school-educated Lancashire amateur whom Cardus had watched at Old Trafford as a boy. Although he played the majority of his cricket before the war,

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65 Cardus, *English Cricket*, 106.

Spooner made a few appearances for Lancashire at the beginning of Cardus’s career as a cricket writer. His subsequent Pateresque account of a Spooner innings is a paean to the past that inscribes upon Spooner’s body the aura of the reified art work. In contrast to what Cardus often described as the dull mechanical reproduction of cricket at the time, Spooner’s bodily performance is valorised as the product of individual creative genius. Cardus’s Spooner evinces a Leavisite “vitality” of expression:

In and through the art of batsmanship we have come to know Spooner as intimately as if he had written Sonnets to a Dark Lady. Walk at random on a cricket field and see Spooner make his off-drive. You have no need to be informed that Spooner is batting. The stroke can be “attributed” with as much certainty as any canvas by Paul Veronese. That graceful forward poise, the supple play of the wrists!

By the early 1930s, Spooner had become a major text in Cardus’s construction of the Golden Age as his essay “The Batsmanship of Manners” shows. Here Cardus did not merely eulogise his boyhood batting idol, but symbolically outlined a simplified vision of English society, a hierarchical and essentially rural society in which deference and ties of service bound the social ranks together. As the embodiment of an old aristocratic order, Cardus’s Spooner is a golden boy of this Golden Age, an effortless and refined stylist whose play is utterly dignified and devoid of violence. Cardus’s studied attention to language foregrounds the need for modes of representation that are themselves apposite stylistic vehicles for the construction of a particular aesthetic of Englishness:

Straight from the playing field of Marlborough he came and conquered – nay, the word conquered is too hard and aggressive for Spooner: he charmed and won our heart and the hearts of his opponents.

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68 Cardus, “The Batsmanship of Manners,” in *Good Days*, 83.
Cardus often unfavourably characterised Lancashire cricket of the 20s and 30s as expressive of the county’s historical associations with industrialism, utilitarianism and, even more concerning, trade unionism and socialism: “Too many Lancashire, Nottinghamshire, and Yorkshire elevens have overdone the collectivist philosophy, turning out just ‘utility’ teams, mechanically efficient.” However, Spooner’s *habitus* produces a mode of embodiment that associates him with the gentility of the Southern shires rather than the industrial heartland of his native county:

Spooner told us in every one of his drives past cover that he did not come from the hinterland of Lancashire, where cobbled streets sound with the noise of clogs and industry; he played always as though on the elegant lawns of Aigburth; his cricket was “county” in the social sense of the term ... I’ll swear that on that day long ago there were tents and bunting in the breeze of Manchester while Spooner’s bat flicked and flashed ...

Spooner’s body is here endowed with the ability to represent the country house and the Public School in the most alien and industrial of environments. This cultured and elegant batting is not only an index of Spooner’s heredity (as Cardus later wrote, “What’s bred in the bones comes out in an innings”) but it represents a form of art-for-art’s-sake in which the scoring of runs is of secondary importance to the display of style. Accordingly, Cardus’s florid prose, replete with allusions to literature and classical music, is carefully constructed so as to create a sense of the aesthetic quality of Spooner’s batting, and to divorce it from any taint of utility-value. Here, as in so many Cardus essays, there are echoes of the aesthetic movement’s doctrine that great art aspires to the condition of music:

He was the most lyrical of cricketers, and for that reason he had no need to play a long innings to tell us his secret. The only difference between 30 by Spooner and 150 by Spooner was a matter of external and unessential form

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70 Cardus, *Good Days*, 83.

71 Cardus, *English Cricket*, 77.
or duration; the spirit moved him from the very beginning. A rondo by Mozart is just as complete as a symphony by him ... and a single stroke by Spooner was likewise a quality absolute, beyond the need of mensuration or any mathematical means of valuation whatever ... as well count the words in a poem or the notes in an allegro.  

The Mozartian grace and charm of Spooner’s play (the “Batsmanship of Manners” a stylistic sign of his privileged class position) leads Cardus at the conclusion of the essay to claim in more general terms for cricket’s status as art, and to rail against those who would think otherwise. At the same time, with its emphasis on the aesthetic, rather than athletic qualities of Spooner’s batting, a softer, more feminised rhetoric of cricketing heroism emerges that is distinct from dominant Muscular Christian constructions of the field:

And Spooner’s cricket in spirit was kin with sweet music, and the wind that makes long grasses wave, and the singing of Elisabeth Schumann in Johann Strauss, and the poetry of Herrick. Why do we deny the art of a cricketer, and rank it lower than a vocalist’s or a fiddler’s? If anybody tells me that R.H. Spooner did not compel a pleasure as any compelled by the most celebrated Italian tenor I will write him down a purist and an ass.  

Cardus’s nostalgic feudal social vision was rendered by an aestheticisation of the amateur/professional divide that structured cricket’s social relations until 1963. In creating a cast of pre-war professional cricketers, Cardus used the literary stereotype of the simple countryman to endow them with a simple bucolic charm that highlights by antithesis the pedigree of the Gentlemen. As well as providing humorous, homespun comments, they are presented as good honest artisans in the manner of the contemporary organicist writings of H.J. Massingham. In his deeply-nostalgic essay “Good Days” (1931), Cardus reveals himself as a shameless purveyor of a feudal vision of rural England. In this piece Cardus introduced the figure of “Old William”

72Cardus, *Good Days*, 83.

73Ibid., 87.
(Ted Wainwright), an ex-professional, and subsequently a cricket coach at Shrewsbury school where, for a time, Cardus acted as his assistant. Like Massingham's Samuel Rockall, Cardus's Old William is organically embedded in a rural environment and thus beyond temporal change. Unlike Cardus's inter-war professionals, Old William's body does not disrupt the aesthetic ideals of cricket discourse, and can thus be seamlessly merged into the English rural landscape: "he seemed as permanent at Shastbury as the ancient oak tree." With this organic image connoting organic social order, his respectful comments, patronisingly rendered by Cardus, exemplify social deference and serve to underline the pedigree of Spooner and its relationship to the gentlemanly batting aesthetic: "'It were a pleasure to bowl to Maister Spooner ...his batting were as nice as he were hisself.'" Within the narrative's logic of distinction, a sense of Cardus's own cultural capital is produced through a condescending description of Old William's theory of literature: "And something about the oak and the ash and a summer of 'wet and splash'. He was fond of that one, because the rhymes brought it within his view of poetry." Compounded of the innocent swain with a home-spun, folkloric wisdom, and the salutary Wordsworthian figure, Old William is resolutely pre-modern rather than upwardly-mobile or materialistic. Here Cardus shares with Leavis a Kenneth Grahame-like hostility to the motor car as a symbol of modernity and conspicuous consumption, whilst Old William's footwear loudly announces his unambiguous class status and unimpeachable masculinity at a safe distance:

74Matless, 141.
75Cardus, Good Days, 101.
76Ibid., 83.
77Ibid., 103.
He was one of the old school of professional cricketers; I cannot see him in a Morris-Cowley, as any day I can see many contemporary Test match players. And I cannot see him in suede shoes, or any sort of shoes. William wore enormous boots which has some sort of metal protection built into the edge of the heel. You could hear him coming up the street miles away. 78

Old William represents an ideal of a mythical economically and socially immobile social formation that in its political deference, merely consented to, and complemented, the cultural authority of the public school-educated elite: “I am glad that he loved Shastbury and knew it was a beautiful place.” 79 Cardus’s rural public school cricket field is a hegemonic space of Englishness that can provide reassurance to the troubled English imaginary of the 1930s. In these nostalgic evocations of Spooner and Old William, Cardus was presenting a more desirable picture of an Englishness based upon both social cohesiveness and clearly demarcated inequality under aristocratic benevolence. Although Cardus is clearly guilty of producing a fictional construction of the past, as Raymond Williams has noted, “what we have to inquire into is not ... historical error but historical perspective.” 80 The significance of the construction of the Golden Age of cricket is its ideological function in the 1920s and 30s. As in the work of Scrutiny, the cricket discourse of the inter-war period responded to the ideological tensions of the time by providing literary constructions of an organic English society that had seemingly been eroded by post-war developments.

One of the features of Cardus’s writings which the timeless concept of the canon all but effaces was that his work, like that of Scrutiny, arose from, and responded to, the cultural, socio-economic and political tensions of its historical context. In this period professional cricket writers, such as Cardus and Sewell, utilised

78 Ibid., 102-103.
79 Ibid., 103.
80 Raymond Williams, The Country and the City in Mulhearn, 58.
their perceptions of bodily disruptions to the disciplinary and identity-forming discourse of cricket in order to mediate perceptions of cultural, political and socio-economic crisis. These writers drew upon cricket to make sense of the troubled state of the nation, and a discourse arose from these agonistics of the cricket field in which dominant Muscular Christian constructions of national identity vied and intersected with emergent, increasingly aestheticised paradigms. Literary representations of cricket in the inter-war period constructed the cricket field as a place of both national and imperial accomplishment and acute anxiety. It was a place representing the strength and continuity of English traditions, and a place increasingly infected by undesirable social, political and economic developments. Such representations internally drew upon and elaborated a rhetorical and modal template that had been established by the 1890s. In this sense they were textual embodiments of the very diachronic conformity so vital to the continuing ability of cricket to reproduce Englishness and empire. On the other hand, cricket discourse synchronically absorbed, refracted and contributed to, the context of cultural crisis identified and diagnosed by commentators such as the Scrutiny group. Inter-war cricket writing is therefore a reminder of Light's claim that there is a need to understand "that there are many possible literary forms in circulation at any one time, and that all of them repay attention and tell us something about each other."

Cricket writing was a composite deriving not only from Nyren and his literary successors, not only from the contemporary embodied practice of cricket, but one that also carried significant traces of other discourses – economic, political and cultural. As in the nineteenth century, this discourse was partly prompted by social concerns. At the moment when the Arnoldian ideals of literature became intensified in the work of Scrutiny, a discourse

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81 Light, ix.
of cricket emerged that was simultaneously a defence against perils such as mass culture and communism, and an imaginary alternative to them in its ability to represent the organic national community. The last two chapters have shown, therefore, that a series of historical events and developments produced a discourse of cricket (articulated through processes of literaturisation, canonisation and aestheticisation) through which constructions of Englishness and the national culture were produced, reproduced and renegotiated. There is now a need to revisit the historical period covered so far in this thesis in order to trace and analyse the production of ideas of the imperial culture through the discourse of cricket.
CHAPTER FOUR
CRICKET, LITERATURE AND EMPIRE 1850-1939

The Author hopes that every reader will derive some pleasure from studying the pages of “The Cricketer’s Companion,” and that it will help lay the foundation for a successful career in the game, and develop those qualities which build up the manhood of the Empire.¹

The three preceding chapters have focused almost exclusively upon the roles of literaturisation, aestheticisation and canonisation in the production and reproduction of Englishness through cricket in the period 1850-1939. However, as the quotation self-consciously suggests, cricket discourse had an important role in the construction of imperial masculinities and in defining ideas of the imperial culture. It is therefore essential to revisit this historical period in order to analyse the dissemination and cultural work of cricket discourse within the colonial dispensation. To do so, this chapter is structured around the analysis of a number of key “texts” and “discursive events”. Here the term “text” denotes both a variety of literary works (books, essays, journalism, and poetry), and cricketers originating from colonial locations whose bodies were inscribed within the sport’s discourses, to varying degrees, with the ambivalences of colonial culture identified by theorists such as Homi Bhabha.² A series of international cricket tours undertaken by both English and

¹F. Davison Currie, The Cricketer’s Companion or The Secrets of Cricket (London: George Routledge & Sons Ltd, 1918), 3. 25% of the profits of the book were donated to The Sports Education Fund to assist boys unable to continue their education through circumstances of war.
colonial teams are important examples of "discursive events." These important moments of imperial cultural interchange produced vast amounts of discourse through which the value and legitimacy of the imperial community (symbolised by the cricket field) was asserted, scrutinised, and eventually challenged.

In order to demonstrate the imperial dimension of cricket's literaturisation, in the first section of this chapter a number of texts are shown to have been instrumental in the sport's imperial dissemination and acculturisation. In these texts the cricket field was constructed as a place of imperial accomplishment, endowed with the ability to transform the identities of colonial subjects to conform to ideals of English manly civility, and therefore as a place that symbolised the strength and stability of empire. However, in the following section, certain texts are shown to have contained latent doubts about cricket's transformative capability and as mediating anxieties about cricket as the symbol of eternal imperial bonds. The themes of ambivalence and imperial anxiety are then further explored in relation to representations of a number of tours to England by colonial cricket teams during the period. Through these discursive events, issues of class, gender and race stimulated by the presence of colonials on English cricket fields produced anxieties about the health and stability of empire. Then, emphasising the pattern of imperial hegemony and anti-imperial counter-hegemony that forms the deep structure of this thesis, a process of aestheticisation is shown to have emerged in representations of colonial cricketers as a response (however unconscious) to these anxieties and doubts about the contemporary condition and future of the empire. Whilst this analysis suggests that colonial cricket gradually became an aesthetic model to the metropolitan centre, its insertion into the supposedly apolitical category of the aesthetic is again seen as mediating anxieties about the empire and, more specifically, the possibility of cricket becoming a
political instrument of anti-colonialism. The various strands of this chapter are brought together in its final section - an analysis of the discourses produced by the infamous Bodyline series in Australia in 1932-3. Here a series of overt discursive agonistics, constituted by, and mediated through, issues of class and gender, show that the production and mediation of this crisis was concerned with the gap between the discourse and practice of empire.

The Literaturisation of Colonial Cricket

The dissemination of cricket throughout the British Empire in informal, uneven and geographically specific ways problematises any simplistic assertion that cricket was part of a straightforward, centrally controlled and consciously executed "civilising mission”. As research by James Bradley has shown, the Marylebone Cricket Club’s conscious writing of itself as the wellspring and centre of imperial cricket was a retrospective process that was a product of the late Victorian and Edwardian period and no earlier. As was shown in chapter one, this retrospective inscription of an imperial role onto cricket emerged from a context in which institutionalised literary study, and bodies such as the Royal College of Music, were likewise inventing themselves as national and imperial institutions. In the white settler colonies of South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, the playing of cricket was initially simply part of the cultural baggage of emigration. Soldiers, sailors, government administrators, engineers and teachers took cricket to colonies such as India and the British West Indies where it was initially a segregated pastime for the

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4Hughes and Stradling, The English Musical Renaissance, 46.
white colonial elite. However, as a fairly substantial body of missionary cricket literature testifies, in certain locations the sport was introduced to the native populations as an instrument of religious conversion, so inextricably bound-up was it with the doctrines of Protestant Christianity.\(^5\)

The cricket fields of India and the British West Indies were initially places from which non-whites were excluded before liberalisation gradually allowed a degree of carefully controlled access. This incremental process was indicative of the discursive re-articulation of the sport that was occurring during the second half of the nineteenth century. As the cricket field was inscribed as an identity-forming place of Englishness, not only did it represent what were believed to be the "higher", "civilised" values of the coloniser to the colonised, but its literature was endowing it with the ability to literally transform the colonised into English gentlemen. As a space of Englishness in which the movements of the colonised were controlled and regulated, the colonial cricket field was nevertheless a place that simultaneously threatened the hierarchical principles of empire because of its new inclusiveness. Hilary Beckles’s analysis of the history of West Indies cricket has thus led him to cite cricket as paradigmatic of colonial culture:

Colonial cultural politics are always tentative, in part the effect of uncertainty about the significance of cultural democracy upon the dispensation. Official society is never sure if the integration of the colonised into its organised cultural institutions will facilitate or undermine the effectiveness of its rule. Incremental, but closely restricted access is generally the result; in turn this process generates further expectations and turmoil.\(^5\)

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As is discussed later in this chapter, an ambivalent sense of the colonial cricket field as a place of both imperial accomplishment and instability has been a central theme in its literary representation.

Studies of cricket and imperialism have largely overlooked the role of print culture in constructing national and imperial identities within the culture of colonialism. As Margaret Beetham has shown, an important example of this is the work of Andrew Lang in *Longman's Magazine* during the 1880s and 90s. Within a theoretical framework in which racial and gender differences were entwined, and seemingly haunted by fears about his own masculinity, Lang attempted to de-feminise literary activity by writing about, and giving critical support to, imperial adventure novels such as those of Ryder Haggard and Conan-Doyle whilst writing prodigious amounts about angling, golf and cricket. In a piece of humorous verse, his friend Robert Louis Stevenson identified that for Lang, cricket and literary criticism were interchangeable categories:

My name is Andrew Lang
Andrew Lang
That’s my name,
And criticism and cricket is my game.⁸

As one of cricket’s most prominent cultural gatekeepers, Lang’s textual identity as a writer was constructed by this very masculine homology between cricket and the art of literary criticism. According to Beetham, Lang need not make explicit the links in

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⁷Margaret Beetham, “The Agony Aunt, the Romancing Uncle and the Family of Empire: Defining the Sixpenny Reading Public in the 1890s,” in *Nineteenth-Century Media and the Construction of Identities*, ed. Laurel Brake, Bill Bell and David Finklestein (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), 253-270.

his writing between fiction, sport and racialised masculine identities, he simply juxtaposed the promise of literary reflections with stories of

How Cambridge pulled, How Oxford bowled,
Wild lore of races white and black
Of these shall many a tale be told
On this our stall of bric-a-brac.⁹

In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said showed that there are many passing references to the colonies and to colonial acquisitions in the nineteenth century English novel that were made possible by the fact of British rule.¹⁰ Accordingly, cricket literature and various literary references to the practice were important means by which the empire registered a presence in English literature in the first half of the nineteenth century prior to the age of the New Imperialism and the imperialist adventure novels so beloved of Lang. In accordance with Beckles’ historical account of early West Indies cricket, a reference to Jamaican cricket in Charles Dickens’ *The Pickwick Papers* (1836-7) describes access to the field for blacks as based on a strict division of labour between white batsmen and black bowlers.¹¹ Mr Jingle’s affable account of a colonial cricket match nevertheless reduces the figure of Quanko Samba and other local bowlers to colonialist paradigms. A worker in both the cricket and economic fields (and thus crucial to the symbolic and economic procedures of empire), Quanko Samba is at once a “gentleman” by dint of the fact he has entered the identity-transforming space of the cricket field, and a dispensable unit of labour utility value. The telegraphic quality of the account suggests the technological means by

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⁹Quoted in Beetham, 268.


which details of sport and other matters were later to be transmitted from colony to metropolitan centre and vice-versa:

“...Played a match once – single wicket – friend the Colonel – Sir Thomas Blazo – who should get the greatest number of runs. – Won the toss – first innings – seven o’clock a.m. – six natives to look out – went in; kept in – heat intense – natives all fainted – taken away – fresh half-dozen ordered – fainted also – Blazo bowling – supported by two natives – couldn’t bowl me out – fainted too – cleared away the Colonel – wouldn’t give in – faithful attendant – Quanko Samba – last man left – sun so hot, bat in blisters, ball scorched brown – five hundred and seventy runs – rather exhausted – Quanko mustered up last remaining strength – bowled me out – had a bath, and went out to dinner.”

“And what became of what’s-his-name, sir?” inquired an old gentleman.

“Blazo?”

“No – the other gentleman.”

“Quanko Samba?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Poor Quanko – never recovered it – bowled on, on my account – bowled off, on his own – died, sir.”

Developments in telegraphy and the growth of print culture were major vehicles of cricket’s diffusion and acculturisation throughout the empire. For example, in terms of the sport’s diffusion, Richard Cashman has shown that in 1832, the Campbelltown cricket club in Australia based its laws on those in William Lambert’s *Game of Cricketing*. Clearly a proportion of the 300,000 copies this book sold between 1816 and 1865 were exported to the colonies where they fed the institutional spread of organised cricket and informed the bodily practices of those who played it. This also suggests that such discourse played a part in transforming Australian cricket from a practice that in the 1830s and 40s was closely associated with gambling and drinking, to a sport embodying the ideals of moral manliness and

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13 Richard Cashman, “Australia,” in *The Imperial Game: Cricket, Culture and Society*, ed. Sandiford and Stoddart, 34.

the bonds of empire. The literaturisation of Australian cricket thus closely paralleled that in England, enabling the hegemonic and synoptic ideals of the sport to be produced and disseminated and, within this colonial context, given literary authorisation. The following passage from Dickens’ “Athletes at Ease” was reproduced in Boyle and Scott’s *Australian Cricketer’s Guide* for 1880-81:

…it [cricket] really places a thousand joys of life within the reach of those who, without their powers with the bat and ball, would find existence a very humdrum and monotonous affair. It acts as the social cement of classes …It is no exaggeration to say … that more valuable acquaintances, more permanent and fruitful friendships, have been made in the cricket field than in any other social rendezvous of the United Kingdom.\(^ {15}\)

As Cashman has demonstrated, many of the leading Australian cricketers and cricket journalists of the 1880s were profoundly Anglophile, and frequently wrote of the game in terms of its moral, masculine and empire-binding qualities. Australian newspapers regularly reproduced large amounts of English cricket writing and thus afforded this discourse a large degree of authority. Although by the late nineteenth century cricket had become an important focal point and instrument of Australian cultural nationalism, and great importance was attached to beating the Motherland at cricket, the sport represented what was essentially a highly deferential and pro-imperial nationalism at this juncture.\(^ {16}\)

Scott Crawford has shown that in New Zealand between 1862 and 1906 press representations of cricket and other sports shaped emerging senses of national identity; indeed, as in Australia, such representations were particularly significant given the lack of a native literary tradition.\(^ {17}\) Discourses surrounding New Zealand

\(^{15}\)Charles Dickens, “Athletes at Ease,” in F.S. Ashley-Cooper, *Cricket Highways and Byways*, 112.

\(^{16}\)Cashman, 44-46.

cricket fields were crucial in constructing the imagined community of empire. If, as Greg Ryan has argued, an English cricketing idyll was recreated in New Zealand, it was produced largely through the written word. After a visit by an English team in 1864, the English writer Samuel Butler, then living in a Canterbury Settlement set up by the Anglophile social engineer, Thomas Wakefield, described the occasion in terms suggestive of Walter Benjamin's space of "homogenous, empty time":

Through them we greet our Mother. In their coming,
We shake old England by the hand
And watch space dwindling, while the shrinking world
Collapses into nothing.

The words of Butler's inebriated speaker, Horatio, however drunkenly sincere, typify, and perhaps parody, a discourse that produced and celebrated the imagined community of empire through cricket. However, as Crawford has argued, cricket discourse was not absolutely stable, and an incipient sense of distinct New Zealand national pride, if not nationalism, began to emerge in sports writing from the 1880s onwards. On the 5th June 1880 the Otago Witness signalled the massive popular appeal of the cricket press and its role in creating the imagined community of empire. At the same time it suggested that some members of this community were beginning to define themselves in terms of beating the Motherland at her own game:

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18Greg Ryan, "New Zealand," in Sandiford and Stoddart, eds., 95.


Just now everybody in the colonies, cricketers or no cricketers watches from
day to day the telegrams from the Australian team touring England and
chuckles over the collapse of the Britishers. Cricket news for the next few
months will bulk almost as largely as the whole politics of the continents.\textsuperscript{21}

As far as the West Indies is concerned, one of the many important points to
emerge from the autobiographical sections of James's \textit{Beyond a Boundary} arises from
his recollections of his juvenile reading habits. As a middle-class public school boy
James was being trained to become a member of the black colonial elite. He was thus
fully immersed in both English literature and cricket at an early age. Cricket itself had
a strongly literary dimension in his early life. Consistent with John Arlott's finding
that there was little or no native West Indies cricket literature at this time,\textsuperscript{22} James
describes how English magazine articles and cricket books formed an integral part of
his early exposure to cricket. As a result his first early cricketing role models were all
English, and he knew little about cricket in the West Indies outside his immediate
locale. When James recalled his boyhood collection of press clippings, his collection
of articles on W.G. Grace, Ranjitsinhji and C.B. Fry, and his reading of the public
school stories of P.G. Wodehouse, he drew attention to the point that he and his
literate compatriots were exposed to cricket's cultural and ideological codes not only
on the cricket field itself, but also through various forms of print culture.\textsuperscript{23} Crucially,
James also shows how this literature, as an integral shaper of \textit{habitus}, informed the
bodily practices of him and his fellow trainee English gentlemen:

These we understood, these we lived by, the principles they taught we
absorbed through the pores and practiced instinctively. The books we read in
class meant little to most of us.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{21}Quoted in Crawford, 60.

\textsuperscript{22}John Arlott, “Reference Books,” in \textit{World of Cricket: The Game From A-Z}

\textsuperscript{23}James, \textit{Beyond a Boundary}, 26-35.

\textsuperscript{24}Ibid., 35
Whilst the passage seems to suggest that cricket and its discourses merely bound the colonised into the prevailing colonial power structure, as chapter five shows, James’s implicit theorisation of the relationship between the discursive and the performative accounted for the sport’s role as an agency of anti-imperial counter-hegemony.

As J.A. Mangan has shown, cricket and its literature had an important pedagogic function in the elite schools of India also. These institutions were crucial instruments in the maintenance of imperial hegemony, and cricket was regarded as a means of inculcating British manly virtues. For example, Chester Macnaghten, the headmaster of Rajkumar College in Kathiawar, regularly read the cricket episode from *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* to the young Princes in his charge before exhorting them to learn its moral lessons of self-reliance, calmness and courage.\(^\text{25}\) In his history of Indian cricket, Ramachandra Guha shows that first Indian cricket books were memoirs by former pupils of such English style public schools, and suggests that these texts show how cricket sustained the complex hierarchy of colonialism. Although books on Parsee cricket were published in 1892, 1897 and 1905, and Urdu poems were written in praise of victorious teams, the Hindu emphasis on the oral tradition retarded Indian cricket literature’s development.\(^\text{26}\) As Arjun Appadurai has shown, the vernacularisation and de-anglification of Indian cricket was a much later development,\(^\text{27}\) and cricket books in Bengali, Marathi, Tamil and Gujarati did not begin to appear until the 1960s.\(^\text{28}\)


\(^{27}\)Appadurai, 23-48.
At the end of the nineteenth century Indian cricket literature tended to be strongly Anglophile in orientation. The literary ideal of cricket as the embodiment of unchanging seriality across time and imperial space was reproduced by the sameness of its discourses, much of which merely mimicked English cricket discourse. The nascent literaturisation of Indian cricket thus shows how colonial writers, however unconsciously, became implicated within the rhetorical patterns of empire. For example, in an emerging, Anglo-centric historiography of Indian cricket, Lord Harris, the cricketer and Governor of Bombay from 1890 to 1895, was fashioned as the founding father of Indian cricket. As Guha has shown, the significance of Harris to Indian cricket has been greatly exaggerated and the glorification of Harris within this early historiography owes much to a process in which various writers simply repeated the same idea. The celebrated Parsee cricketer, M.E. Pavri, wrote in 1901 that, “it was [Harris’s] personal example that gave great impetus to sports of all kinds in Bombay … Lord Harris, as a sage statesman, at once saw that much of the friction between the Europeans and the Natives of India could be got rid of by bringing the rulers and ruled together by means of sports.” In 1905 J.M. Framjee Patel dedicated his *Stray Thoughts on Indian Cricket* to Harris “in grateful remembrance of a high-minded and sympathetic ruler and a generous and genuine sportsman, who, during his Governorship of Bombay, zealously encouraged physical culture amongst the people and proved a true FRIEND AND PATRON of Indian Cricket and Parsee Cricket in particular.” By the 1920s, an accretion of such discourse meant that Harris’s status as a seminal figure in the development of Indian cricket was further consolidated, partly

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as a result of his own literary self-fashioning. In a history of Indian cricket published in 1929, Wahiuddin Begg wrote that “while the Governor of Bombay ...he took special pains to improve Indian Cricket and did a lot to invigorate interest of the game among all classes of people. In fact, Lord Harris is regarded as the ‘Father of Indian Cricket’ and Indian Cricketers shall remain ever grateful to him.”

This discourse of imperial loyalty and deference allied Indian cricket with a political stance at odds with the increasing anti-colonial nationalism of the period.

Another important example of the Anglophile persuasion of early Indian cricket discourse is Mohammad Abdullah Khan’s *Cricket Guide*, published in Lucknow in 1891 at a time when Rudyard Kipling tellingly described an outbreak of “cricket mania” on the Indian sub-continent. In order to impose order and authority upon this scene of colonial chaos, Khan’s book was concerned with inscribing a hegemonic version of English masculinity upon his cricketing compatriots who were apparently failing to live up to the high ideals that the sport supposedly represented.

“Even those,” wrote Khan, “who are very good and noble ...turn so rash and inconsiderate at certain moments that their brains lose the balance and begin to take fallacious fancies ...[they] boil over with rage, pick up quarrels with one another, and even look daggers at their own dearest friends and darlings.” Khan advises his compatriots to mimic the behaviour of English gentlemen, for instance, to “avoid clapping and laughing in the faces of the persons you have defeated.” By reiterating the codes of English civility now so indelibly inscribed upon cricket, Khan’s contribution to the literaturisation of Indian cricket subsequently warranted

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29 Guha, 55-56.

30 Quoted in ibid., 47.

canonisation. In 1922 the text became the subject of an essay by E.V. Lucas, in which its author was positioned in cricket writing’s apostolic tradition by being honoured with the title, “The Indian Nyren”. However, Khan’s book was not wholly typical of discourses surrounding Indian cricket fields in the 1890s. As Guha has shown, with cricket becoming more and more popular and domesticated, as it began to replace indigenous sports like gilly danda and kabaddi, discourses began to emerge in the more nationalistic sections of the press that saw in the Indian passion for cricket a hopelessly subservient attitude to the values and culture of the coloniser.

Nevertheless, in Bourdieu’s terms, cricket writing emanating from the metropolitan centre was a doxic discourse in which the cricket field was inscribed with nothing less than identity-transforming powers. Through its literaturisation the cricket field was not only rhetorically endowed with a civilising mission, but it was constructed as a place of Englishness that could be reproduced in the most alien and distant of environments. The following passage describing an Indian cricket field, taken from one of a number of books by Harris, demonstrates how the reproducible cricket field was inscribed with the ability to transform aesthetically the colonial landscape. As in the texts discussed in chapter two, the imperial cricket field could subsume geographical particularity into a single, generic space of Englishness:

The surroundings were charming, everything as green as in an English spring for some weeks. The Deccan hills looming up in the distance, a ground which sloped away slightly on three sides from the pitch, and a few red-coated chokras (little boys) on the boundaries to run after the fours, a small party of guests, and the band combined to make the ground and its surroundings very typical of cricket in England.

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33 Guha, 46.

34 Lord Harris, A Few Short Runs (London: John Murray, 1921), 234-235.
Though Harris doubted the cricket field’s ability to successfully civilise all but “the wisest men of each religion and caste,” liberal writers such as Ford Madox Ford held more sanguine views of the cricket field’s transformative capabilities. As Baucom has demonstrated, with his emphasis on place and environment, rather than race, as the defining qualification of Englishness, Ford was a forthright advocate of the cricket field as a place of identity transformation. Recalling his school days, Ford emphasised the common Englishness of his white schoolmates and a West African boy who showed considerable prowess at cricket:

We felt intensely English. There was our sunshine, our [cricketing] “whites”, our golden wickets, our green turf. And we felt, too, that Stuart, the pure-blooded Dahomeyan, with the dark tan shining upon his massive and muscular chest, was as English as our pink-and-white or sun-browned cheeks could make us. It may have been this feeling only. A spirit of loyalty to one of our team. But I think it was deeper than this. It was part of the history engendered in us by the teachings of the history of the British Islands: it was part of the very spirit of the people ... I am almost certain that we felt that training, that contact with our traditions, was sufficient to turn any child of the sun into a very excellent Englishman.

On the cricket field, such discourse suggested, the colonised (from whatever racial background) could be re-fashioned into English gentlemen; and, as cricket became written across the British Empire, it became living proof of the success of Britain’s civilising mission and of the successful transference of Anglo-Saxon values onto its subjects.

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35 Lord Harris, “Introduction,” in Framjee Patel, Stray Thoughts on Indian Cricket; quoted in Guha, 73.

36 Baucom, 17.

The Literature of Accomplishment and Anxiety

In his analysis of the rhetorical strategies of imperialism, David Spurr has argued that tropes of imperial affirmation and accomplishment reveal a fundamental ambivalence. Because a position of self-evident authority would never have to represent itself, repeated acts of colonial affirmation reveal an underlying sense of insecurity. Therefore, affirmation was a strategic device necessary for the maintenance of colonial hegemony.⁴⁸ A book that seems to confidently embody the notion of cricket as a symbol of empire is Pelham Warner's *Imperial Cricket*, published in 1912 to coincide with an important sporting celebration of the bonds of white empire - the triangular Test series between England, Australia and South Africa. This is a profusely illustrated, vellum-bound tome, produced in a subscription edition of 900 copies and “Dedicated by Gracious Permission to his Majesty the King-Emperor” [George V]. The book’s lavish presentation and sheer aura produced an impressive sense of cricket as a hegemonic, empire-bonding sport. However, behind the confident façade lay a discursive disquiet. In the book’s introduction, Lord Hawke, a prominent member of the M.C.C. committee and an influential literary figure in the sport, expressed his hope that the other contributors would properly fulfil their roles as cultural gatekeepers by inscribing specific meaning upon the sport:

> If the various writers in this volume foster the true impression, namely, that the spirit of the game is exactly the same as the spirit of all that is best in our great Empire, then their efforts will not have been in vain. On the cricket grounds of the Empire is fostered the spirit of never knowing when you are beaten, of playing for your side and not for yourself, and of never giving up a game as lost. This is as invaluable in Imperial matters as in cricket.⁴⁹

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This passage suggests that the discursive construction of the cricket field as a space of imperial accomplishment often only thinly concealed a much more disturbed discourse of imperial anxiety and loss. With the growth of nationalism in colonies such as India and the British West Indies during the first decades of the twentieth century, writers like the liberal imperialist Warner, who had been instrumental in encouraging and enabling black participation in West Indies cricket up to the highest level, became increasingly aware of the role of cricket in maintaining and symbolising the bonds of empire. Born in Trinidad of white plantocracy stock, Warner’s career as a cricketer, cricket administrator and prolific cricket writer embodied the hegemonic ideals of the sport as a civilising influence both in Britain and the empire. In the interwar period Warner’s considerable cultural capital within the field of cricket meant that authors invariably sought a Warner preface to validate and sanctify their cricket books. In 1921 Warner started The Cricketer magazine to fill a gap in the market left by the demise of Cricket in 1914. In the first edition, published on April 30th 1921, Warner provided an editorial setting out the tasks that faced him and his fellow writers. Because “the very essence of cricket is camaraderie and good sportsmanship,” The Cricketer is endowed with a self-consciously evangelical and imperial role; hence its contributors “will strive to write in such a spirit, hoping to spread an even greater love of cricket than exists at present, and ...to educate the

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41 First published in 1882, *Cricket* was a product of the late-nineteenth century literaturisation of cricket. It ran weekly during the season and monthly during autumn and winter. Its editor, C.W. Alcock was one of cricket and football’s most influential cultural gatekeepers (Allen, *Early Books on Cricket*, 39).
public in the finer points of the game.\(^2\) Likewise, in one of his many inter-war introductions, Warner acknowledged the role of literaturisation in the imperial and international spread of cricket, and thus explicitly endowed the medium of cricket writing with a quasi-religious role:

It is often said that there is too much written on Cricket, but one may venture to urge that such a book as this, which tends to spread a love of the game, which tends to educate people in a knowledge of its finer points, and which gives something of the ideal for which Cricket stands, is doing a service not only to the game itself, but is also helping to promote the good feeling and fellowship which always follow in the wake of the "game with the beautiful name." And it is a fact that the increase in writing on Cricket has been followed by an enormous development of the game, not only through the British Empire, but even further afield: and I believe that the day will come when Cricket will be played by every nation.\(^3\)

This is typical of Warner’s output in which the cricket writer is an important mediator of empire and thus afforded a priestly function. Warner endowed cricket literature with a sacral status and was therefore unrealistically optimistic as to how far the "Gospel of Cricket" could spread. At the same time Warner’s writings are haunted by fears about the future stability of empire. He acknowledged the role of new forms of media in creating the imagined community of empire through cricket, but feared that such developments could undermine the authority of cricket’s select coterie of pro-imperial cultural gatekeepers. In the context of growing anti-imperial nationalism in India and in his native West Indies, there was a particular need for responsible, pro-imperial cricket journalism:

A Test Match to-day is an Imperial event. Almost every ball is broadcast to the uttermost ends of the earth, but you must get the right men to do the

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chronicling – men who are imbued with a genuine love of the game and a respect for its traditions. 44

Warner was also concerned to justify his much-criticised dual role as a selector of the English team and a prolific journalist; but more significant is the anxiety lying just beneath the surface of such utterances, a sense that the game's discourses need to be controlled so as to enable cricket to continue its role as an agent of imperial cohesion.

The Tour Book as Colonial Travelogue

The fundamental ambivalences of colonial discourse also found expression in examples of an important genre of cricket writing, the tour book. Such texts should be considered within their wider literary context as imperial travelogues that were important texts in presenting representations of the colonies to metropolitan readerships. Cecil Headlam's *Ten Thousand Miles Through India and Burma* is an account of a tour in 1902/03 undertaken by the Oxford Authentics, a team of moneyed amateur cricketers. Though Headlam gave detailed records of the matches played, his descriptions of the people, customs and culture of India are a prime example of that discourse of "otherness" identified by Edward Said as constitutive of the unequal imperial relationship. 45 Though Headlam explicitly denies any political agenda in his writing by stating "this is not a blue book," 46 the India here represented is an anti-Gramscian world in which there is no attempt on the narrator's part to conceal the workings of discipline and power. Carrying a stick around to punish wayward natives,


Headlam's textual identity is as a figure of imperial discipline and surveillance (or "panopticim" as Foucault terms it\(^{47}\)). At the same time, as in so many colonial travelogues, there is a sense that the meaning of Englishness can only be comprehended by travelling to the corners of empire.\(^{48}\) Headlam's book begins with an account of the sea voyage to India, and this voyage motif transforms the tour into an Odyssean enterprise, apparently a necessary part of the narrator's quest for self-awareness and identity. But, as Headlam recounts his experiences of India, this reveals itself as an unpleasantly racist text, full of confident generalisations about the Indian people, obsessed with the idea that Indians are thieves, and tinged with an arrogant ethnocentrism. The themes of filth and defilement and the conflation of physical degradation with moral and intellectual impoverishment (tropes identified by Spurr as characteristic of such colonial travelogues\(^{49}\)) are also significant rhetorical strategies. Within the logic of the text these tropes justify the need to survey and discipline the colonised. Though replete with quotations from Kipling and rhetoric expressing confidence in the empire-binding qualities of cricket, this is a deeply troubled text that typifies what Patrick Brantlinger has identified as the anxious character of much late nineteenth century imperial discourse.\(^{50}\) It is also a text struggling to comprehend the sheer "otherness" of India. The images of debasement associated with both Indians and Indian society represent the negative pole of a colonial value system that is constantly threatened by these very images. Here filth


\(^{49}\)Spurr, 76-91.

and contamination represent dangerous transgressions of the crucial boundaries between inside and out, nature and civility, savagery and civilisation. The principles of exclusion, boundary and difference identified by Frantz Fanon as constitutive of colonial discourse are threatened, and so become the cause of acute anxiety for the metropolitan observer.  

Foucault defined the concept of heterotopia as the way radically different social spaces can come into contact with one another. According to Foucault the experience of heterotopia predisposes people to wonder which space they are occupying. As has been shown, the enterprise of colonialism established the cricket field as a place of Englishness through which the movements of the colonised were strictly controlled. However, as the colonised gained incremental access to the cricket field, it was gradually rendered a place of heterotopian anxiety. This is typified in one passage of Headlam’s book where he chronicles various exotic elements of Bombay before describing his first impressions of the city’s cricket ground. Initially the ground is a reassuring symbol of Englishness, a place of contrasting civility and order linking the imperial centre to the periphery across geographical space. But this superficially comforting impression soon gives way to a more troubled sense that even the cricket field has been changed beyond recognition. Headlam here experiences a degree of existential anxiety in the face of the exotic comparable to that experienced by Adela Quested in Forster’s *A Passage to India*. Whereas the sun is a benign feature of conventional English cricket narratives, adding the warm glow of nostalgia to the act of therapeutic recollection, here it symbolises a nature lacking boundary and restraint.

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This pathetic fallacy of the "deceptive sun" mirrors the apparently inherent untrustworthiness of the Indian population. What Spurr has termed the "insidious tropicalisation" of the cricket field now renders it an unstable space representing the fragility of a symbolic order based on difference. The tropicalised cricket field is a space in which the maintenance of English gentlemanly "sang-froid" becomes impossible:

The Gymkhana Ground appears at first sight to the visitor the most English thing in the vast city ... After driving through the streets, filled with representatives of every race, and bright with patches of every colour, the pavilion, the green cricket ground, and the nets, seem quite English. And yet how little English it is after all! A second glance round and you have to admit that you left England behind you when you stepped off the gangway of the P. & O. Till that moment England was with you. But now you are preparing to play cricket under new conditions. Native servants move about silently and endeavour to valet you; the punkah swings overhead and fails to keep you cool. You go out on the ground to play, and you get at once your first and probably most lasting impression of cricket in India. It is an impression of sun – dazzling, exhausting, baking, cooking, deceptive sun ...

Initially presented as a reassuring place of Englishness, the cricket field has been subjected to an imperial transformation: it is no longer a place of imperial accomplishment, but something more ambivalent and unstable that is failing to perform its identity-transforming function. As an integral part of the practice of colonialism, the regulated heterotopic place of the cricket field has produced a sense of disorientation and a crisis of colonial identity.

"An Oriental Poem of Action": Ranjitsinhji and "ringeysingey"

Narratives of embodiment surrounding the figure of Prince Kumar Shri Ranjitsinhji raised no such fears about English identity and the future of empire, although as a writer, text and important mediator of empire, Ranjitsinhji did suggest

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54Spurr, 67.
that Englishness was not a hermetically-sealed category and could be subject to imperial revision. Because of Princely duties in colonial India, Ranjitsinhji was able to have only a fitful presence on English cricket fields. However, when he did – as a brilliant batsman for Sussex and England – his cultural impact was immense. In other parts of the Empire, too, his batting caused a sensation and he became an advertising icon within the burgeoning Victorian commodity culture identified by writers such as Anne McClintock.\textsuperscript{56} Ranjitsinhji’s studious self-construction as an exotic trope fed into a contemporary fascination with the orient, and made him much in demand as an advertising tool. Ranjitsinhji iconography in all its forms meant that he was an agent of imperial cohesion both in Britain and its Empire. In his introduction to Ranjitsinhji’s own account of the 1897/98 England tour of Australia, a writer called “Rover” recalled:

During the tour in Australia, Ranjitsinhji not only sustained his reputation, but created a Ranjitsinhji fever – there were Ranjitsinhji matches, Ranjitsinhji railway bar sandwiches, Ranjitsinhji hair restorers. Afterwards the great cricketer returned to his peaceful home, whither he had been summoned on important business. Here he was at once presented with an enthusiastic address to this effect: “Our joy knew no bounds when we heard that a Rajput prince, Ranjitsinhji by name, beat all previous records in a game which is in a special sense an English game. You have raised India in the esteem of the English people, and made Indians love the noble race that inhabits the British Isles.”\textsuperscript{57}

Ranjitsinhji’s celebrity status had been hard won. In his early career he was a victim of the endemic racism of English cricket. Despite adopting the pseudonym of “Smith” as a student at Cambridge, his colour hampered his progress and he was not selected for the first XI until his third year. Although clearly one of the best batsmen in England, he was not selected for the 1\textsuperscript{st} test against Australia in 1896 because Lord

\textsuperscript{56}Anne McClintock, \textit{Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Conquest} (London: Routledge, 1995).

\textsuperscript{57}Kumar Shri Ranjitsinhji, \textit{With Stoddart’s Team In Australia} (London: Constable, 1985), 25-26.
Harris, who had just returned from a spell of colonial duty in India, opposed his qualification for England on the grounds of race. An opponent of this decision, Sir Home Gordon, later recorded that a fellow M.C.C. member had threatened to get him expelled “for having the disgusting degeneracy to praise a dirty black.” However, popular representations of Ranjitsinhji suggest that the English preoccupation with social class and status could transcend issues of race. Ranjitsinhji’s royal status (a status that he carefully self-fashioned) was emphasized in much cricket literature of the period. His own books – *The Jubilee Book of Cricket* (1897), *With Stoddart’s Team in Australia* (1898) and *Cricket Guide and How to Play It* (1906), all contained title pages describing him as a Prince. Francis Thompson entitled his review of *The Jubilee Book* as “A Prince of India on the Prince of Games,” and biographies of Ranjitsinhji frequently had titles that either stressed his royal pedigree or his apparent exoticism such as P.C. Standing’s *Ranjitsinhji Prince of Cricket* (1903).

Ranjitsinhji’s cultural status as an authoritative mediator of empire had been largely produced through forms of literary discourse. His highly popular *Jubilee Book of Cricket* was dedicated “by her gracious permission to her Majesty, The Queen Empress”, and in it he wrote, with no trace of irony, that cricket was “certainly amongst the most powerful links which keep our Empire together … one of the great contributions the British people have made to humanity.” Long before the notorious “Tebbit Test”, Ranjitsinhji was constructed as embodying the ideal of colonial affiliation to the Mother Country by all but the most racist of commentators.

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58Quoted in Birley, *A Social History of English Cricket*, 166.


60In 1990, in an interview by the *Los Angeles Times*, Norman (now Lord) Tebbit claimed that too many British Asians failed what he called “the cricket test”. By this he meant that when England played India or Pakistan, their allegiances were with the Asian teams. From this he drew the spurious conclusion that they were not
In this discourse his charismatic presence on the cricket field legitimised his Englishness, proving that it was a remarkably efficacious place of identity-transformation. In an introduction to Ranjitsinhji’s own account of the 1897-1898 England tour of Australia an author known as “Rover” wrote:

Ranjitsinhji is a little above the medium height. In most respects, especially as a sportsman, he is a thorough Englishman. With all due deference to the sufficiently patriotic and culturally assimilated (Mike Marqusee, Anyone But England: Cricket and the National Malaise [London: Verso, 1994], 137-140).
sensibilities of the small minority of out-and-out patriots, I, in common with the vast majority of English cricketers, look forward to seeing his famous lissom figure once again among a representative English eleven.  

Ranjitsinhji’s entry into the English cricket field was simultaneously represented as the legitimate intervention of a colonial into Englishness itself, and as a performative disruption to the stylistic and technical norms of English cricket. Contemporary descriptions of Ranjitsinhji’s batting often convey a sense of its innovatory nature. Widely regarded as one of the most original stylists to have ever played the game, his idiosyncratic re-articulation of cricket’s performative grammar was frequently praised in racial terms. To his friend, co-writer and fellow cricketer, C.B. Fry, “[W]hat gave him his distinctiveness was a combination of perfect poise and the suppleness and the quickness peculiar to the athletic Hindu.”  

W.G. Grace likewise put Ranjitsinhji’s success and massive popularity down to two factors – “his extraordinary skill as a batsman and his nationality.”  

According to the journalist A.G. Gardiner:

Here was what the late Lord Salisbury would have called a “black man” playing cricket for all the world as if he were a white man. Then they realised that he did not play it as a white man, but as an artist of another and superior strain ...[Ranjitsinhji] combines an Oriental calm with an Oriental swiftness – the stillness of the panther with the suddenness of its spring.

In 1896 a leader column in The Daily Telegraph was equally replete with such exotic oriental images. At the same time it used a literary analogy to suggest that colonial cultural forms were inherently unstable and thus susceptible to appropriation and re-articulation at the colonial peripheries: “Wrists supple and tough as a creeper of the Indian jungle, and dark eyes which see every twist and turn of the bounding ball,

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61 Ranjitsinhji, With Stoddart’s Team in Australia, 28.
62 Quoted in Benny Green, A History of Cricket, 161.
Ranjitsinhji has adopted cricket and turned it into an Oriental poem of action. These narratives of oriental embodiment were later elaborated within the aestheticised discourse of the Golden Age. In the inter-war period Ranjitsinhji’s social status was readily absorbed into the contemporary literary construction of idealised feudal social structures. As in Forster, inter-war representations of Ranjitsinhji projected the authentically aesthetic into the colonial space of the “other” as a reaction to the fallen aesthetic present. According to Cardus:

He was a remarkable instance of the power and scope of cricket to express not only the style that is the man but also the style that is the race ... A strange light from the East flickered in the English sunshine when he was at the wicket; “He’s no batsman,” said the Australian George Giffin, “he’s a conjuror!” When he turned approved science upside down and changed the geometry of batsmanship to an esoteric legerdemain, we were bewitched to the realms of rope-dancers and snake-charmers; this was cricket of Oriental sorcery, glowing with a dark beauty of its own, a beauty with its own mysterious axis and balance.

As what Arjun Appadurai has termed “the quintessential and living trope of an ‘Oriental’ form of cricketing skill,” Ranjitsinhji was represented as “the glamorous obverse of the effeminacy, laziness and lack of stamina that many colonial theorists thought Indians represented.” In Ranjitsinhji “wile became guile, trickery became magic, weakness became suppleness, effeminacy was transformed into grace.” The textual figure of Ranjitsinhji thus became implicated in the contemporary renegotiation of the idea of moral manliness discussed in chapters two and three. According to Cardus, one fellow player claimed, “‘e’ never played a Christian stroke

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65 Quoted in J. Williams, Cricket and Race, 26-27.
66 Baucom, 119.
67 Cardus, English Cricket, 68.
68 Appadurai, 30.
in his life." But Ranjitsinhji's own literary self-fashioning drew upon such formulae, and theorised his bodily performance in racialised terms, attributing his batting brilliance to his eyesight, which was "just a gift of my race ... The message from the eye to the brain, and from thence to the muscles, is flashed with a rapidity that has no equal amongst Englishmen."70 Despite the spurious biology and orientalist clichés of such utterances, the textual construction of Ranjitsinhji formed a positive axiology of aristocratic, anti-nationalist Indianness.

By 1930 Ranjitsinhji had taken on an important role as a recognisable imperialist figure and mouthpiece, as the following passage taken from an after-dinner speech given to the Australian touring team in September 1930 suggests. In the context of severe economic depression and strained relations between Britain and Australia at the time, Ranjitsinhji used the occasion to make a decisively political statement by employing an extended metaphor of empire as cricket team. At this moment of imperial anxiety and tension (Australia and five other dominions were to be granted legislative independence in 193171) the avowedly apolitical pieties of Victorian cricket writers such as Lang are transposed into the wider sphere of empire, with the supposedly innocent language of the cricket metaphor sidestepping political conflict:

These post-War years are admittedly difficult. There are adjustments to be made in our Imperial team. Some of our players seem dissatisfied with their place in the team; there are some whispers, although of the most irresponsible kind, of resignation. It is occasions such as this, far more than the stress of a crisis, which test both the skill in the captain and the loyalty of the team. Every cricketer knows how easy it is on certain occasions to allow himself to

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69 Cardus, *English Cricket*, 68.

70 Quoted in J. Williams, *Cricket and Race*, 27.

71 Patrick F. McDevitt, "*May the Best Man Win*": Sport, Masculinity, and Nationalism in Great Britain and the Empire, 1880-1935 (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 84.
become discontented, if he starts brooding over his own individual case ... Yet it is precisely this kind of temptation which cricket teaches us to avoid at all costs. How often have I wished that all the political leaders in the countries of the Empire were cricketers! For if they had undergone the training and the discipline of the great game, I am sure they would find it easier than they appear to do at present to think first and last of the team. I am not a politician myself ... but I cannot help thinking that all of us in the great British Empire need more of the spirit which cricket inculcates; we need more team work, more patience, and more unselfishness; we need more of the true spirit of cricket. 72

From the 1890s to his death in 1933, Ranjitsinhji produced, and gave rise to, images and discourses of imperial loyalty and accomplishment during a period of increasing imperial instability. As an oriental trope of imperial accomplishment, Ranjitsinhji's renegotiation of cricket's performative grammar produced narratives of embodiment that brought together the magical Orient and the playing fields of England in such a way that symbolised the unity of Empire. Furthermore, his innovative style had revolutionised cricket (as Grace's had done a generation before) in such a way that new forms and energies deriving from the colonial peripheries were perceived to be reinvigorating this most "English" of cultural practices.

Although the narratives of embodiment surrounding Ranjitsinhji signified the stability of the imagined community of empire, these discourses also suggest the extent to which cricket (and, by implication, Englishness itself) could be subject to imperial revision. James Joyce's novel, Finnegans Wake (1939) contains a particularly pronounced example of the instability of the discourse of Englishness and empire as figured by cricket. Joyce had been interested in cricket as a boy, and the sport formed part of the curriculum of the Jesuit school he attended. This was reflected in his semi-autobiographical novel, Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (1916), with its much- anthologised onomatopoeic description of cricket:

The fellows were practising long shies and bowling lobs and slow twisters. In the soft grey silence he could hear the bump of the balls: and from here and from there through the quiet air the sound of the cricket bats: pick, pack, pock, puck: like drops of water in a fountain falling softly in the brimming bowl.  

Joyce brilliantly replicates the sound of bat on ball but the symbolic significance of the implements of cricket are as metonyms of the British colonial system and its disciplinary influence on the Irish, however disguised these hegemonic procedures may have been. Cricket also featured briefly in Joyce’s anti-colonial recasting of Homer, *Ulysses*, however, during an extended passage of *Finnegans Wake* a litany of the names of thirty-one pre- First World War One cricketers appears. The passage suggests the power of colonial discourse to make a deep impression on the colonial dispensation and to enter into the consciousness of the colonised. At the same time, the technique of stream of consciousness recasts the formal conservatism of English cricket writing. Its concentration of puns and sexual innuendo inevitably has an estranging effect upon the reader, de-familiarising cricket’s esoteric lexicon, hagiography and literary canon. Here, and elsewhere, the text of *Finnegans Wake* is shown to have been formed by, and was deeply implicated within, such a cultural vocabulary, whilst remaining at its margins. In this passage, high literary modernism appropriates cricket in such a way that suggests a modernist aesthetic from the colonial peripheries most effectively challenges Englishness itself. At the level of the political and historical cosmology which partially informs the structure of the novel, cricket, like every carefully chosen image and theme in the narrative, is destabilised and rearticulated in the interests of an alternative cultural politics. In this act of

73 James Joyce, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1992), 59-60.

postcolonial literary appropriation, the supposedly stable discourse of “lilywhite”
moral manliness, as signified by cricket, is Celticised, sexualised and estranged:

At half past quick in the morning. And her lamp was all askew and a trumbly wick-in-her, ringeysingeay. She had to Spofforth, she had to kicker, too thick of the wick of her pixy’s loomph, wide lickering jessop the smoky shiminey. And her duffed coverpoint of a wickedly batter, whenever she druv behind her stumps for a tyddlesly wink through his tunnil-clefft bagslops after the rising bounder’s Yorkers, as he studd and Stoddard and trutted and trumpered, to see had lordherry’s blackham’s red bobby abbel’s...The game old merrimynn, square to leg, with his lolleywide towelhat and his hobsy socks and his wisden’s bosse and his nursery pinafore and his gentleman’s grip and his playaboys plunge and his flannelly feelyfooling, treading her hump and hambledown like a maiden wellheld, ovalled over, with her crease where the pads of her punishments ought to be by womanish rights when, keek, the hen in the doran’s shantyqueer began in a kikkery key to laugh it off, yeigh, yeigh, neigh, neigh, the way she was wuck to doodledoo by her gallows bird (how’s that? Noball, he carries his bat!) nine hundred and dirty too not out, at all times long past conquering cock of the morgans.75

Though the novel itself had little popular impact, the passage is important as a form of meta-discourse: first in its guise as a collage of received impressions gleaned from newspapers, books and conversations; second, as a hagiology in which images of normative colonial manliness were presented to the colonised; third, as an esoteric and highly technical language; and finally, with its references to Wisden, to Nyren and to Kipling, as a national and imperial cultural form preserved and disseminated in particular texts. However, as colonial discourse, Joyce shows that cricket was inherently susceptible to colonial and postcolonial re-articulation. In the 1920s Walter Shaw Sparrow celebrated sporting art because such representations “illustrate[s] those qualities which make and preserve a colonising people.”76 In the following decade, in the wake of Irish independence, Joyce de-familiarised the language and literary canon


of cricket in a way that suggested the instability both of cricket as a cultural sign and, by implication, the empire it symbolised.

**Literaturisation and Colonial Cricket Tours**

International cricket tours were significant moments of imperial cultural interchange and literaturisation. They were discursive moments in which the conflicting themes of imperial accomplishment and anxiety interacted. The first tour to Britain by a colonial team was in 1868 when a squad of Aboriginal cricketers captained by a white player and managed by an entrepreneur undertook a gruelling schedule of 47 matches in 4 months. At a time when highly commercialised cricket unashamedly paraded itself as a form of popular entertainment, and before the late 19th century re-writing of cricket as an essentially amateur and disinterested activity, the aboriginal cricketers were packaged as an exotic form of entertainment. At close of play the cricketers gave demonstrations of boomerang and spear-throwing wearing costumes of possum or kangaroo skin and lyre-bird feathers. Charles Box later described the apparently illegitimate entry of the aboriginals into the field of cricket in terms of a mixed sense of fascination, unease and condescension:

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77The first Australian cricket tour to England occurred in 1861/62 after the Melbourne-based catering firm of Messrs Spiers and Pond secured a contract with group of English professional cricketers known as the “All-England XI”. In the origins of this tour derive one of cricket’s enduring literary myths. According to the official M.C.C. account, Spiers and Pond only considered a cricket tour after failing to secure the services of Charles Dickens for a reading tour of the antipodes. As Paul Graham has shown, this account is spurious, based as it is on faulty chronology and questionable evidence (Paul Graham, “Dickens, Spiers, and Pond: From the Birth of Anglo-Australian Cricket to the Death of the Missis of Mugby Junction,” *Dickensian* [1990]: 111-120). Nevertheless, it is a significant example of the cultural validation of cricket through literaturisation. Dickens or not, the tour was an outstanding financial success earning Spiers and Pond £11,000, reminding us that cricket was at this time fully implicated in broader patterns of commercialism that included the enterprises of a popular novelist such as Dickens.
A great deal of curiosity was, as a matter of course, excited thereby. The idea of such an invasion upon the legitimate domain of cricket created amusement; and the possibility of the faintest chance of success was, by the great bulk of the English community, hard to be conceived.\textsuperscript{78}

The Aboriginal intervention into the “legitimate” field of cricket was a significant moment of literaturisation. Box later commented on the profusion of verse inspired by the aboriginals, but opined “the attempts to be witty were vile, and others, to be over-clever, failures.”\textsuperscript{79} A few lines of one contemporary rhymester typify the nature and quality of literary discourse surrounding the tour:

\begin{quote}
Arrayed in skins of kangaroo
And deck’d in lanky feather
How well you fling the fragile spear
Along the Surrey Heather\textsuperscript{80}
\end{quote}

Like the Fisk University Jubilee Singers who visited Britain in 1870 and were the first performers to sing Negro spirituals on a public platform in Britain, the aboriginals were forced to conform to demeaning cultural stereotypes.\textsuperscript{81} The flurry of discourse surrounding the tour in the fast growing sporting and general press gave the tour a national dimension; yet, also like the Jubilee singers, the visit of the aboriginals represented a significant moment of imperial cultural interchange that created a degree of ambivalence at the level of discourse. Exotic descriptions of the team vied with representations stressing their “gentlemanly appearance.”\textsuperscript{82} Such discourse implied that the imperial cricket field had the power to civilise even the most culturally primitive colonial subjects.

\textsuperscript{78}Charles Box, \textit{The English Game of Cricket}, 323.

\textsuperscript{79}Ibid., 327.

\textsuperscript{80}Ibid., 327.

\textsuperscript{81}Paul Gilroy, \textit{The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness} (London: Verso, 1993), 87-93.

According to James Bradley, the aboriginal tour only had a limited impact on popular representations of Australia, save that it created and fed an ignorant assumption that all Australians were black. 83 Ten years later, when the first officially representative white Australian team visited England, initial surprise at the ethnicity of the tourists gave way to a debate concerning the racial characteristics of the British and its Diaspora. The 1878 tour created enormous public and press interest, and with the Australians strong enough to beat an M.C.C. Club and ground team including W.G. Grace, such success demanded some explanation. As was shown in chapter one, in the context of social Darwinism, discourses surrounding the late 19th century cricket field constructed it as a repository of Anglo-Saxon purity and thus as a counterfoil against fears of racial degeneration. Because the cricket field was a transportable fragment of the English countryside, the Australian success could be attributed to its remarkable powers of identity formation and the survival of Anglo-Saxon racial purity in the most distant of colonial contexts. For one writer, therefore, the Australians “are all our own flesh and blood, and we welcome their prowess cheerfully as a proof that the old [blood] is not degenerating in those far-off lands.” 84

As Bradley has shown, the largely positive press coverage given to the 1878 tourists (in which their cricketing success was explained by their “Anglo-Saxonness”) was one element in a broader discursive construction of the white peripheries of the Empire manifest in much popular literature of the period. At a time when Britain was approaching the zenith of its imperial glory, Australian cricketers became implicated


in a discourse on the superiority of the “Anglo-Saxon race.” This theory is confirmed by writings on the one-off Test Match between the two countries played in 1880 at the Oval, the enormous public appeal of which was satirised by Anthony Trollope in his novel, The Fixed Period. Whilst the Australian victory in this match caused an “obituary” of English cricket to appear in Sporting Life (suggesting that English cricket has always been in a perpetual state of mourning for itself), the Australian success was again cast in terms of the superiority of Anglo-Saxon

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85 Bradley, 42.

86 Anthony Trollope’s last novel, The Fixed Period (1882), contains the most bizarre and proto-post-modern fictional representation of cricket ever written. Set in the dystopian former British colony of “Britannula” in 1980, the novel features a stylised, highly mechanised “Test Match” between the ex-colony and a visiting English team. In Trollope’s futuristic sporting encounter, cricket has been transformed into pure technology: batsmen wear protective armour to avoid injury against the ferocious onslaught of the steam-powered bowling machines that are set against them. Trollope’s novel is fundamentally a parody of the idea of euthanasia, but its cricket scene also has resonances for cultural historians of sport. At the time of the novel’s composition, the English newspapers were excitedly anticipating the forthcoming Test Match between England and Australia that was to famously result in an Australian victory and the subsequent coining of the term “The Ashes”. Trollope had been critical on a number of occasions of professionalism and commercialism in sport, and the mechanisation of cricket presented in the novel is a caricature of these processes. The novel draws attention to these issues by making the Britannulan team amateur, whilst the English team rely heavily on the skills of its professionals. Furthermore, by rendering both the Britannulan population and the British government ludicrously absorbed in the match, Trollope graphically displays an Adornian sense that organised sport was a distraction from political reality, merely causing men to serve the machine more inexorably (David Inglis, “Theodore Adorno on Sport: ‘The Jeu D’Esprit of Despair,’” in Sport and Modern Social Theorists, ed. Richard Giulianotti [Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004], 81-95). At the same time, with so much national pride at stake, it shows sport to be necessarily implicated in the politics of national and imperial identity (Antony Trollope, The Fixed Period [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993], 58-78).

manhood and the strength of the bonds of empire. For instance, the former cricketer Frederick Gale wrote admiringly about the determined performance of the Australians in such a way that it, and the crowd’s response, became a panegyric to the tourist’s Anglo-Saxon manliness and the community of empire they embodied:

Let us not forget to say an honest word of praise in favour of our national glory and love of fair play. Don’t let us boast, but let us be thankful that the largest crowd of Englishmen ever collected to witness our national game were heart and soul in admiration of our colonial cousins, who fought one of the finest up-hill games ever seen, and proved themselves worthy representatives of the Anglo-Saxon blood.87

However, as discourses surrounding the English cricket field increasingly redefined it as an essentially disinterested, amateur pursuit, Australian cricketers were subjected to criticism for their perceived financial rapaciousness. During the next Australian tour in 1881, Lillywhite’s Annual stated that, “if the Australians did not make cricket their profession in their native land, they most decidedly did when they came to this country.”88 In 1882 the same publication blamed the players’ strike of the previous year “indirectly on the Australian elevens.”89 Although there were obvious tensions between such views and the commercial imperatives of the publications in which they appeared, the Australian cricketers became implicated in a broader contemporary critique of bourgeois professionalism that went well beyond the field of cricket.90 Interviewed by Cricket Field (one of a number of specialist cricket publications emerging at this time), Lord Hawke likened Australian cricketers to “speculators.”91 In 1896, when the English professionals went on strike prior to the Oval Test as a protest against the large sums of money allegedly earned by the Australians, Athletic

86Quoted in Bradley, 44
87Ibid, 44.
90Wiener, 15.
91Bradley, 44.
News responded with a cartoon entitled "The Motherland's Farewell." Though the title ironically alluded to the ideal of cultural cohesion represented by cricket, several of the Australian players were depicted in a boat called "The Golden Fleece" weighed down to the gunnels with four large sacks of gold. At a time when the disavowal of the economy had been placed at the very heart of the cricket field (embodied in the literary cult of the charismatic amateur), the Australians were represented as the embodiment of the sordid values of professionalism, and blamed for politicising and destabilising the otherwise innocent cultural space of the cricket field.

At the same time some media and literary representations refused to accept the Australians as men of the correct social pedigree. They were seen as claiming amateur status when their social status did not merit it. Though most of the Australian tourists were men of independent financial means, representations of them often likened them to English professionals who were frequently described as boring, unadventurous and lacking in charisma. Again, in Bourdieu's terms, social distinctions were transposed into the specific logic of the cricket field. According to Arthur Budd, the Australians:

Are slow and studiously correct in their cricket, sometimes wearisomely so. They hit at nothing but loose balls, but the fact remains that they are terribly difficult to get rid of, and that you never know when you have done with them. 92

Without the rigid amateur/professional divide so integral to English cricket's ability to symbolise the national community, the Australian teams unsettled the English cricket establishment. For more liberal writers such as the former professional player A. E. Knight, the Australians could be used as a means of critiquing the rigid class structure of the English game. Knight was aware that the Australians upset the establishment, not because they were paid, but because they lacked the necessary social pedigree to claim amateur status:

92Ibid., 48.
The official recognition of the Australian players as “amateurs” is an anomaly which has never been acceptable to the mind of the English. The problem it presents is one of great complexity and difficulty. We ourselves have seen fit to draw a clear-cut and definite line theoretically separating the “professional”, i.e. the paid player, from the “amateur”, the enthusiast who plays when he can spare the time. The distinction has long lost its validity. The “amateur” is very frequently, directly, no less than indirectly, a paid player, and the distinction now rests on social grounds. Australia, save in a narrow circle which gathers round the vice-regal representative, knows practically nothing of the system of petty caste. The practical position of the Australian is, however, a perfectly candid one, and on the whole I admire the courage and skill with which they have asserted their status.

For a liberal such as Knight, Australian cricket teams represented an ideal of a near classless society that contrasted with the social inequalities of English cricket and society.

Representations of Australian cricketers in the work of Neville Cardus dating from the inter-war period further demonstrate the role of the colonial “other” in the formation of constructions of the national and imperial cultures through cricket. At the same time they show that perceptions of alternative modes of bodily performance in cricket could trouble and disturb the English imaginary. In an article written to mark the arrival of the 1930 Australian tourists tellingly entitled “Invasion”, Cardus used the Australians as aesthetic counter-images to an aristocratic Englishness embodied in his favourite pre-war amateur batsman, R.H Spooner. In contrast to Spooner’s genteel style, Cardus’s narratives of Australian embodiment emphasised, rather than euphemised, the violence of cricket:

Australian cricket has never come under the influences of village cricket or the public schools; consequently it has gained in high seriousness and arrogance what it has lost in geniality and affable manners. There has never been a comic character amongst Australian players. They are men of war at most times. Even when the Australian batsman is brilliant to watch, he is at the same time a dour fellow. Your Spooner drives past cover-point with a courtliness that causes you to forget he is at bottom an antagonist, the bowler his enemy. You feel that a Spooner is batting not for the contest’s sake but simply for beauty’s sake. The Australians have shown us many handsome

93Albert Knight, The Complete Cricketer (London: Methuen, 1906), 228.
batsmen, but one and all they have worn their plumes with a difference. They have hit the ball hard and beautifully – but also have they always hit the ball vindictively. Lust for spoils, not some power above mortal combat, has been the motive force. Even Victor Trumper was a conquistador, and there was little humour or graciousness about the incomparable Macartney. His every innings was a scherzo – in a battle symphony; there was a touch of the macabre in the way he led bowlers along a dancing track to their ruin. His brilliance was not sunny; out of his bat’s end shot the lightning that works havoc.  

In Cardus’s writings the most representative of all Australians was the fast bowler “Demon” Spofforth. Cardus’s representation of Spofforth clearly drew upon and embellished pre-war discourse and iconography, particularly one of the earliest photographic cricket books, George Beldham and C.B. Fry’s *Great Bowlers*. Such colonial representations echoed contemporary portrayals of working-class professional bowlers as demonic mercenaries, and thus as internal counter-images to the Gentlemen amateurs (see chapter one):

I suppose Spofforth was what Emerson would have called a “Representative Man” of Australian cricket. He has the leanness suspected by Caesar; look at the portraits of him in Mr. Beldham’s book on “Great Bowlers,” and you will feel that in this man some spirit of destruction was contained which broke forth in sinister, Spring-heel Jack leapings. When Spofforth stepped on to an English field such an east wind of antagonism blew as the worthy and eminent Victorians had never known: a killing, chilling wind fit to freeze our grass and dry up nature in our soil ... He seems to have had a Mephistophelian personality; he stalked over the field like a spirit of denial.  

Although Spofforth actually identified more closely with his native Yorkshire than with Australia, Cardus drew upon and elaborated an established formula of representation through which he became a sinister external counter-image of Englishness. In these writings on Australian cricketers, Cardus suggested that the identity-forming locale of the cricket field, the archetypal village green of authentic

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Englishness, had not been successfully transplanted to Australia. By implication, Englishness and the empire represented by the cricket field was subject to imperial revision and thus worryingly unstable. The bodily performance of the Australian players, unlike that of the English gentlemen stylists, cannot be aesthetically euphemised because it contravenes and revises the sport’s discursively established norms of bodily movement. If Spooner and the village green represent paternalistic and hierarchical social values, the Australian’s “high seriousness and arrogance” threatens to disturb and politicise this aesthetic ideal. As these examples suggest, English literary representations of Australian cricketers were highly ambiguous acts. On the one hand, white Australian cricketers were presented as embodying cultural and ethnic ties between Dominion and Mother Country; on the other hand, writers detected modes of disquieting bodily performance and economic capital that threatened to destabilize the imperial cricket field as a place of stability and accomplishment. Fundamentally concerned with social class, the discursive ambiguities surrounding Australian cricket became a series of overt agonistics in the Bodyline series discussed at the end of this chapter.

**West Indies in the Field**

The racial dimension of writings and other representations of West Indies players even more strongly demonstrate the profound ambiguity of colonial discourse. Whilst the success of visiting Australian teams could be attributed to the validity of “Anglo-Saxon” values, West Indies teams that included black players were simultaneously symbols of imperial accomplishment and deeply unsettling cultural entities. However, in tracing a history of the representation of West Indies cricketers in England a pattern emerges in which overtly racist rhetoric gradually evolves into a
more positive axiology of alterity in which the category of “blackness” figures aesthetic and cognitive values believed to be lacking in the metropolitan culture of the modern period. This aestheticisation of West Indies cricket was nevertheless an attempt by English cricket writers to efface any political dimension to the West Indies’ entry into the cricket field, a cultural intervention that was in reality politically deeply significant for the colonised.

There were five black cricketers in the first West Indies squad to visit England in 1900. Although media representations constructed a largely white image for the team, the presence of blacks in the side led Boys Own Paper to write of the “great novelty of coloured men playing on a cricket field in England.”97 Tropes of colonial tutelage and infantilisation characterised representations of the black players. For example, the Star published a cartoon showing W.G. Grace surrounded by six crouching black men all shedding tears, and saying to him: “We have come to learn, sah!”98 The tour was unsuccessful in terms of results for the West Indies, but it was a major historical landmark for black players and heralded the beginning of non-racial West Indies international cricket. The next tour in 1906 was another significant discursive event, for blacks now made up the majority of the touring party. In spite of its white leadership reactions to the team were typically ambiguous: the colonials were encouraged in a paternal manner but, because they now had a black media image, the press represented the cricketing competition in racial terms. Many writers felt the tour succeeded in stressing Imperial ties, but the initial failure of the team provided elements of the press with a rationale for racialised explanations. After the team were heavily defeated by the W.G. Grace XI, a caricature by A.E. Morton

97Quoted in Beckles, 26.

98C.L.R. James, “The History of West Indies Cricket” in Cricket, 18.
appeared in which the West Indies team represented by a simian black child is being caned by Grace who is featured as an Imperial schoolmaster. The cartoon implied that the West Indian team was merely unsuccessfully apeing their white masters (see figure 18). According to Hilary Beckles, “on the whole the literary image of an African world – black primitives and white masters – was unleashed ...” Furthermore, such representations “located cricket in England at the centre of colonial discourse, particularly the legitimacy of colonial rule and white superiority ideology.”

Fig. 18. A.E. Morton comments on the West Indies’ heavy defeat to a W.G. Grace XI in the first match of their 1906 tour. Source: J. Williams. *Cricket and Race*.

By the inter-war period, in the context of the workers rebellions of the 1930s, West Indies cricket was becoming infused with an ideological meaning that was making white leadership of the team (which had eventually achieved Test status in 1928) increasingly untenable to the black majority. According to Franklin Knight:

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99 Beckles, 32-40.
Nationalism and class consciousness gained major impetus in the inter-war years. Like the Bolivian Indians after the wars in Gran Chaco, the West Indians who returned after service in the European war theatre agitated for change. And their agitation coincided with a number of other factors which together contributed toward hastening the end of European colonialism in the Caribbean.  

As Eric Hobsbawm has shown, the economic slump resulted in a marked increase in anti-colonial agitation and led to social unrest in the Caribbean and in other regions such as West Africa. The consistent infantalisation of West Indies cricketers in the English media at the time articulates closely with this political context. With activists in the Caribbean and in England (such as James) making claims for West Indies self-government, the sporting embodiments of Caribbean political aspirations were consistently patronised and held to be inherently incapable of rational self-governance. This is evident in Cardus’s coverage of the 1928 and 1933 West Indies tours. Having belatedly been afforded Test match status, the West Indies played their first official Test at Lord’s in June 1928. In his report for the Manchester Guardian, Cardus explicitly framed the scene within the conventions of juvenile colonial literature, with the infantalised West Indies silhouetting the Englishness of the scene. The foregrounding of the picturesque trivialises the scene by gesturing towards patterns of popular literary consumption, and thus elides the historically symbolic dimension of the West Indies presence at Lord’s:

To-day the West Indians had their first experience of a Test match in this country. There was a real June day for it. Rich sunshine lighted Lord’s from noon till evening, and a crowd of more than 20,000 sat in huddled ease, making a scene very human, very English. In the day’s warmth the colour of the West Indians seemed as natural as that of the green grass. There are six of them black as ebony, and three with faces of chocolate brown. When they smile they are loveable; we see white teeth and we think of melons and the

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dear humorous friends of our nursery days in a hundred tales of the old plantations.\textsuperscript{102}

In Cardus the trope of infantalisation also provided a critique of the moribund idioms of contemporary English cricket. West Indies cricket thus became implicated in the discourse of cultural crisis discussed in chapters two and three. Because of their supposed childishness, the West Indies cricketer’s bodily performance is afforded positive aesthetic status:

…the day’s charm was provided by the spirit which moved the West Indians – an unsophisticated spirit and all the more endearing because of its want of acquaintance with routine and introspection and the critical habit of mind. The West Indians play the game like children of impulse, their activities tell us of simple humours and blood and animal spirits. They are clever up to a point, but technique with them has not been so cultivated and practiced that it will work out its problem by rote in the automatic way of your proper professional. The West Indian cricketer’s every action is lived through by the whole man of him. His command of technique is not so great that it keeps pace with his ambition.\textsuperscript{103}

By explicitly linking these images of childishness to the issue of race, the logic of Cardus’s writings on West Indies black cricketers is to deny them the “English” quality of self-discipline. The political implications for the reader are clear:

The erratic quality of the West Indian’s play is surely true to racial type. At one moment the team is eager, confident, and quite masterful; then, as circumstances go against them, you can see the men losing heart. Routine has not yet given them a cloak to cover emotions that live on the surface…\textsuperscript{104}

Within this axiology, the infantalised black West Indies players, despite their refreshing spontaneity, are prone to mimicry. Thus Cardus frequently complained about their tendency to copy the English professional players. Such writing is typical of colonialist discourse in which the colonised are demeaned for their “otherness” and

\textsuperscript{102}Neville Cardus, “West Indies in the Field. How Tydelsley Made his 100,” Manchester Guardian, Monday June 25\textsuperscript{th} 1928.

\textsuperscript{103}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{104}Ibid.
reviled when they attempt to behave according to colonial models. For Cardus the West Indies were making the mistake of playing too defensively in the style of the English professionals:

Better far had the West Indians gone all out to expel science with bats that were high-spirited, agile, Herculean, racial. These cricketers of the hot sun ought never to help English bowlers to look at all scientific by themselves placing their batting in a scientific world. They should trust to their own spirit — original spirit is better any day than acquired science... Let them decide at once not to be educated farther into the technical proprieties of cricket as we English play it. 105

Overall the black West Indies players are damned by Cardus for falling prey to the identity-transforming powers of the cricket field. They are located within the contemporary crisis of cultural and aesthetic authority because their models are not of the correct social breeding:

As a trial of strength the first Test match was a sad disappointment – because the West Indies batsmen decided for the most part to play cricket according to the rules of the English professionals’ union. 106

Nevertheless, at the very time when West Indies cricket was being transformed into a focal point for nationalist and anti-colonial struggle, many metropolitan commentators began to valorise what they perceived as a peculiarly West Indian cricketing style, positing it as stylistically superior to the aesthetically-deficient, moribund and routine idioms of English cricket. At one level West Indies cricket was an example of the way in which the exotic was increasingly entering into both popular and elite culture at this time, for instance, the influence of Caribbean rhythms in dance music. Clearly cricket was an important means by which new energies and forms from the colonial peripheries were perceived to provide models of how to reinvigorate metropolitan


cultural traditions. At the same time, the aestheticisation of non-white colonial cricket is indicative of the latent anxiety of the avowedly apolitical, yet decisively political, discourse of cricket. As Spurr has argued, within colonial discourse, aestheticisation served to isolate narratives of colonial "otherness" from relations of political and economic power. The insertion of colonial cricket into the reconciliatory category of the aesthetic is indicative of the moment of imperial crisis identified by Knight and Hobsbawm.

Cardus, Constantine and the Aesthetics of Otherness

This theme is now further developed in relation to Learie Constantine and C.L.R. James’s Cricket and I (1933), and to Cardus’s representations of Constantine himself. Cricket and I is widely regarded as a significant event in Caribbean literary history because it was one of the first books written by (a) Caribbean author(s) to be published in Britain. Along with texts such as James’s novel, Minty Alley (1936), and his tract espousing West Indies independence, The Case for West Indian Self-Government (1933), Cricket and I formed part of what was later described by James himself as a West Indian literary renaissance. James had arrived in England in 1932 at the invitation of Constantine who was then playing as the professional for the Lancashire League club, Nelson. James spent much of his first year in England with Constantine in the role of his amanuensis. Constantine suggested that James send an example of his cricket writing to his acquaintance, Neville Cardus, who subsequently offered James the position as his assistant at the Manchester Guardian. Apart from enabling James to become a professional cricket writer, the relationship with

107 Spurr, 48.

108 James, Beyond a Boundary, 124.
Constantine was instrumental in his politicisation. As he recalls in *Beyond a Boundary*, Constantine encouraged him to question and challenge imperialist modes of representation by drawing his attention to the racial politics which underpinned them. Through his discussions with Constantine he began to recognise the inseparability of cricket and politics.\(^{109}\) Though it contains almost nothing of the radical critique of the English cricket establishment evident in Constantine’s later books such as *Cricket Crackers* and *Cricket in the Sun* (in which a movement towards the anti-racialist polemic of *Colour Bar* can be detected\(^{110}\)), *Cricket and I* is a text which emphasises the cultural significance of West Indies cricket both in the Caribbean and in Britain. Constantine used his connections in order to persuade Cardus to write a validating preface for the book, and Cardus’s short contribution draws attention to many of the ideological and aesthetic contradictions of the contemporary cricket field. First, it testifies to Gilroy’s assertion that the image of the black has been central to debates about cultural value by implicating Constantine’s body into the contemporary discourse of cultural crisis.\(^{111}\) In the opening sentence Constantine’s book is itself lauded because it seemingly provides a new and refreshing viewpoint that is linked to the culture of the colonial peripheries. West Indianness is represented as the positive side of a “play”/“work” dichotomy; English cricket (and, by extension, English culture) is associated with a dull work ethic and cultural stagnation that is desperately in need of reinvigoration. As he did with Spofforth and Ranjitsinhji, Cardus linked art (or cricketing style) to environmental,

\(^{109}\)Ibid., 117-128.


climatic and racial determinants in the manner of Pugin, Ruskin and J.S. Mill. The binary is here one of nature/ civilisation in which “nature” is the valorised term and is linked to the regenerative capabilities of the colonial peripheries. Cardus infantilises his object whilst associating his fielding style with a valorised aesthetic of primitivism. At the same time, West Indianness is defined in terms of natural athleticism, an assertion arising from the colonialist opposition of mind and body. Cardus acknowledges and celebrates the stylistic innovation of Constantine’s cricket and therefore stresses the two-directional flow of colonial culture. With its absence of artifice and repression, Cardus suggests that West Indies cricket is a means through which new styles and forms flowed from the colonies to the metropolitan centre itself:

It is good to read a book on cricket by Constantine; he gives us a fresh point of view, and it is the view of a country which is young enough yet to play its games and not merely work at them. Constantine is a representative man: he is West Indian cricket, just as W.G. Grace was English cricket. When we see Constantine bat or bowl of field, we know he is not an English player, not an Australian player, not a South African player. We know that his cuts and drives, his whirling fast balls, his leapings and clutchings and darlings – we know they are the consequences of impulses born in the blood, a blood heated by the sun and influenced by an environment and a way of life much more natural than ours; impulses not common to the psychology of the over-civilised places of the earth. His cricket is racial.

Professionalism with Constantine has not expelled nature. When he hits a ball for six, he laughs hugely, and seems to say, ‘Oh golly, I like it : let me do it again.’ Cricket is his element; to say that he plays cricket, or takes part in it, is to say that a fish goes swimming. His movements in the field are almost primitive in their pouncing voracity and unconscious beauty. There are no bones in his body, only great charges and flows of energy. A genius, and, I say, a representative man!112

Apart from this litany of colonialist tropes, however, Cardus registers the political meaning of Constantine to his compatriots, endowing a sense of historicity to his body usually absent in colonialist discourse.113 Right at the very spiritual centre of empire

112Neville Cardus, “Preface” to Learie Constantine, Cricket and I (London: Philip Allen, 1933), xi-xii.
- Lords, the ultimate auratic place of Englishness – Constantine’s embodied performance (registering his mastery of the coloniser’s culture) is the occasion for a collective celebration of West Indian national identity and is a proleptic sign of future political autonomy. For Cardus, the book itself somehow exudes the exuberant modes of Constantine’s batting:

He has made a contribution to the style and technique of cricket; at the same time he has told the tale of his people. At Lord’s last year while Constantine played a wonderful innings a number of his compatriots wept for joy and shook hands in brotherly union. Constantine was their prophet; they saw in his vivid activity some power belonging to their own blood, a power ageless, never to be put down, free and splendid.... Constantine’s book is like the man himself. He believes that first-class cricket needs something that the West Indies can give it. What that something is can be felt continuously in these pages.114

Cardus’s preface to Cricket and I was little more than an abridged version of his essay “Constantine” which was reprinted in Good Days (1934). Another reworking of this piece exotically entitled “Life, sunshine and lustre” appeared in Playfair Cricket Monthly in the early 1960s – the years immediately preceding West Indian independence. Looking back at Constantine of the 1920s, and employing many of the same images, metaphors and tropes as in the two earlier pieces, the essay is nevertheless a more extensive appraisal of Constantine’s cricket and of his cultural meaning, whilst the historical context of the early 60s gives this narrative of embodiment a new cultural and political resonance. As in the earlier essays Constantine’s status as a “representative cricketer” is conveyed through a list of confident generalisations about West Indianness, the emphasis being upon his intuitive and instinctive cricketing ability:

113 Spurr, 98-102.
114 Ibid., xii.
He played like a sort of elemental instinctive force. Principle became impulse in him. He expressed in all of his motions on the field the West Indian temperament. His swift darts and twistings in the slips were directed by intuitions heated by West Indian blood; he bowled terrifically fast as every West Indian boy wishes and loves to bowl. He batted with a racial power, positiveness and agility — again, as every West Indian boy wishes and determines to bat. As much as Ranjitsinhji, Constantine was a genius of his own habitation, his place of origin.\footnote{115}

Such generalisations place the piece within an ethnographic frame of reference in which Cardus’s authoritative white voice defines his black object. Cardus frames Constantine at once as a noble savage, a primitive man, an infant and an animal, hence the pleasure of spying on him from the elevated press box (a voyeuristic pleasure charged with latent homoeroticism) is permitted. Here cricket reporting absorbs the rhetorical strategies of High Imperial adventure fiction and travel writing with the press box acting as a "noble coign of vantage," a trope identified by Spurr as characteristic of colonialist panopticism\footnote{116}:

He drove with a velocity and power quite terrifying. From the high Press Box I looked down on the fury of primitive onslaught, beautiful if savage and violently destructive ... Moreover, I was really scared at the power and velocity of Constantine’s strokes — scared that someone in the field might not merely be hurt — this was to be expected — but perhaps killed. Yet there was no excess of muscular effort in Constantine’s swift plunderings. It was the attack and savagings of a panther on the kill, sinuous, stealthy, strong but unburdened. The batsmanship of the jungle, beautiful, ravaging, marvellously springy, swift as a blow of a paw. He would pull the pace of Larwood square. His footwork leaped. He even played back defensively baring teeth. At the same time, inexplicably and fantastically, it was happy genial batting, true to the good nature of Constantine himself. Like a schoolboy with a catapult he killed without intent to kill.\footnote{117}


\footnote{116}Spurr, \textit{The Rhetoric of Empire}, 17.

\footnote{117}Cardus, “Life, sunshine and lustre,” 96-98.
Cardus here describes what Paul Gilroy has identified as the sublime of racial terror. As Gilroy has explained, the Burkean concept of the sublime was often informed by an awareness of the category of race as an aesthetic marker. The mixture of admiration and terror that the specific dynamics of Constantine’s bodily performance generate in Cardus again typify the ambiguity of colonial discourse. Whilst the forceful and uncontained physicality of Constantine’s “batsmanship of the jungle” shocks and unsettles the awe-struck English connoisseur/ethnographer, and precludes the possibility of aesthetically euphemising its violence, the stylistic authenticity of Constantine positions in him Cardus’s valorised category of artist batsmen. For Cardus, Constantine’s cricket embodies something akin to Ruskin’s gothic style, with its primitivity, its unfinished “savageness or rudeness.” This bodily performance produces a sense of the authentically aesthetic as a residual category, an aesthetic that, like Ruskin’s art of the ancient world, is “healthier than those of modern times, for then people were full of animal spirit and physical power ... incapable of every morbid condition of mental emotion.” Part of the discursive ambivalence of this text derives from its debt to this highly-gendered discourse of Victorian cultural criticism in which the quality of manliness was frequently seen to exemplify true art. Thus the intense physicality and manliness of Constantine’s batting make it for Cardus greatly aesthetically superior to the prevailing style of English cricket in the inter-war years (and, to a greater degree, the 1950s and 60s). In Cardus’s writings on Constantine, an implicit homology between the cricket field and the cultural and economic fields posits his object as a living trope of a primitivism that is a positive

118Paul Gilroy, The Black Atlantic, 16-17.


120Ibid., 35.
antidote to the aesthetic values modernity had supposedly negated. At the same time, in failing to civilise Constantine, the cricket field is a place of acute anxiety and bewilderment more than accomplishment. The text’s sublime ambiguity is also due to Constantine’s possible political significance. In these presentations of a distinctive black kinetics - a bodily performance that is explicitly constructed as the product of what Gilroy terms as the “brutal historical conditions” of the post-slave populations\textsuperscript{121} - the body and the body politic are symbolically conflated in such a way that simultaneously elicits fear and admiration on the part of the metropolitan observer.

Writing “Bodyline”: The Agonistics Of Empire

In the year following the publication of Constantine’s Cricket and I, a satirical novel was published in which a cricket episode parodied the recent “Bodyline” controversy, a discursive event that had caused profound political reverberations throughout the British Empire. In A.G. MacDonnell’s How Like An Angel, Hugo Seeley, a textual figure of colonial alterity from an island called Kalataheira, is placed in a number of improbable narrative situations in which his presence provides the narrator with an opportunity to laconically observe the customs and behaviour of the English. One such place is Lord’s cricket ground where Hugo, somewhat implausibly, has come to represent England in a Test Match against a dominion called “Borealia,” clearly a reference to Australia. As the game begins, the English captain asks Hugo, who is to open the bowling, how many slips he would like in his fielding formation. His reply reveals that what is to be parodied is the most controversial episode in sporting history: “One,” replied Hugo firmly, “and five short-legs.”\textsuperscript{122}

\textsuperscript{121}Gilroy, The Black Atlantic, 72.

unconventional field setting causes rumbles of discontent amidst the vast crowd of visiting Borealian spectator/pilgrims who have come to pay homage to the cathedral of cricket and the bonds of empire it enshrines. Hugo runs up to the wicket and bowls a delivery straight at the batsman’s body, striking him in the ribs - a performative act that has an immediate affect on the crowd who make “a terrible sound, like a thousand hungry lions, or revolutionaries baying for the blood of aristocrats.”123 The next ball, the Borealian batsman, in the process of defending his body, is caught by one of the leg slips causing the Borealian crowd to riot, an act of insurrection that is only quelled after an appeal from the Secretary of State for the Dominians (an “ever-popular cabinet minister”). Hugo is then removed from the bowling attack and deported to America for his misdemeanours by the M.C.C. committee.124

Despite the levity of Macdonnell’s fictional version of the Bodyline controversy of the previous year, it nevertheless gestures towards an analysis of some of the discursive ambiguities that surrounded the controversy. In this episode the behaviour of the Australian crowd suggests that to be a colonial was to be in a state of political and cultural schizophrenia. Portrayed as an uncivilised mob, they are driven to riot by the Bodyline tactics employed by England but, simultaneously, they are devotedly loyal to the ideals of empire: “these ten thousand simple souls were longing to sing Land of Hope and Glory in front of the Pavilion, as a gesture of Imperial solidarity and good-will.”125 The Borealian riot is further ambiguous because it enacts a defence of cricket’s inalienable doxa of “fair play” and “sportsmanship” in the face of their contravention by the English themselves. However, the performance that

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123Ibid, 269.
125Ibid., 271.
precipitated the disruption to the normally tranquil atmosphere of Lord’s was enacted by an outsider. Hugo’s deportation represents the cricket establishment’s ability to shirk their moral responsibilities by making a figure of cultural difference a moral scapegoat. It is a clear reference to an article that appeared in the *Morning Post* attacking Australian “over-reactions” to Bodyline by ironically suggesting the English bowlers should be deported.\(^{126}\) Furthermore, Hugo is told by the Dominians Minister that his deportation is “For hendangering hour himperial ‘armonies, and for ‘ampering hour hexporting hindustries.”\(^{127}\) The rhetoric of imperial harmony around the cricket field has, he candidly admits, a sound economic rationale.

Bodyline was a particular articulation of cricket’s performative grammar that gave rise to a series of discursive agonistics constituted by intertwined problematics of masculinity and class. In Bodyline the aesthetic euphemisations of cricket discourse were laid bare and the latent ontology of cricket as surrogate warfare fully exposed. A dialectical tension between cricket’s elevated discourse of imperial cohesion and the practice of Bodyline bowling exposed as a fiction the coloniser’s claims to moral superiority articulated in the sport’s doxic discourses. This rupture between discourse and practice had profound effects for the future of the British Empire. As C.L.R. James wrote, despite the “violent shock” it received from the Great War, “[T]he blow from which ‘It isn’t cricket’ has never recovered came from within and it came in 1932. This was body-line.”\(^{128}\)

As was shown in an earlier section of this chapter, from the time of the inception of international cricket between England and Australia, English cricket

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\(^{126}\)McDevitt, 96.


\(^{128}\)James, *Beyond a Boundary*, 185.
writers utilised Australian cricketers as textual counter-images through which Englishness was constructed by a process of differentiation. Australian players were represented as contravening cricket doxa by adopting a competitive "win at all costs" approach to cricket, as combative in their attitude, commercial in their motivations and as embodying an aesthetically-deficient and utilitarian style of play. At the same time, proving Bhabha's principle that colonialist discourse is characterised by its "ambiguity," Australian success at cricket was represented as embodying the bonds of empire and the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race and its value systems. These discourses surrounding the performance of Australian cricketers were constituted by issues of class, race and masculinity. However, in the context of socio-economic and political crisis discussed in the previous chapter – a context of instability that had a strongly imperial dimension – Australian Test victories became deeply problematic events for a British establishment anxious that the Empire and the value system that underpinned it should retain hegemony in a global context of economic recession and increasing anti-colonial nationalisms. As has been shown, the period immediately preceding the Bodyline crisis saw increasing anti-colonial agitation in various parts of the British Empire, including the cricket-playing colonies of India and the British West Indies. The humiliating home defeats suffered by England at the hands of Australia in 1921 and 1930 occurred in a context where a post-war reconfiguration of class forces and, to some extent, gender relations, meant that the British establishment, whose value system was still expressed through the discourse of athleticism, felt embattled.
In 1930, Australia inflicted a 2-1 home defeat on England in a five match Test series. Much of their success was due to their young batting prodigy, Donald Bradman, hitherto unknown to the English public. The impact of Bradman was remarkable. In the first Test at Trent Bridge Bradman scored 131 in Australia’s second innings. In the second Test at Lord’s he scored 254 out of a massive Australian total of 729 for 6 declared. At Headingley he scored the then highest individual Test innings score of 334, followed by another gigantic score of 232 at the
Bradman’s Test average for the series was nearly 140. In Australia, newspapers sponsored the erection of scoreboards in towns and cities recording the feats of Bradman and the Australian team. Furthermore, as figure 19 suggests, the new technology of radio was now instrumental in the national and imperial dissemination of cricket.

In Australia, Bradman soon became a cultural icon whose good looks, in addition to his extraordinary talent, gave him the aura of a film star. The need for an icon such as Bradman was heightened by the devastating effects of the global economic depression. In the early 1930s Australia was suffering over 30% unemployment and widespread and intense social deprivation. There were extensive fears of social unrest. As in England, cricket had cross-class appeal and represented itself as a social emollient. The language of Bradman iconography was deliberately synoptic, stressing that he was a common national belonging. A popular song of the time ended: “Our Don Bradman / Ev’ry Aussie ‘dips his lid’ to you.” But in England Bradman’s prodigious run scoring, whilst admired for its technical proficiency, gave rise to a discourse in which Bradman himself became a signifier of the contemporary cultural crisis and particularly the emergence of new technological and industrial processes. A 1930 essay by Cardus typifies this discourse. Cardus began by respectfully commenting on Bradman’s “right to mastership” but immediately qualified this by stressing Bradman’s tendency to “repeat himself” and his “routined and mechanical” mode of play. After reaching the score of 200, Cardus


130 McDevitt, 83-85.

131 “Our Don Bradman,” in David Rayvern Allen, A Song For Cricket, 89. The song sold 40,000 copies in a few weeks.
hoped Bradman would display some humanity by making "one miscalculated stroke."\textsuperscript{132} By the time Cardus wrote his \textit{Autobiography} (1947) the textual figure of Bradman was established as mediating the power of the new technocracy through cricket:

Bradman was the summing-up of the Efficient Age which succeeded the Golden Age. Here was brilliance safe and sure. streamlined and without impulse. Victor Trumper was the flying bird; Bradman was the aeroplane.\textsuperscript{133}

Often dubbed as a "run machine," for English commentators Bradman shattered the aura of the reified aesthetic artefact or practice so important in the bourgeois humanist critical tradition. Cardus and other commentators perceived Bradman as having renegotiated the logic of the cricket field by embodying the awesome, inhuman power of mechanical reproduction. Cardus could not share Walter Benjamin's qualified celebration of such developments.\textsuperscript{134} For Cardus and Leavis, the machine had the terrible power of repeatability. Indeed, when Cardus and other writers stressed Bradman's flawless technique they were espousing a Ruskinian view of art in which the truly aesthetic always displayed signs of human imperfection. Such representations of Bradman suggest that Bodyline was, partially at least, a discursive agonistic as to legitimate definition of the aesthetic in cricket, an issue that nevertheless inevitably intersected with issues of imperial authority and masculinity.

Another significant factor in the Bodyline controversy was the appointment of Douglas Jardine as England captain for the tour. Although born in India, Jardine was an austere Scotsman with a marked antipathy to Australians whom he detested for

\textsuperscript{132}Neville Cardus, "Bradman, 1930," in \textit{Good Days}, 29.

\textsuperscript{133}Cardus, \textit{Autobiography}, 152

\textsuperscript{134}Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in \textit{Illuminations}, 211-244.
their "democracy." Donning a Harlequin cap (a synecdoche of upper-class imperial authority) Jardine cultivated an effete image that seemed deliberately intended to induce feelings of hatred in Australian crowds. In Australia an alternative discourse of cricket had emerged known as "barracking", a demotic, spontaneous discourse of the crowd involving quick-witted and often cynically humorous responses to the events of play. At the beginning of the series the manager of the English touring party, Pelham Warner, had pleaded with the barrackers to create a "different atmosphere" and asked them: "Do you think that it is quite dignified that the greatest cricket match between the two greatest cricketing powers should be interrupted by a certain amount of noise?" However, in the context of the worst phase of the Depression, the Bodyline controversy meant that this was the noisiest and most fractious Test Series ever played. At the height of the controversy one barracker advised Jardine as he was brushing away flies: "Leave our flies alone; they're the only bloody friends you've got."

Before visiting Australia in late 1932, Jardine had devised what could variously be called a "strategy" or a "tactic" to deal with the threat of the Australian batting, particularly that of Bradman. As Michel De Certeau has argued, "a tactic is determined by the absence of power just as a strategy is organized by the postulation of power." According to Certeau's definitions, the sense of conscious organisation behind Bodyline suggests it was a "strategy," yet because Bodyline was devised in a context of profound imperial insecurity, "tactic" is a more accurate description.

135 McDevitt, 91.
136 Quoted in Cashman, 'Ave a Go, Yer Mug, 94.
137 Ibid., 98.
Jardine decided to instruct his fast bowlers (all professionals and thus Jardine’s social inferiors) to bowl fast, short-pitched deliveries (known as “bouncers” or “bumpers”) directly on a line with the batsman’s body. This method of bowling attack was in itself nothing new. However, in systematically using it in conjunction with a concentration of close leg side fielders, the tactic was a major reconfiguration of the logic of the field and one that significantly put at risk the safety of the Australian batsmen. The tactic was based on the theory that the batsmen, in defending themselves against the barrage of bouncers, would eventually deflect the ball via bat or glove into the hands of the waiting leg-side fielders and thus be caught out (see figure 20). The theory proved sound and highly effective.

Fig. 20. Douglas Jardine’s reconfiguration of the cricket field. Source: Pelham Warner. *Cricket Between The Wars* (London: Chatto & Windus. 1942), 127.

During the third Test at Adelaide, with the Test series standing at one match each, the Australian captain, W.M. Woodfull, was struck in the chest by a bouncer
bowled by England’s Harold Larwood. Although Jardine had not set his “leg-trap” at the time of the incident, he did so in the following over and the crowd reacted with fierce indignation at what they perceived as his lack of sportsmanship (a scene echoed in MacDonnell’s novel). The following day the Australian wicketkeeper, Bert Oldfield, was struck on the head by another Larwood bouncer and suffered a fractured skull. In reporting the incident, *The Times* only briefly alluded to the injury and focused on the reaction of the Australian crowd: “The indignant crowd abused Larwood and Jardine, and continued their wild shouting when England opened their innings.”139 In contrast to *The Times*, the Australian *Smith’s Weekly* made no concessions to Jardine’s tactics and urged the Australian Board of Control to protest to the M.C.C.. Fearful of serious crowd disorder, the board hastily sent the following telegram to London:

> Body-line bowling has assumed such proportions as to menace the best interests of the game, making protection of the body by the batsman the main consideration. This is causing intensely bitter feeling between the players as well as injury. In our opinion it is unsportsmanlike. Unless stopped at once, it is likely to upset the friendly relations existing between Australia and England.140

Such a challenge to the authority of the game’s ruling body with its aspersions on the ethics of English cricket was condemned in most sections of the English press. *The Times* wrote:

> It is inconceivable that a cricketer of Jardine’s standing, chosen by the M.C.C. to captain an English side, would ever dream of allowing or ordering the bowlers under his command to practice any system of attack that, in the time-honoured English phrase, is not cricket.141

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139 Quoted in Birley, 1999, p.236.

140 Ibid, 237.

141 *Cricket in The Times*, p.276.
The response of the M.C.C. was couched in the patrician language of disciplining a wayward child:

We, Marylebone Cricket Club, deplore your cable. We deprecate your opinion that there has been unsportsmanlike play. We have fullest confidence in captain, team and managers. \(^{142}\)

In the context of the economic depression with agricultural prices severely depressed, the Australian Government were fearful that too much militancy on the part of A.B.C. could threaten trade with Britain and urged them to retract. Eventually, after a further flurry of dispute, the A.B.C. cabled, “We do not consider the sportsmanship of your team to be in question.” \(^{143}\)

Bodyline was probably the most remarkable and significant clash of discourses in sports history, a series of agonistics enacted in telegrams, newspapers and countless books around the legitimate meaning of cricket and the nature of the imperial relationship that went on for at least two years. The bodily disruption to cricket doxa and the reconfiguration of the cricket field enacted by Jardine and his bowlers led to a spectacular outpouring of discourse. It has been estimated that reporters cabled over 300,000 words during the Adelaide Test Match to all parts of Australia and the British Empire. \(^{144}\) It was essentially a dispute about the contravention of values supposedly enshrined in cricket discourse that necessarily occurred within the permissible boundaries of that discourse. Thus the agonistics of Bodyline were ideologically complex and contradictory. Firstly, the term “Bodyline” was regarded as particularly offensive by the English cricketing establishment and press. Earlier in the series, faced with the need to cut cable costs at such a busy time,

\(^{142}\)Birley 237.

\(^{143}\)Ibid., 238.

\(^{144}\)McDevitt, 83.
an Australian journalist had condensed “bowling in the line of the body” (an accurate and relatively neutral description of Jardine’s line of attack) to “Bodyline.” In the discursive whirl surrounding the Test series, the term very quickly became common currency for Australian journalists. As potentially disruptive to cricket’s pedagogic discourse, the body, unless it could be euphemised in the terms of aesthetic discourse, was an unsettling entity. Harold Larwood, the ex-Nottinghamshire miner who dutifully carried out Jardine’s tactic in his role as fast bowler, later commented that the term:

... was maliciously coined for the express purpose of misleading, and for obscuring the issue, which it did with great success. The mere use of the word “Body” was meant to damn me, and damn me it did. ¹⁴⁵

The Australian use of somatic language was regarded by Larwood and most English commentators as provocative because it threatened to disturb and politicise the disinterested aesthetic field of cricket. That Bodyline was a dispute about language is further brought out by the fact that in Australia, during the years immediately after the crisis, “Bodyline” became a verb meaning to do something unfair or underhand.

Though the term “Bodyline” was an Australian neologism which deeply troubled the English imaginary, the majority of the discursive agonistics of the crisis were enacted in the language and metaphors of the dominant cricket discourse. In 1921, the arch-imperialist and colonial supremacist, Lord Harris, had defined the metaphor of “not cricket” and registered the degree to which it had been absorbed into the discourses of various fields:

The brightest gem ever won by any pursuit: in constant use on the platform, in the pulpit, Parliament, and the press, to dub something as being not fair, not

honourable, not noble. What a tribute for a game to have won, but what a responsibility on those who play and manage it! 146

The performance of Bodyline gave rise to a questioning of the moral values signified by such metaphors but such critiques were couched in their very terms, so indelibly inscribed were they upon the minds and bodies of many millions of Australians. In all sections of the Australian media Bodyline was regarded as “unsportsmanlike” and contrary to the doxic ideal of “fair play”. As a bodily disruption from within the pedagogic discourse of cricket, Bodyline exposed the gap between the practice and discourse of both cricket and empire. The following poem appeared in the Brisbane Courier on the 23rd January 1933:

This is not the game you taught us!
Is it cricket?
It has lost the charm it brought us!
Is it cricket?
On the dear old village green,
Where the vicar and the dean
Kept the bowling “all serene”:
That was cricket!
If you’re “short weight” in the mart
It’s not “cricket”!
If your business deals are “smart” —
That’s not “cricket”!
Hanki panki is for fools,
It’s not taught you in your schools
So expunge it from your Rules:
It’s not cricket.
Age-long query of the Saxon!
Is it cricket?
See the bruises, there, our backs on:
Is it cricket?
No, this new fangled bumping
That has set Australia “jumping”
And out batsmen’s hearts a-thumping
Isn’t cricket. 147

146 Lord Harris, A Few Short Runs, 265.

This piece of doggerel verse encapsulates much of the discursive ambiguity of Australian protests to Bodyline. By literally imprinting itself upon the bodies of loyal dependents, the practice of Bodyline has upset a mythical ideal of cricket signified by the village green and thus calls into question the veracity of modes of imperial self-representation. Yet so culturally pervasive were the literary images, terminology and values of cricket that critiques of Bodyline were unable to step outside this bounded system of representation. Its righteous indignation notwithstanding, the poem remains a celebration of the “Anglo-Saxon” bonds of white empire through its appeal to a series of literary images and the elevated values they supposedly represent. Literary critiques of Bodyline by English writers likewise used the image of prelapsarian rural cricket to highlight the “fallen” practice of modern international Tests which threatened to destabilise the bonds of empire. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, Leavis’s predecessor at Cambridge as King Edward Professor of English Literature, wrote occasional cricket verses and had included an essay on cricket in his *Oxford Book of English Prose*. In February 1933 *The Times* published the following verse by “Q”:

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The batsman stands to hide his wicket,
The bowler at his body aims:
Tho’ these perfect the “art” of Cricket,
Do they improve the best of games?

- The game we played with zest, and, after,
Homeward thro’ meadows scented warm,
Rehearsed, re-played, with generous laughter,
Victor and vanquished – arm-in-arm.¹⁴⁹
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Here, as in much contemporary English cricket literature, the modern technocratic practice of international Test cricket threatens the literary ideal of the metonymic cricket field: the transportable piece of the English countryside that could be reproduced *ad infinitum* across the nation and empire as a place of imperial stability.

In recently published research, Patrick McDevitt has argued that the Bodyline controversy was a complex mediation of issues of imperial manhood and one in which residual and emergent constructions of masculinity vied and mutated with one another. He argues that during the controversy and in its aftermath the British press “used both the trope of civilised manliness and ... that of virile masculinity in criticising the Australians, who were allegedly not brave enough to stand up to fast bowling that way the English had ...” Against these charges the Australian media consistently argued that they, and not the English, were the upholders of the old gentlemanly manliness. Therefore, “the imagery of masculinity was at stake in this imperial confrontation.” MacDevitt has provided much evidence to suggest that the English media and cricket establishment successfully displaced the moral implications of Bodyline by constructing an image of Australian cowardice figured in tropes of womanliness and childishness.\(^{150}\) The images were projected on to both the Australian players and Australian cricket writers. In his book written in the aftermath of the controversy, Harold Larwood wrote, “If certain critics had not made such an effeminate outcry about it during and after the third Test the whole bother would be too childishly ludicrous to merit further consideration by grown-up men.”\(^{151}\) For Larwood such discourse threatened the entire edifice of empire and any attempts to prevent Bodyline would “make of cricket a less manly game. That would be an

\(^{150}\) McDevitt, 95-102.

\(^{151}\) Larwood, 33.
imperial disaster.” Similarly, at the height of the dispute, a poem called “A Whining Digger” by J.C. Squire was published in The Evening Standard:

Where is that tough Australian grin?  
When comrades did you learn to faint?  
Can you not take without complaint  
A dose of your own medicine?

Finish this futile brawl today  
We won’t believe the paradox,  
A whining Digger funkling knocks  
Come on one up and two to play.  

As was shown in chapter two, Squire’s retreat to the village green of authentic Englishness was an attempt to retrieve a sense of pre-war class and gender relations. Indeed, this poem stresses how crucially important the issue of manliness was at the time. It also underlines the extent that the whole Bodyline issue was for the English press and literary scene a purely discursive affair. Basing their spurious judgements on newspaper articles written mainly by absent journalists (there were only three English writers in Australia to cover the series), Bodyline was a textual space in which competing notions of what constituted imperial masculinity clashed and interacted.

English responses to Bodyline are in many ways typified in the writings of Neville Cardus who contributed to a discourse of Australian effeminacy during and after the Bodyline series. In his first response to the events, published in The Observer, he blamed sensationalist newspaper coverage for inflaming the situation before contrasting stoical English responses to Australian fast bowling in the past with the present Australian bumptiousness and “whining”:

152 Ibid., 44-45.

Surely Australia has no right to dictate to her opponents the character of the bowling they must employ. The authorities have never taken up such a position. No one, certainly no responsible critic, argues that Australia should not have sent Gregory and McDonald [the Australian fast bowlers] to England in 1921...The English players, unaccustomed to fast bowling for years, were, as a whole, slow in movement and scared ...But they did not squeal, nor did commentators talk about ‘bloody battering’, even after Nottingham in 1921. 154

In another Observer piece published just after the end of the series, Cardus had somewhat softened his views of the Australian response, acknowledging that Bradman, Woodfull and at least some of the Australian spectators were not “squealers” and “hooligans”. 155 However, he avoids any critique of the English tactics, seeing instead a healthy disregard for moral imperatives in Jardine’s actions. In a similar vein, another Cardus article called for a statue to be erected in honour of Larwood for clearing away cricket’s “fatty degeneracy.” 156 The amoral line of Cardus’s interpretation of Bodyline was developed in a Manchester Guardian piece subsequently re-printed in Good Days (1934) entitled “Measure for Measure.” Here the justification for Bodyline tactic, and the erasure of cricket’s moral and empire-binding imperatives that it supposedly represented, was praised in the language of virile masculinity:

Until recently the English teams which have visited Australia have tended to overdo the gesture of gentlemanly compliance, forgetting that the enemy of grand contention is lack of realistic vision. A number of English captains of cricket have wasted their public school amenities on heroes whose greatness has come out of a hearty appreciation of things as they are. A national game simply will not be confined in cotton wool. The rigour of battle is spoiled if a cricketer is not prepared to take as much as he is prepared to give. When you shake hands with the iron glove it is an insult to the man who wears it if your own glove is made of delicate wash-leather. The Australian plays cricket to win; he has usually left it to Mr. Warner to make the Empire-binding speeches. 157

155Cardus, “Bodyline II,” The Observer, 5 March 1933.
156Birley, A Social History of English Cricket, 237.
157Cardus, Good Days, 26.
In other words English cricket has thrown off its mantle of Victorian moral manliness and has at last met Australia on its own, supposedly more virile, terms. In this piece, Cardus figures Jardine as the personification of this emergent masculinity and partly attributes it to his “stern” Scottishness. In contrast to many contemporary cricketers he has “personality,” a trait that although negatively expressed in his obdurate and unexciting batting, becomes a positive attribute in his fearless attitude to the angry response of Australian spectators which he described as “the raving winds of the mob.” At the same time, the Australian practice of “barracking” was seen by English cricket writers such as Cardus as demonstrating a lack of social breeding. At one level, therefore, Bodyline was interpreted as a legitimate response to this alternative, demotic discourse around the cricket field. Significantly, when the M.C.C. eventually acted to prevent the tactic of Bodyline prior to the 1934 Test series, it was on the grounds that the Australian Board took action to curb “barracking.” Even if we disregard the veracity of Cardus’s interpretation of Bodyline, an interpretation that utilises the colonial binaries of his earlier writings of cricket and Australian identity and thus confirms its own logic, the passage is important for it suggests that emergent constructions of imperial masculine identity were arising around the vexed issue of Bodyline.

As was argued in chapter three, Cardus’s repudiation of moral manliness so inextricably inscribed upon cricket during the second half of the nineteenth century constituted a significant, and usually unacknowledged, discursive re-articulation of the sport that formed part of the broader cultural and literary context identified by critics such as Alison Light. However, this negation of cricket’s ethical imperatives led Cardus to an aestheticism that effaced any sense that cricket could have profound

\(^{158}\text{Ibid., 27.}\)
political resonances. Cardus's influential and canonised reconstructions of Bodyline have thus contributed to an English historiography that has successfully disavowed the political implications of the crisis. As was discussed earlier in this chapter, Cardus and other English writers responded to Bradman's utter domination of the England bowlers in 1930 by figuring Bradman as the human embodiment of modern technological processes. Within this frame of reference Bradman was afforded qualified praise for his prolific run scoring achievements but shown to be aesthetically deficient. Writers like Cardus thus interpreted Bodyline as a form of artistic retribution and, in doing so, submerged the broader social and political implications into the reified sphere of the aesthetic. E.H.D. Sewell, like Cardus, avoided any of the moral dimensions of Bodyline bowling (or "Torso Bowling" as he preferred to call it) in arguing that the primary reason for proscribing the practice was that it "is an irritating insult to the aesthetic sense of a cricketer" and "to all intents and purposes cuts the off-side out of batting," leading to "numbers of graceless, clumsy, blind strokes on the on-side." In Cardus's *English Cricket*, published 12 years after the crisis, Bodyline had been rewritten as a form of aesthetic retribution carried out by the English bowlers as "a desperate remedy in the face of the robot batsmen." As in Sewell's commentary, "not cricket" has been transposed into a purely aesthetic term:

...Larwood for a season solved the problem of years – how to put an end to the mechanical domination of the batsman on a perfect pitch. Was it not cricket? Is there not an order of ethics higher than the common one? ... But, judged by the measure of the amoral Gods, Larwood's attack in Australia was wonderful, thrilling and beautiful to behold.  

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161 Ibid., 88.
The retrospective aestheticisation of Bodyline effaced any broader political implications the crisis may have had. At a moment of imperial insecurity, the responsibility for representing a sport that symbolised the bonds of empire was a crucial matter. At a dinner in 1933 attended by Jardine as well as Squire and Alec Waugh, H.D.G. Leveson-Gower proposed a toast to “Literature and Cricket”, and said “the one could not be separated from the other.”¹⁶² Though Bodyline was at the time a significant set of agonistics concerning the nature, legitimacy and future of the empire, its subsequent literaturisation and aestheticisation in English cricket discourse served to sublimate these issues into the reified and healing sphere of the aesthetic.

The diffusion of cricket throughout the British Empire eventually assimilated the colonised populations into the intricacies of a cultural practice intimately bound-up with the ideals of Englishness and imperialism. Initially cricket acted as a form of social control and its spread seen as evidence of the success of the “civilising mission.” By the 1880s tours undertaken by visiting cricket teams from the colonies heralded their entry into the field of English cricket and provided the opportunity for the creation of a dialogue about the meaning of Englishness and the nature of the colonial relationship. Cricket tours symbolised the cultural bonds of empire, but at the same time provided commentators with examples of racial, social and cultural otherness that were constitutive elements in the construction of Englishness through cricket. However, as metropolitan culture increasingly perceived itself to be in a state of crisis, colonial cricketers such as Ranjitsinhji and Constantine produced discourses in which their embodied performances represented the very aesthetic values that modernity had seemingly negated. At the same time such representations revealed acute anxieties about the present and future stability of empire. Although an imperial

¹⁶² “The Heritage of Cricket: Mr Jardine’s Tribute to the Game,” in Double Century, 288.
crisis precipitated by a mode of bodily performance, Bodyline was largely a dispute about the meaning and cultural resonances of language. However, whilst the political implications of the practice of Bodyline long continued to call into question the morality of the imperial bond for Australians, the subsequent discursive aestheticisation of the practice in England euphemised its violence and projected the controversy into the healing, avowedly apolitical and reified realm of the aesthetic. The following chapter focuses more closely on this important issue of the aesthetic in cricket writing and, in doing so, examines the emergence of a post-colonial and decidedly political aesthetic of cricket in the seminal work of C.L.R. James.
CHAPTER FIVE

"FROM FAR IT LOOK LIKE POLITICS": C.L.R JAMES AND THE CANON

Is cricket is cricket in yuh ricketics
but from far it look like politics

This chapter juxtaposes C.L.R. James’s political cricket aesthetic with the canon of English cricket literature, and particularly the influential contemporaneous work of Neville Cardus. It begins by discussing the hitherto unexplored inter-textual relationship between James and Cardus. Far from being a gratuitous literary critical exercise, this demonstrates the extent to which James’s writing was immersed in cricket’s literary canon even while it sought to subvert it in the cause of an alternative, postcolonial cultural politics. James’s aestheticisation of cricket both transcended the class and racial politics of English cricket discourse and attempted to offer an alternative. A telling example of his technique can be found in his essay “Garfield Sobers”, published in 1969. Writing about Sobers allows James to find the hybrid literary registers and forms through which a postcolonial West Indian cricket might be represented. However, the chapter concludes with a critique of James’s ultimately problematic, trans-historical aestheticisation of cricket, arguing that it is its implicit theorisation of the relationship between cricket as discourse and cricket as embodied performance that constitutes Beyond a Boundary’s real contribution to an understanding of the game’s history as both instrument of, and resistance to, colonialism.

Aestheticisation: An Overview

This thesis has argued that the aestheticisation of cricket was an important discursive element in the cricket field's ability to symbolise the national and imperial cultures. During the nineteenth century a multi-faceted aesthetic discourse emerged around cricket, a series of discursive negotiations that functioned in a number of important ways. In the 1820s and 30s the inscription of an aesthetic on the sport was a means of euphemising its violence and severing cricket's connections with the more disreputable elements of the old popular culture. It associated cricket with an emergent bourgeois ideology of the masculine body and linked these ideals of the body to a series of ethical precepts that were held to be constitutive of Englishness. Through the use of analogies with cultural forms such as classical music and literature, cricket was culturally validated and raised above the level of the merely "popular". Later in the century the aestheticisation of cricket inscribed the sport as standing outside commodity culture and the cash-nexus, even while County and Test Match cricket were increasingly becoming part of modern, commercial culture. Indeed, as was shown in chapters two and three, the sport became increasingly aestheticised the more cricket became commercialised and more generally as commercial and technocratic imperatives were perceived to permeate all levels of cultural life. Furthermore, the process of aestheticisation was a means through which social distinctions could be registered, often in codified form, through the particular logic of the cricket field and served to euphemise the unequal social relations of the cricket field. And finally, within what Bourdieu has called the "space of sporting practices," the aestheticisation of cricket distinguished it from other, supposedly less

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aesthetic sports, again inscribing upon it a distinctively bourgeois aura and emphasising its quintessential Englishness.

Because of the representation of cricket as an essentially disinterested cultural practice, it could become an important field for the production of meanings, social forms and relations. Given its “disinterestedness” it could lay claim to truth because it was supposedly uncontaminated by commerce or politics. As an aesthetic form cricket was afforded enhanced symbolic significance and capital and this enabled it to become a signifier of an authorised version of English society, of how dominant individuals and institutions viewed that society and the image they wished to create for others. As was shown in chapter one, with cricket constructed as an aesthetic form, its resultant symbolic power made for the possibility of a consensual vision of the social world, a vision that to some extent contributed to the reproduction of the social order.⁴ Although the ideal of cricket as a national art contributed to social distinction with amateurs and professionals being symbols of particular social positions, representing, and therefore contributing to, the structure and relationships of the social world, it was also unifying by producing a vision of the national community in which the fragmented nation could be bound together.⁴ However, as was argued in the previous chapter, the remarkable hegemonic efficacy of cricket’s aestheticisation, the fact that it rendered the cricket field a place of national and imperial stability and accomplishment could not render it immune from the broader historical currents that threatened the future of empire. As the work of C.L.R. James


shows, the colonial cricket field became a place in which the social and political contradictions of empire were played out rather than resolved.

**Cardus and James**

If Nyren has been constructed within the sport’s discourses as cricket’s Chaucer and Cardus as its Shakespeare, then James is something of a Milton figure, greatly admired for the quality of his prose and knowledge of cricket, but whose politics remain something of an embarrassment. In *Beyond a Boundary* James exceeded the canonical limits of representing cricket by politicising this avowedly apolitical field. For example, James’s reconstruction of Trinidadian cricket in the early years of the twentieth century showed how institutional access to the structure of club cricket, with its finely graded social and racial distinctions, replicated and contributed to the colonial policy of divide and rule. Furthermore, as is later further developed, James fearlessly critiqued the colonialismer axiologies of English cricket discourse discussed in the previous chapter. James understood that such discourse reproduced a colonial value system based upon a racist mind/body dichotomy. His reinterpretation of Constantine, for example, is consciously positioned against such discourse:

> Constantine’s leg-glance from outside the off-stump to long-leg was a classical stroke. It was not due to his marvellous West Indian eyes and marvellous West Indian wrists. It was due, if you must have it, to his marvellous West Indian brains.

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6*Beyond a Boundary*, 134.
Surprisingly, although James's cricket writings contain numerous references to, and interpretations of, the canon of English cricket literature, little attention has been paid to the way that his work re-articulates this discourse in a manner that is simultaneously profoundly traditional and markedly radical. Critics have correctly identified the relationship of James's work both to the English literary canon (in which he always remained thoroughly immersed) and to the work of other Marxist cultural theorists, but have largely overlooked James's correlation to the tradition of English cricket writing. This critical oversight is particularly surprising given that at the beginning of the chapter of *Beyond a Boundary* entitled “What is Art?,” he self-consciously positioned his work in relation to that of Cardus:

I have made great claims for cricket. As firmly as I am able and is here possible, I have integrated it in the historical movement of the times. The question remains: What is it? Is it mere entertainment or is it an art? Mr Neville Cardus (whose work deserves a critical study) is here most illuminating, not as a subject but as object. He will ask: “Why do we deny the art of a cricketer, and rank it lower than a vocalist's or a fiddler's? If anybody tells me that R.H. Spooner did not compel a pleasure as aesthetic as any compelled by the most cultivated Italian tenor that ever lived I will write him down a purist and an ass.” He says the same in more than one place. More than any sententious declaration, all his work is eloquent with the aesthetic appeal of cricket. Yet he can write in his autobiography: “I do not believe that anything fine in music or in anything else can be understood or truly felt by the crowd.” Into this he goes at length and puts the seal on it with “I don’t believe in the contemporary idea of taking the arts to the people: let them seek and work for them.” He himself notes that Neville Cardus, the writer on cricket, often introduces music into his cricket writing. Never once has Neville Cardus, the music critic, introduced cricket into his writing on music. He finds this a “curious point”. It is much more than a point, it is not curious. Cardus is a victim of that categorisation and specialisation, that division of the human personality, which is the greatest curse of our time. Cricket has suffered, but not only cricket. The aestheticians have scorned to take notice of popular sports and games – to their own detriment. The aridity and confusion of which they so mournfully complain will continue until they include organised games

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and the people who watch them as an integral part of their data [James's emphasis].

There are a number of points to be drawn from this crucially important passage. First, James's advocacy of a critical study of Cardus acknowledges and reinforces the importance of this figure both to the cricket canon and to the ideological discourses of the national and imperial cultures. It also reveals that James himself was an important figure in the critical valorisation of Cardus, as other passages in Beyond a Boundary reiterate. Furthermore, his claim has the additional value of drawing attention to the need for a study of cricket writing more generally. One of the main arguments of Beyond a Boundary was that sport and its discourses merit and demand scholarly attention (a Jamesian assertion that is strangely overlooked and unacknowledged by many serious scholars of sport). Secondly, James's critique of Cardus's aesthetic places cricket and its discourses at the heart of a crucial cultural debate, a debate that has become constitutive of what is commonly defined as "modernity". Like theorists such as Raymond Williams and Pierre Bourdieu, James understood the opposition between "high" and "popular" culture as a historically-specific construction that had arisen as a direct response to the technological and industrial forces of modernity. The reified concept of "Art" that arose from these conditions, James believed, became the valorised term in a binary opposition between it and the degraded concept of the "popular". James fully acknowledged that Cardus rendered cricket as an art form at the level of discourse, but totally rejected his claim that its aesthetic subtleties were beyond the understanding of the sport's mass spectatorship. Indeed, for James the relatively unmediated experience of the crowd was positively constitutive of cricket's meaning as a cultural form. James's statement, therefore, gestures towards a counter-
hegemonic discourse of cricket in which proper attention to the experience of mass spectatorship provides a democratic aesthetic which can transcend the exclusive class and racial politics of English cricket writing.

Although, as has been shown in the previous chapters of this study, aestheticisation had been a constant feature of cricket discourse ever since its emergence, in *Beyond a Boundary* James described this process as “impressionistic or apologetic, timid or defiant, always ready to take refuge in the mysticism of metaphor.” James has in his sights those cricket writers like Cardus who sought to argue for the sport’s status as art simply by a process of cultured allusion and intense subjectivity. In James’s view the urbane metaphors and allusions amounted to nothing more than a litany of “literary and psychological responses.” James elaborated this tradition of aestheticisation by offering a more rigorous and historicised theory of cultural equivalence in which aesthetic factors are given a properly historical and materialist context. In this respect Cardus was important for James because his often acute understanding of the relationship between cricket and its social and economic context could be accommodated dialectically within a Hegelian/Marxist schema. For example, in one passage in *Beyond a Boundary* James respectfully quotes Cardus’s assessment of W.G. Grace as “a Representative Man of his epoch,” but notes that he failed to comprehend exactly what Grace represented, particularly to those living in the alienating conditions of Britain’s industrial towns and cities:

As usual, it is Mr Neville Cardus, in his vivid darting style, who has got closest to W.G.: “The plain, lusty humours of his first practices in a Gloucestershire orchard were to be savoured through the man’s gigantic rise to a national renown.” Only it was not the plain, lusty humours of an orchard, but a whole way of life. He rendered rusticity cosmopolitan whenever he returned to it. And always did he cause to blow over the fashionable pleasances of St.

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9Ibid., 192.

10Cardus, *English Cricket*, 41.
John's ...” There they needed it least. It was bleak Sheffield, to dusty Kennington and to grim Manchester that W.G. brought the life they had left behind. The breezes stirred by his bat had blown in their faces, north, south and east, as well as in the west.\textsuperscript{11}

In this apparently conventional reading (which clearly draws upon the books James voraciously consumed as a boy), Grace is nevertheless represented as a classic Hegelian/Marxist “world-historical individual,” an embodied synthesis of England’s past and present. At the same time the passage is crucial for it establishes James’s argument for a popular aesthetic that will cut through the false distinction between “high” and “low” culture (the idea of culture is here rendered exactly according to Raymond William’s pluralistic definition of “a whole way of life”\textsuperscript{12}). Here James simultaneously admires Cardus’s prose whilst critiquing his narrow definition of “culture” in such a way that exemplifies his ambivalent relationship to the English cricket canon. Such ambivalence and ambiguity is further evident in James’s idyllic portrayal of the “Golden Age”. In this respect Beyond a Boundary reveals what David Spurr and other critics have described as the tendency of (post)colonial writers to enter into the dominant rhetorical patterns of empire.\textsuperscript{13} In his resoundingly canonical view of late nineteenth century cricket and its discourses, James almost completely effaces any sense of the iniquitous systems of exploitation upon which the economies of nation and empire depended. As Gordon Rohlehr has correctly observed, “one cannot avoid the conclusion that James in his depiction of the Golden Age is engaged in a highly idealised verbal reconstruction of an ethos that he had never actually experienced, but which was part of the nostalgically recalled and abstract world of the

\textsuperscript{11}James, Beyond a Boundary, 179.

\textsuperscript{12}Raymond Williams, Marxism and Literature, 17.

\textsuperscript{13}Spurr, 188.
books in which as a child he had lived.\textsuperscript{14} Indeed, it is an irony of cricket discourse (but an irony that testifies to the discourse’s hegemonic efficacy within the colonial dispensation) that the conservative Cardus drew more attention to the harsh realities of Victorian social relations than did James. However, both Cardus and James’s constructions of the Golden Age of cricket suggest in a heightened way that the discursive meaning of cricket has consistently been produced and reproduced in response to perceptions of socio-economic, political and cultural crisis. Although politically poles apart both writers constructed and deployed the Golden Age of cricket as a retrospective critique of the conditions of contemporary capitalism.

Consideration of Cardus and James’s analyses of the cricket of the interwar period further reveals a sense of an important inter-textual relationship. For example, in a passage in \textit{English Cricket} (already quoted in chapter three) Cardus tellingly described a sense of aesthetic decline that he believed afflicted cricket after the First World War:

When first-class cricket was played again after the end of the 1914-1918 war, we were given yet another example of what a sensitive plant this cricket is – how quick to respond to atmosphere, how eloquent at any time of the English mood and temper. It was an age of disillusionment and cynicism; the romantic gesture was distrusted. “Safety First” was the persistent warning. We saw at once on the cricket field the effect of a dismal philosophy and a debilitated state of national health. Beautiful and brave stroke-play gave way to a sort of trench warfare, conducted behind the sandbag of broad pads.\textsuperscript{15}

In this passage Cardus suggests a relationship between a cultural practice and its historical context that explains why, despite his profoundly conservative cultural politics, he remained a literary model for James. As was shown in chapter three, Cardus drew upon a tradition of non-Marxian cultural criticism that Raymond


\textsuperscript{15}Cardus, \textit{English Cricket}, 81.
Williams has shown was exemplified in the work of Pugin, Ruskin and William Morris. According to Williams, these writers sought to demonstrate that "the art of a period is closely and necessarily related to the generally prevalent 'way of life.'"16 Commenting on the Cardus passage quoted above, John Simons only slightly overstates the case in claiming that it conveys "a sense of a lost aesthetic, his sharing of Adorno's fear that there can be no poetry after Auschwitz."17 James developed dialectically Cardus's vision of post-World War One cricket by theorising an inter-war rationalisation of cricket, its embodiment in the figure of Donald Bradman and the Bodyline tactic devised and deployed by the English team on the 1932/33 tour, as nothing less than symptomatic of "The Decline of the West," of "the violence and ferocity of our age expressing itself in cricket."18 In these conditions, argued James, cricket could no longer aesthetically euphemise its violence. Not only did James correctly identify Bodyline as a moment of imperial crisis, he saw it as the contemporary expression of the emergence of totalitarianism he had interpreted as being foreshadowed in Hermann Melville's *Moby Dick*.19

Equally, both writers represented the cricket of the post-1945 period as mediating the moribund cultural, political and economic conditions of contemporary Britain. According to James it was cricket representative of a "Welfare State of Mind."20 James and Cardus's view that capitalist state welfare provision had a


18James, *Beyond a Boundary*, 186.

paralysing aesthetic effect was not only echoed by a number of conservative contemporary cricket writers such as A.A. Thomson and E.W. Swanton but also by Franco Moretti in his *Signs Taken For Wonders*. Just as James’s 1950s English cricketers play as “functionaries in the welfare state,” so Moretti’s Draculas and Frankensteins of the same period represent “a welfare state sort of terror” [author’s emphasis]. Although James’s interpretation of the bodily performance of 1950s cricket resembles Moretti’s idea of a popular cultural form “proper to an era of peaceful coexistence,” he argued that the historical forces which had unleashed not only Bodyline, but two World Wars, were now meditated in the game’s contemporary literature. Whereas Cardus re-articulated cricket as a purely aesthetic and amoral form, the Marxist James dialectically incorporated the sport’s ethical and pedagogical precepts, and noted how its degraded contemporary discourse registered the fallen present. James’s diagnosis confirms the fears expressed by influential gatekeepers such as Lord Harris and Pelham Warner in the 1920s and 30s (see chapter four):

A corps of cricket correspondents functions as an auxiliary arm of their side, but is ready to turn and rend it at the slightest opportunity. What little remains of “It isn’t cricket” is being finally stifled by the envy, the hatred, the malice and the uncharitableness, the shamelessness of the memoirs written by some of the cricketers themselves. Compared with these books, Sir Donald Bradman’s ruthless autobiography of a dozen years ago now reads like a Victorian novel.

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20Ibid., 207-216.


23Ibid., 250.

24*Beyond a Boundary*, 190.
A comparison of Cardus and James's respective aesthetics of cricket further suggests how the canon could prove itself both culturally pervasive and vulnerable to colonial subversion. Whereas James explicitly theorised an aesthetic of cricket, as both Derek Birley and Cardus's biographer Christopher Brookes have suggested, Cardus never satisfactorily defined exactly what he meant by the terms "art" or "the aesthetic." This is not surprising given that Cardus stood within a highly subjective critical tradition in which the aesthetic was avowedly beyond rational analysis. A straightforwardly biographical reading of Cardus would attribute his tendency to write cricket into the category of the aesthetic to his dual role as music and cricket correspondent of the Manchester Guardian. As was argued in chapter three, however, Cardus's aestheticisation of cricket was a mediation of a widely perceived sense of cultural crisis in the inter-war years. As the idea of Englishness symbolised by cricket was called upon to reconcile the pressing ideological stresses of the period, an increasingly aestheticised version of English cricket positioned the sport as standing outside commodity culture. As was also noted in chapter three, frequently Cardus's inscription of aesthetic status on cricket was rendered simply by means of cultured analogy and the floridity of his prose style. However, Cardus did make two more systematic attempts to outline an aesthetic of cricket and was therefore one of the first writers to do so. The first of these was his 1921 essay "The Cricketer as an Artist," a piece which originally appeared in H.J. Massingham's organicist publication, The Nation. As David Matless has shown, contemporary organicist visions of the English landscape espoused an anti-urban ruralism and opposed modern preservationist

25 Derek Birley, The Willow Wand: Some Cricket Myths Explored, 164; Christopher Brookes, His Own Man: The Life of Neville Cardus, 14.

26 See also J.B. Priestley, "Sutcliffe and I," in Open House (London: Heinemann, 1927).
approaches to the countryside that encouraged planned policies for the arrangement 
and economy of rural spaces.\textsuperscript{27} This aesthetic of cricket does not in any simple way 
accord with organicist paradigms, but at a time when this ideology was being 
crystallised, reveals some of its emerging preoccupations. The essay begins with a 
characteristic Cardusian reference to classical music, an allusion that betrays his 
prejudice against the French composer, Claude Debussy, and against artistic 
modernism generally (Stravinsky’s anti-Romantic view that “music is powerless to 
express anything at all” was heretical to the culturally conservative Cardus\textsuperscript{28}): 

We are supposed to be well on the way towards decadence in art as soon as we 
allow the parts to fascinate us rather more than the whole – when, for instance, 
a Debussy so falls in love with the attractiveness of his whole-tone harmonies 
that he neglects the main job of music, which is the expression of some sort of 
emotion.\textsuperscript{29}

Here Cardus projects a distaste for what he perceives as a decadent anti-subjectivism 
in contemporary music (characterised as a preoccupation with technique for 
technique’s sake) into the field of cricket, the result being a curiously ambivalent 
thesis that seems at odds with the general thrust of his later cricket writing in which 
cricket is defined as a form of art-for art’s-sake, flaunting its own stylistic being and 
thus completely antithetical to the utilitarian principle. In this essay Cardus concedes 
that there is something inherent in the artistic mentality that is fascinated by technique 
(“the artist’s preoccupation with the way of doing things simply for the fascination of 
that way”) but then complains that this aspect of artistry is predominant in the cricket

\textsuperscript{27}Matless, \textit{Landscape and Englishness}, 103.

\textsuperscript{28}Paul Griffiths, \textit{A Concise History of Modern Music} (London: Thames and 
Hudson, 1980), 66.

\textsuperscript{29}Neville Cardus, “The Cricketer as an Artist,” in \textit{Days in the Sun} 2d ed. 
(London: Rupert Hart Davis, 1929), 82.
immediately following the First World War. Here the apparent intrusion of modernity into cricket is figured in terms of a critique of the division of labour:

This love of technique for technique’s sake is a characteristic in English cricket to-day – perhaps more than it has ever been before. The parts of cricket – bowling, batting, and fielding – are now reaching an almost over-developed stage.

By way of contrast, Cardus looks back to the textual world of Nyren’s Hambledon, when the game was supposedly played according to more simple utilitarian principles:

In its earliest period, the parts of cricket were too crudely organised to invite specialism and all those distractions which specialism can easily engender to take a cricketer’s attention from the job in hand – that of beating the other men. Played on a village green, rudely if lovingly, one could say of cricket, borrowing from Kipling, that “the game was more than the player of the game.” Nothing but the lust for conquest and contest here – no wiredrawn appreciation of the fine shades; simply the wigs on the green and our team against the world.

As in later organicist discourse, this is almost an anti-picturesque landscape in which beauty reveals itself unselfconsciously through modest acts of labour. The loss of this organic aesthetic was embodied, argues Cardus, in a number of great batsmen whose careers spanned the Great War. Remarkably for a writer who later frequently argued that style is more important than content (runs scored), Cardus complained that artistic spectacle was now regarded by cricketers and spectators alike as more important than winning: “Who cares about the tussle for championship points if a Ranji be glancing to leg?” The argument now moves into more familiar and typical Cardus critical territory with cricket identified as a sport in which winning and losing

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30 Ibid., 82.
31 Ibid., 82-83.
32 Matless, 106.
33 Cardus, “The Cricketer as an Artist,” 83.
is unimportant. For influential writers such as Cardus and Orwell it was this privileging of style over content that defined the essential “Englishness” of cricket:

...the man who goes to cricket solely to witness a contest is mistaking his game ... Normally the game is a spectacle as much as a contest. And because of this we must have out artist-cricketers – men who can get us interested in themselves, who can get interested in themselves, even though no finish of the game is in sight ...  

Overall, Cardus’s essay demonstrates the very “confusion” that James believed characterised approaches to the aesthetics of sport. Writing in 1921 Cardus had apparently yet to conceptualise fully the aesthetic decline in cricket that he was later to anatomise during the later 1920s and 30s. The continued presence of Golden Age amateur batsmen such as Ranjitsinhji and C.B. Fry led Cardus to draw upon a contemporary discourse of anti-decadence as a means of critiquing the modern. That Cardus’s 1921 aesthetic critique of the post-First War period (as “decadent”) could be so radically different from his later, retrospective assessment (“trench warfare”) is itself highly significant. It reiterates that the literary production of cricket (including its aestheticisation) was a series of differing responses to contemporary conditions rather than a reflection of cricket’s inherent meaning.

Later in the 1920s Cardus produced an essay called “Artists and Cricketers” in which he again attempted to identify the aesthetic properties of the sport. It was a more cogent and more successful attempt, and one that seems to have suggested a number of ideas to James who later developed and dialectically incorporated them into Beyond a Boundary. Cardus’s first point is that a cricket crowd, however unconsciously, were undergoing an aesthetic experience. In a way that foreshadows


35Cardus, “The Cricketer as an Artist,” 84.
James's more democratic aesthetic, Cardus argued that cricket provided the English (defined as a people "prone to be ashamed of living the life aesthetic") with an acceptable form of national art. Whilst the subtleties of the game are supposedly lost on those sitting in the popular seats, a cricket crowd nevertheless undergoes an aesthetic experience that is crucial in terms of the production of a collective national consciousness:

Go among the shilling crowd any fine day at the Oval and what do you hear? Little technical jargon, little talk of off-breaks and the position of the left funny-bone in the late cut. Instead, you will hear many delighted cries of "Beautiful Stroke – Beautiful!"36

At this point of Cardus's aesthetic his "many delighted cries" suggest that cricket provides a collective aesthetic experience rather than a privatised, cerebral experience of form. James's aesthetic is in this sense similar. Like Cardus, James proposed an aesthetic in which the relatively unmediated embodied performance of cricket elicits a natural and collectively expressed discourse: "The spontaneous outburst of thousands at a fierce hook or a dazzling slip-catch, the ripple of recognition at a long-awaited leg-glance, are as genuinely felt expressions of artistic emotion as any I know."37 For James, that a particular re-enactment of cricket's performative grammar can result in a "long, low 'ah' of recognition"38 means that cricket involves a degree of organic interaction between audience and performer that constitutes its status as popular art. James thus implicated cricket into a conception of popular art that had been retrospectively adumbrated by interwar writers such as Eliot and Cardus and, in the


37James, Beyond a Boundary, 203.

38Ibid., 14.
early 1960s was more fully theorised by Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel in *The Popular Arts*. According to Hall and Whannel

Popular art ... is essentially a conventional art which re-states, in an intense form, values and attitudes already known; which measures and reaffirms, but brings to something of the shock of art as well as the shock of recognition. Such art has in common with folk art the genuine contact between audience and performer: but differs from folk art in that it is an individualised art, the art of the known performer. The audience-as-community has come to depend on the performer’s skills, and on the force of a personal style, to articulate its common values and interpret its experiences.39

The second and closely related element of Cardus’s aesthetic is the idea that cricket’s measured ritualism, its long hours, its “very leisureliness” and “occasional static quality” is able to provide a stage “for the expression of personality and the individual style.”40 Cricket is supposedly aesthetically superior to England’s other national sport, football, because its very structure and tempo allows for the sustained display of individuality. Thus, through the logic of distinction, cricket is identified as an art:

The pace of football is too fast for an artist’s indulgence in his own particular way of getting a thing done; your cleverest footballer is at the mercy of the rest of the team, dependent on them and sent here and there pell-mell according to the sheer chance of the ball’s movements. But at cricket a Sutcliffe, a Hearne, is able to dominate the field for hours; he stands there in isolation, so to say, poised in the peak of his own egotistical ability; for the paradox of cricket has always been that the great masters serve their sides best when they serve themselves best. The great batsman, in his three hours’ traffic at the crease, seems master of all he surveys; the bowling is his material, and out of it he can, if he be a Woolley, carve beauty before our eyes, beauty that is characteristic.41

Without endorsing this aspect of Cardus’s aesthetic, clearly the pace and structure of cricket has lent itself to aestheticisation in discourse more readily than the more


40Cardus, *The Summer Game*, 252.

41Ibid.
untidy and faster games of rugby and soccer, although this is not to argue that these sports cannot be the object of aestheticisation. Cardus’s conception of cricket as art here conforms exactly to Bourdieu’s definition of bourgeois sport:

[Thus] a sport is in a sense predisposed for bourgeois use when the use of the body it requires in no way offends the sense of the high dignity of the person ... Ever concerned to impose the indisputable image of his own authority, his dignity or his distinction, the bourgeois treats his body as an end, makes his own body a sign of his own ease. Style is thus foregrounded, and the most typical bourgeois deportment can be recognised by a certain breadth of gesture, posture and gait ... and above all by a restrained, measured, self-assured tempo.

James also argued that cricket was the most fully aesthetic of sports because it possesses the “rigid structural frame” in which “the individuality so characteristic of cricket can flourish.” To both Cardus and James, therefore, cricket was a form of dramatic art structurally organised so as to allow the spectator insight into the personalities of the various protagonists on view by way of style. However, James provided a dialectical reworking of Cardus’s notion of cricket as a form of drama, not by arguing that it resembled forms of dramatic art, but that it was a form of dramatic art, one that “belongs with the theatre, ballet, opera and the dance.” Though James believed all sports to be dramatic, cricket is structured in such a way that throughout the match “it is compelled to reproduce the central action which characterises all good drama from the days of the Greeks to our own.” James defines that central action as the dramatic conflict between two individuals. This formulation of cricket as a form of dramatic art is redolent of both Cardus and Georg Lukács’s Hegelian conception of

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42 See for example Eric Hobsbawm on Brazilian football in *The Age of Extremes*, 398.

43 Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 218.

44 James, *Beyond a Boundary*, 194.

the necessity in successful art of creating a structural balance between the “typical”
and the “individual.” Indeed, as Lazarus points out, for James the purity of cricket as
an art form lay in the fact that this fundamental relationship is inherent in the game’s
structure.\textsuperscript{46}

\ldots two individuals are pitted against each other in a conflict that is strictly
personal but no less strictly representative of a social group. One individual
batsman faces one individual bowler. But each represents his side. The
personal achievement may be of the utmost competence or brilliance. Its
ultimate value is whether it assists the side to victory or staves off defeat. This
had nothing to do with morals. It is the organisational structure on which the
whole spectacle is built. The dramatist, the novelist, the choreographer, must
strive to make his individual character symbolical of a larger whole \ldots This
fundamental relation of the One and the Many, Individual and Social,
Individual and Universal, leaders and followers, representatives and ranks, the
part and whole, is structurally imposed on the players of cricket.\textsuperscript{47}

Again, in a way which is both Cardusian and profoundly Hegelian, James now asserts
that a dramatic spectacle consists of a series of individual, isolated episodes, each in
itself completely self-contained. Cricket in this respect is again structurally perfect:
“Each [episode] has its beginning, the ball bowled; its middle, the stroke played; its
end, runs, no runs, dismissal.” The encounter between the two “representative
protagonists” (batsman and bowler) consists of a series of episodes that together make
up the whole.\textsuperscript{48} Furthermore, as in Cardus, the long hours and ritualism of cricket
means that “human personality is on view long enough and in sufficiently varied form
to register itself indelibly [upon the spectator]”\textsuperscript{49} James then shifts back across the
high culture/popular culture binary by suggesting that because of its structure cricket
has its own narratives and associated personality cults (a view that Cardus shared) and

\textsuperscript{46}Lazarus, 348.

\textsuperscript{47}James, \textit{Beyond a Boundary}, 192-193.

\textsuperscript{48}Ibid., 193

\textsuperscript{49}Ibid., 199.
in this respect it resembles another popular art form, the cinema, a form treated extensively by James during his fifteen year sojourn in America: “Here a Keith Miller met Clark Gable on equal terms.” As in a number of his essays on American popular culture, James celebrated the early cinema as a potentially liberating form of popular art in such a way that distinguishes him from commentators such as Eliot and Cardus who regarded this medium a perfidious symptom of the new technocracy in which there was a severance of the organic link between performer and audience.

James’s conception of cricket as dramatic art goes way beyond that of Cardus because it had a crucial historical and political dimension. As Neil Lazarus has argued, although the conservative Cardus was singled out for criticism in Beyond a Boundary, James’s diatribe contained an implicit critique of influential Marxist aestheticians such as Adorno. James’s view was at odds with the Adornian idea that only esoteric art could resist capitalist commodification, and that sport was necessarily a reactionary cultural practice serving only the needs of the ruling class. Whereas Adorno would find in James’s aesthetic a false reconciliation (as in the work of Samuel Beckett, Adornian art should show the impossibility of harmony under present conditions) to James art is a totalising category with the power to recapture

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50Ibid.


and recreate a harmonious totality of human life. In *Beyond a Boundary* James placed cricket within a lineage of democratic popular art starting with the competitive Greek dramas and moving forward chronologically through the Olympic Games and Shakespearian theatre:

The popular democracy of Greece, sitting for days in the sun watching The Oresteia; the popular democracy of our day, sitting similarly, watching Miller and Lindwall bowl to Hutton and Compton – each in its own way grasps at a more complete human existence. We may some day be able to answer Tolstoy’s exasperated and exasperating question: What is art? – but only when we learn to integrate our vision of Walcott on the back foot through the covers with the outstretched arm of the Olympic Apollo.55

This passage, with its equivalising juxtaposition of what are commonly perceived to be quite distinct spheres of cultural activity – a canonical work of drama and a Test Match, a batting stroke and a piece of sculpture – encapsulates much of what James has to say about the game of cricket and its place within metropolitan and colonial society. This is no gratuitous act of literaturisation because, according to James, cricket is both an art form and a mode of popular entertainment. Writing against the canons of bourgeois aesthetics which had constructed a hierarchical opposition between “art” and “the popular”, James argues that certain art forms – particularly dramatic art – arose at key historical moments when new conceptions of “the people” came into being. Hence to argue that Athenian or Shakespearian drama should be the preserve of the cultured elite is to misunderstand the social functions of their origins.

Cricket is comparable to Athenian drama because it was a cultural manifestation of a historical shift towards democracy; hence for James both cultural forms share what Angus Calder has called a “democratic immediacy.”56 To view modern sports as part of an Adornian “culture of consolation” is therefore to utterly misunderstand them:

55James, *Beyond a Boundary*, 206.
The birth of democracy saw the birth of individualism in sculpture. Immense new passions and immense new forces had been realised. New relations between the individual and society, between individual and individual, launched life on new, exciting and dangerous ways. Out of this came the tragic drama. After a long look at how the creation of the Hambledon men became the cornerstone of Victorian education and entertainment, I can no longer accept that Peisistratus encouraged the dramatic festival as a means of satisfying or appeasing or distracting the urban masses on their way to democracy. That would be equivalent to saying the rulers of Victorian England encouraged cricket to satisfy or appease or distract the urban masses on their way to democracy. 57

What is emerging here is an aesthetic in which cricket is placed not so much beyond, as across the boundary of the bourgeois opposition between high art and popular culture. As an art form retaining residual elements of pre-industrial folk culture, cricket did not merely act as some sort of social emollient, but in the urban centres of Victorian Britain was able to re-establish the rapport between performer and audience, of a shared set of social values, and of organic belonging to community that had been lost during the industrial revolution. In this respect, James’s popular aesthetic of cricket is comparable with Berthold Brecht’s view of a football in which the crowd is a paradigm of how an audience should critically engage with a dramatic performance. 58 Whilst Brecht sought to create a medium of dramatic art in which a theatre audience took a creative part in a performance, James viewed a cricket crowd as actively shaping the meaning of the game by responding collectively to moments in its dramatic exposition. Like Brecht, James saw this form of drama as rendering ordinary people intellectuals, and in this respect he again placed himself at odds with writers such as Cardus whose aesthetic of cricket, as has been shown, was based on an elitist ideal that the “finer points” of art are not available to the masses.

57James, Beyond a Boundary, 205-206.

The next important stage of James’ aesthetic is based upon an elaboration of Cardus’s notion of “style”. Drawing upon the theories of the art historian, Bernhard Berenson, James argues that what constitutes great representational art is not the degree to which it accurately imitates nature – its purely mimetic function – but the way it conveys “significant form,” that is, its ability to present “tactile values” and “a sense of movement.” Here style is the cricketing equivalent of significant form – the individual way in which a batsman, bowler or fielder executes a cricketing action. In cricket of course, an image is not permanent yet it can be constantly recreated during cricket’s narrative episodes (an individual innings or a spell of bowling) so that a Sobers cover drive or the bowling action of Maurice Tate leaves a permanent impression in the spectator’s mind conveying a sense of movement and tactile values (for example, a vicarious sense of how it feels to play a particular stroke). James’s willingness to treat bowling as an art form (John Arlott’s writings on Tate are quoted approvingly), is another counter-hegemonic element of his aesthetic. As has been shown, English cricket discourse had consistently aestheticised the predominantly amateur practice of batting, whereas the largely professional practice of bowling was identified as a form of artisan labour. The politics of this distinction were challenged in the second half of the twentieth century by writers such as the liberal Arlott and the Marxist James. In James the logic of this distinction is false because both batting and bowling are artistic (re)presentations of tactile values and movement that lead to a “life-giving and life-enhancing stimulation of the spectator.” For James significant form, far from being an invention of high civilisation, is elemental: “We respond to physical action or vivid representation of it … because we are made that way.”

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59Ibid., 196.

60Ibid., 197.
basic bodily movements of cricket therefore “represent physical action which has been the basis not only of primitive but of civilised life for countless centuries.”

James’s identification of the constitutive bodily movements of cricket, though problematically trans-historical, is crucial to his radical aesthetic. It is through the notion of embodiment that James is most effectively able to account for cricket as a cultural form that was re-articulated at the peripheries of empire and reconstituted as an important instrument of postcolonial subjectivity and agency. By establishing a critical position both within, and external to, the English cricket canon, James suggested that the body was potentially destabilising to cricket’s pedagogic and identity-forming discourses. He understood that the reified concept of “art” which had only emerged in the late eighteenth century had constructed a hierarchical separation of “mind” and “body”, and that this dualism had informed the rhetorical and discursive practices of imperialism. The remaining two sections of this chapter therefore consider in more detail the relationship between cricket as discourse and cricket as practice in James’s writings.

“Garfield Sobers”

James’s critique of the canon of English cricket writing not only sought to democratise the notion of a cricket aesthetic but was a quest for a suitable, non-racialised literary means of accounting for the embodied performance of West Indies cricket. James was highly conscious of the convention of representation discussed in the previous chapter that sublimated matters of cricketing style (or, in James’s aesthetic “significant form”) into racialised binaries. James’s radical subversion of the tradition of English cricket writing, his re-articulation of the game’s aesthetic

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61Ibid., 204.
discourses and his quest for the suitable literary means of representing non-white players were crystallised in his 1969 essay, “Garfield Sobers” which was originally published in John Arlott’s collection, \emph{The Great Allrounders}. This essay exemplifies James’s status as an anti-colonial writer, inhabiting colonial literary and cricket discourse, subverting it from within and using cricket as a means of writing about political emancipation. Grant Farred has accurately summarised the significance of the work:

Garfield Sobers is a brilliant piece of writing that is simultaneously cricket commentary, cultural politics, and an articulation of the process of Caribbean nation-building. (Without intending to be reductive, the Sobers piece can in many ways be read as a synopsis of \emph{Beyond a Boundary}, so eruditely does this essay echo the themes of James’s most important work).\footnote{Grant Farred, “‘Victorian with the Rebel Seed’: C.L.R. James, Postcolonial Intellectual,” \emph{Social Text} 38 (1995): 33.}

Sobers was unquestionably one of the greatest cricketers of all time. He was a superb batsman, fieldsman and a player capable of bowling fast, medium pace or spin (many great cricketers only master one of these disciplines). In this essay James characteristically situates this phenomenal cricketer in his particular cultural and social space and explicitly positions his own analysis against conventional, metropolitan interpretations of Sobers. As Farred has argued, “The Sobers essay … is James’s corrective to the ‘pundits’, a code word in this instance for white English cricket critics.”\footnote{Ibid., 34.} However, Farred’s next statement contains an inaccuracy:

These critics, James holds, are unable to identify in Sobers’s unique game the abilities which are representative of their particular “unit of civilisation”. “Garfield Sobers” conceptualised in the early years of West Indian independence is but one Jamesian intervention in a dominant cricket discourse that sublimates questions of race and the effects of colonialism when it considers cultural practices such as sport.\footnote{Ibid.}
Far from race being sublimated in the dominant discourse of cricket, James identified that writers such as Cardus misrepresented and misinterpreted cricketers from the colonies precisely because they over-emphasised the issue of race as a means of accounting for a distinctive West Indies aesthetic of cricket. Furthermore, as was shown in the previous chapter, race was frequently cited as an explanation for a supposedly undisciplined colonial approach to cricket, an approach that codified the apparent West Indian incapacity for political self-determination. As in Beyond a Boundary, one of the main themes of James's Sobers essay is to counteract such racialised and reductive accounts of Caribbean players. As a “text” Sobers is very much West Indian but James refuses to account for his West Indianness in terms of race. Instead, Sobers is read as a richly individualised embodiment of historical forces and hence of the West Indian popular consciousness. Here there are strong echoes of his earlier descriptions of W.G. Grace. Like Lukács, James invokes the Hegelian idea of typicality in order to show how Sobers embodies historical currents and forces and thus links the individual to the social whole:

The pundits colossally misunderstood Garfield Sobers – perhaps the word should be misinterpret, not misunderstand. Garfield Sobers, I shall show, is a West Indian cricketer, not merely a cricketer from the West Indies. He is the most typical West Indian cricketer that it is possible to imagine. All geniuses are merely people who carry to an extreme definitive characteristics of the unit of civilisation to which they belong and the special act or function which they express or practice. Therefore to misunderstand Sobers is to misunderstand the West Indies, if not by intention, by inherent disposition, which is much worse. Having run up the red flag, I should at least state with whom I intend to do battle. I choose the least offensive and in fact he who is obviously the most wellmeaning, Mr Denys Robotham of the Guardian of Friday, 15 December 1967. Mr Robotham says of Sobers: “Nature, indeed, has blessed Sobers literally, for in addition to the talents and reflexes, conditioned and instinctive, of a great cricketer, he has the eye of a hawk, the instincts and suppleness of a panther, exceptional stamina, and apparently, the constitution of an ox.”

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65 C.L.R. James, “Garfield Sobers,” in The C.L.R. James Reader, 379.

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To James, Rowbotham’s representation of Sobers is typical of the unconscious racism that he believed permeated English cricket discourse. James thus sets out to show that Sobers’ remarkable cricketing abilities are not racial but “the fine fruit of a great tradition,” a tradition that includes not only great West Indies players such as Constantine and George Headley but English masters such as W.G. Grace and Walter Hammond. A Sobers innings, as much as any poem by Derek Walcott, is thus read as an expression of a cultural hybridity that is the inevitable result of the historical experience of colonialism.

James’s aestheticisation of Sobers involved an imitation of English cricket discourse through frequent allusions to canonical writers such as Shakespeare and the Romantic poets. This, however, was no mere Bourdieusian “circuit of inter-legitimation” but another consciously executed theoretical tactic. In eulogising Sobers, James pointedly appropriated a literary frame of reference usually preserved in the work of writers such as Cardus for the English amateur batsmen of the Golden Age. With its archaisms and concentration of literary references, the following passage is particularly Cardusian. It also deliberately draws attention to the act of literary representation:

It was jealousy, nay political hatred which prompted Cassius to say to Caesar:
Why, man, he doth bestride the narrow world,
Like a Colossus, and we petty men
Walk under his huge legs and peep about,
To find ourselves dishonourable graves.

Certainly in the press box watching Sobers a mere scribe is aware of Hazlitt’s: “Greatness is power, producing great effects. It is not enough that a man has great power in himself, he must show it to all the world in a manner that cannot be his or gainsaid.” Of a famous racket-player: “He did not seem to follow the ball, but the ball seemed to follow him.” Hazlitt would not have minded the appropriation of this acute simplicity for Sobers at short-leg to Gibbs. 66

66Ibid., 383.
The literary works through which Sobers' bodily performance is mediated are carefully selected for their political, as well as their aesthetic, resonances. Like Shakespeare's Caesar, James's Sobers is a political figure whose "power," as expressed in the cricket field, is emblematic of the appropriation of political power that was Caribbean independence. The significance of Hazlitt is that, like James, he saw culture in a broad, non-exclusive sense and conceived aesthetic experience as emanating from diverse practices within a broadly-defined cultural spectrum. Significantly, Hazlitt's essay on the rackets player, Cavanagh, was greatly admired by James and is discussed at some length in Beyond a Boundary. James then interprets Sobers as a direct descendant of the classically orthodox English players of the Golden Age. However, rather than deriving from heredity (as in Cardus), Sobers' classical artistry is interpreted as the dialectical synthesis of the contradictions of the colonial and post-colonial epochs. The pervasive cultural effects of British Imperialism mean that to be West Indian is, in part, to be British. James's immersion in the English literary tradition and Sobers' brilliance at the English game of cricket are thus held to symbolise the divided consciousness that is the condition of the Caribbean artist.

In providing a historical account of Sobers's emergence as a world-historical individual, James resists the temptation to evaluate the relative skills of players of different eras. Such comparisons are meaningless, believed James, because they fail to take into account the relationship between culture and historical context. James "reads" Sobers, therefore, as a mediation of the historical moment of de-colonisation rather than as an individual genius who, in the bourgeois critical tradition, transcends his historical ground: his all-round talents are "not so much a quality of Sobers himself. It is rather the age we live in, its material characteristics and its social
temper." As in the work of Lukács, historical "content" – the inner dynamics of a society at a particular moment – provides the basis for formal achievement. Within the Jamesian aesthetic, great artists such as Tolstoy, Charles Chaplin or Sobers, not only express such particularity but have universal appeal. Cardus is again a point of reference:

I borrow here a thought from Sir Neville Cardus. Visualise please. Not only in the crowded towns and hamlets of the United Kingdom, not only in the scattered villages of the British Caribbean people were discussing whether Sobers would make 200 or not. In the green hills and on the veldt of Africa, on the remote sheep farms of Australia, on the plains of Southern and the mountains of Northern India, on vessels clearing the Indian Ocean, on planes making geometrical figures in the air above the terrestrial globe. In English clubs in Washington and in New York, there that weekend at some time or other they were all discussing whether or not Sobers would make the 200 required from him for the West Indies to win the match.  

As David Spurr has argued, in the Hegelian tradition of colonial discourse, the absence of written history testifies to the absence of history itself. As shown in his study of the Haitian slave revolt, The Black Jacobins, James sought to provide the victims of colonialism with a history denied to them in colonialist discourse. Therefore James’s Sobers, this Hegelian/Marxist world-historical individual is “not something new;” Sobers is a “consummation,” not only of a Caribbean cricket tradition, but the embodiment “of the whole history of the British West Indies.” To comprehend the double-consciousness embodied in this typically West Indian artist James then places this “text” within British cultural history:

For to see Sobers one must place him in a wider framework than meets the eye. Research shows that cricket has been a popular game in England for centuries, but the modern game that we know came into its own at the end of the eighteenth century, and the beginning of the nineteenth. It was part of the

67 Ibid., 383.

68 Ibid., 383-384.

69 Spurr, 99.

70 James, “Garfield Sobers,” 384.
total change of an agricultural society that was developing into what we no
know as the advanced countries. Perhaps a most unexpected and therefore
arresting exemplification of the change is to be found in a famous piece of
writing. Here James sets up an apparently unlikely inter-textual relationship between Sobers
and Wordsworth and Coleridge’s preface to The Lyrical Ballads. This seminal work
of English Romanticism is posited as the key to the interpretation of West Indies
cricket of the 1960s. This is no simple act of inter-legitimation but a tactic that self-
consciously justifies the basis of the relationship it establishes. According to James,
Wordsworth set out to provide “an alternative” to a decaying civilisation: Wordsworth
was certain that there were “inherent and indestructible qualities of the human mind”
which would survive “this degrading thirst after outrageous stimulation.” In its own
way, James argues, cricket “did what Wordsworth was trying to do.” As was shown
in chapter one, this assertion derives not only from Wordsworth but from nineteenth
century cricket writing, a discourse that had actively produced a construction of
cricket as an organic cultural practice at a time of traumatic social change. However,
in relating Sobers to broader historical currents, James then shifts from the idea of
cricket as national culture to a post-imperial and global perspective. Sobers is not only
“a West Indian of the West Indies. But he is also a citizen of the world today.” James
characterises the late twentieth century as a period of global crisis; thus cricket is “a
most powerful resistant to the ‘outrageous stimulation’ of our age, stimuli far more
powerful and far more outrageous than they were in Wordsworth’s time.” Thus
cricket (again, constructed according to nineteenth century discourse) can counter the
dehumanising effects of “engineering” – the forces of technology, global politics and
economics that degrade the dignity of the individual and weaken social ties. Here,

\[71\text{Ibid., 385.}\]

\[72\text{Ibid., 385.}\]
however, there is a typically dialectical understanding of engineering and the "organic," for forms of technology are held to provide the means by which cricket and its discourses are disseminated nationally, imperially and globally:

And of all of those who go forth the world over to develop the dignity of the human mind which Wordsworth was so certain would survive all challenges, cricketers are not the least. This is the age of Telestar and whatever the engineers do for cricket, there is one all-rounder whom we may be certain will meet their challenge.73

As has been noted, other Marxists such as Adorno would have regarded such a view of sport and art as mythical. To James, however, because the relentless and de-humanising logic of capitalism had produced an aesthetic paralysis in cricket – firstly in the form of Bodyline and later, in the 1950s and 60s, in a safety-first mode of play governed by a purely accumulative telos – an artist such as Sobers, appearing at the historical moment of de-colonisation, played in such a way as to reflect the rich totality of society, restoring an image of human wholeness and counteracting the fragmentation and alienation of capitalism.

Though Sobers is aestheticised through a density of allusions to the canon of English literature, James's rhetorical tactic also involves a dialectically counterbalancing empiricism and a highly controlled textual economy of style. He thus very deliberately positioned himself in relationship to the canon of English cricket writing by fusing the aesthetic rhetoric of Cardus with the scientific rationalism of C.B. Fry, a figure whom he regarded as the one of finest non-intellectual writers of the twentieth century.74 In the text an arid and pointedly un-poetic presentation of empirical observation about Sobers' technique, along with statistical data, is thus nothing less than a formal device. At the level of literary form,

73 Ibid., 386.

74 Stuart Hall, "A Conversation with C.L.R. James," in Rethinking C.L.R. James, 27.
therefore, James challenges the colonialist assumption of much English cricket writing that West Indian cricket was merely “Carnival Cricket,” carefree, spontaneous, but undisciplined. In the following passage nothing, particularly the pithy one sentence paragraphs, could be further from Cardus’s purple prose and the belletrist emphasis on style over content:

In 1964, his last season for South Australia, Sobers, against Western Australia, bowled batsman No. 1 for 12, and had batsman No. 2 caught by wicket-keeper Jarman for 2. Against Queensland Jarman caught No.2 off Sobers for 5, and Sobers bowled No.3 for 1. Against the history-making New South Wales side, Sobers had Thomas, No. 1, caught by Lill for 0. He had No.2, Simpson, caught by Jarman for 0. He then had Booth, No 4, caught by Jarman for 0. He thus had the first Australian Test players for 0 each. In the second innings he bowled Thomas for 3 ...

It is impossible to find within recent years another fast bowler who in big cricket so regularly dismissed for little or 0 the opening batsman on the others side.

His action as a pace bowler is the most orthodox that I know. 

The keywords in James’s description of Sobers are “orthodoxy,” “discipline” and “classical”: “He is the most orthodox of great batsmen”; “His aggressive play is very disciplined”; “…at no time is there anything but orthodoxy carried to the penultimate degree where orthodoxy itself disappears in the absolute”; “His captaincy has the same measured, one might say classical character.”

This rewriting of Sobers debunks the notion – prevalent in English cricket discourse – that West Indies players are lacking in discipline and technique. Whereas English writers such as Cardus interpreted players such as Ranjitsinhji and Constantine as beyond the boundary of the classical metropolitan cricketing tradition, James places Sobers in a tradition of classical batsmanship and bowling – a tradition he holds to be both English and West Indian – and is thus able to pointedly assert, “There is nothing of the panther in the

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76Ibid., 380-382.
batting of Sobers.” Even when he claims, “...I have seen the panther in Sobers,”
the subsequent anecdote relating a spontaneous display of unrestrained stroke play
reinforces the sense of discipline in Sobers’ cricket at all other times. To be capable of
reining in such aggressive tendencies requires immense self-discipline, self-restraint
and self-governance. James fully understood that at this moment of West Indies de­
colonisation that there were metropolitan detractors who regarded the people of the
Caribbean as inherently incapable of ruling themselves. Sobers’ self-disciplined,
highly cerebral cricket, and James’s controlled, often highly empirical prose, suggest
otherwise. Art, as manifest in Sobers’ cricket and James’s writing is thus a metaphor
of the West Indian aptitude for rational self-governance.

Constantine and Critical Practice

Although James’s retention of a problematic conception of art as trans­
historical and universal contradicts the argument of this thesis – namely, that the
aestheticisation of cricket is best conceptualised as a series of historical uses – it is
nevertheless far superior to the vague and impressionistic aesthetic of a writer such as
Cardus whose work is best understood as part of a broader discourse of inter-war
cultural crisis. Nevertheless, by taking Cardus’s Ruskinian view of art and society and
dialectically incorporating it into a materialist schema, James provided an historical
means of accounting for the stylistic specificity of West Indies cricketers that is free
from the racial stereotyping of English cricket discourse. Furthermore James’s
aesthetic of West Indies cricket is rendered at the level of literary form with the
dialectically produced balance of reason and instinct he saw embodied in this cricket
reproduced in a textual balance between the prosaic and the poetic, the ascetic and the

\[\text{Ibid., 381-382.}\]
aesthetic. However, an important critical space remains to be filled. There is a need to find a critical practice of cricket that not only accounts for stylistic specificity by recourse to history rather than race, as James has done, but does so in way which avoids transcendental and universal conceptions of the aesthetic. Such an alternative approach, I believe, is latent in James’s writing and can be developed through his insights via the work of Gramsci and Bourdieu. Indeed, at one level (we could say a “macro level”) *Beyond a Boundary* is a profoundly Gramscian text. For example, the following passage describing the national celebration of W.G. Grace’s 100th century in 1895 is almost explicitly Gramscian, particularly if the words “social history” are replaced with the term “hegemony”:

> On what other occasion, sporting or non-sporting, was there ever such enthusiasm, such an unforced sense of community, of the universal merged in an individual? At the end of a war? A victorious election? With its fears, its hatreds, its violent passions? Scrutinize the lists of popular celebrations, the unofficial ones; that is to say, those not organized from above. I have heard of no other that approached this celebration of W.G. Grace’s hundredth century. If this is not social history what is?78

Through the discourse and cultural practice of cricket all sections of the populace are here drawn into the imagined community of nation. In contrast to Marxist structuralist accounts of culture, here a mass sporting celebration does not simply testify to the successful ability of ideology to dominate and control, but suggests that the meaning of a sport is to some extent created “from below.” That the meaning of cricket is potentially a matter of negotiation and contestation is therefore central to the Jamesian analysis and this is particularly important to his understanding of the counter-hegemonic appropriation of cricket in his native West Indies. Indeed, in this respect, a reading of James via Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus* can provide an account (at what

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78 *Beyond a Boundary*, 182-183.
can be termed a "micro-level") of the counter-hegemonic acts of resistance enacted by cricketers such as Sobers.

In the introduction to this study it was suggested that Bourdieu’s concept of fields could be a useful theoretical tool in the analysis of the cultural meaning of cricket. If we are to account for the stylistic specificity of colonial and post-colonial players we first have to identify the cricket field as possessing its own specific logic and laws (this, I think, is fairly self-evident) and then achieve a sense of the relational position players (or agents) occupied within the field. Not only is this relational understanding important (for instance the position a player such as Constantine had to the dominant stylistic modes of English professionals in the 20s and 30s) but we also require some understanding of their relationship to their socio-historical ground. Bourdieu sometimes described the *habitus* as a “feel for the game,” a “practical sense” that leads an agent or player to perform within the specific logic of a particular field in a way that is not necessarily calculated and that is not merely a matter of deliberate or conscious adherence to rules. Instead, *habitus* is a particular disposition, the outcome of a process of inculcation going back to early childhood, a “second sense” that may be transposed into the specific logic of a number of different fields. These dispositions are both “structured structures” that incorporate the objective social conditions of their inculcation, and “structuring structures” in their ability to generate practices within particular situations or fields.⁷⁹

With Bourdieu’s theories of fields and *habitus* in mind it is possible to reconsider James’s reading of West Indian players, such as Constantine, with the aim of suggesting some of the ways these theoretical concepts can illuminate aspects of his work. In an important passage in *Cricket and I*, Constantine/James placed West

Indies cricket in relation to the field of English cricket. In the passage there are
implicit homologies between the cricket field and the fields of culture, politics and
economics – a series of homologies that, as was shown in chapters two and three,
underpinned much of the cricket discourse of the inter-war years. Constantine/James
likewise interpellated cricket into a broader discourse of cultural crisis by insisting
that the entry of West Indies into the field would reinvigorate cricket and signal a
return to the true spirit of the game. *Cricket and I* is suggestive of Bourdieu’s theory
that “the basis of all heretical subversions” is “a return to sources”\(^{80}\):

> Cricket today needs the West Indies. Sometimes when I have been playing big
cricket I think of my Sunday afternoons at home with my father bowling, my
mother behind and my brother in the slips, or I think of myself playing in the
Queen’s Park Savannah competition games with my friends, and I wonder if it
is the same game.\(^{81}\)

West Indies cricket can revitalise and reinvigorate this most “English” of cultural
forms because, as James and Constantine implicitly suggest, cricketers from the
Caribbean possess a different *habitus* or “feel for the game” that is structured by the
objective social conditions of life in the islands.

In his contemporaneous work, *The Case for West Indian Self-Government*
(written primarily for a British readership) James had to some extent reproduced
certain Eurocentric assumptions about Blacks in constructing a picture of life in the
British Caribbean:

> It has to be admitted that the West Indian Negro is ungracious enough to be far
from perfect. He lives in the tropics, and has the particular vices of all who
live there, not excluding the people of European blood. In one respect, indeed,
the Negro in the tropics has an overwhelming superiority to all other races –
the magnificent vitality with which he overcomes the enervating influences of
the climate. But otherwise the West Indian people are an easy-going people.
There life is not such as to breed in them the thirst, the care, and the almost

\(^{80}\) Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 67.

\(^{81}\) Learie Constantine, *Cricket and I*, 173.
equine docility to system and regulation which is characteristic of the industrialised European. If their comparative youth as a people saves them from the cramping effects of tradition, a useful handicap to be rid of in the swiftly-changing world of today, yet they lack the valuable basis of education which is not so much taught or studied as breathed in from birth in countries where people have for generations lived settled and orderly lives. Quicker in intellect than the English, they pay for it by being less continent, less stable, less dependable. 82

With none of the subversive irony exhibited in the poetry of Senghor, 83 James apparently falls into the trap of reinforcing the absolute distinction between ruler and ruled “even while,” as Said has put it, “revaluating the weaker or subservient partner.” 84 Nevertheless, this is fundamentally a cultural, rather than a racial, construction of West Indianness that suggests how the objective social conditions of life in the Caribbean shape and inform habitus. In turn, James and Constantine suggest, these transposable “structured structures” will generate new practices from within the structured field of cricket:

... in the West Indies the true spirit of the game has more opportunity of being maintained...And that is where I think the game to-day (sic) will benefit by players from the West Indies (and from New Zealand) playing big cricket and playing it in their own way. Conditions are such in the West Indies that we shall never be able to play cricket in the style that it is played by so many Englishmen and not a few Australians ...I have not seen many great batsmen who play cricket in quite the same way as Headley does. 85

The passage culminates with a quotation taken from an earlier press description of Constantine by James, a description that explicitly compared the Trinidadian with one of the most popular and successful interwar English professional batsmen, Patsy

84 Edward Said, Culture and Imperialism, 275.
85 Cricket and I, 174-175.
Hendren. The writing places these contrasting narratives of embodiment within the broader discourse of cultural crisis. Whereas Hendren epitomises: “English solidity, English determination developed to the highest pitch of proficiency by the experience of generations of cricketers,” Constantine’s batting embodies “The Spirit of Adventure, the sheer pleasure of enjoying the game, the desire to exploit rather than to employ his marvellous powers, always lure him into attempting the most impossible strokes.” The sense of this “feel for the game” producing a particular position-taking – a position-taking that is in relation (however unconsciously) to Hendren and the other M.C.C. batsmen – is explicit in James’s Cardusian description of Constantine’s fielding and the particular position he assumes in the field. Again, James foregrounds the literary mediation of the bodily performance of cricket:

But here description fails us. To see him take up position in the slips, to see him throw to the bowler, these things we can describe. He moves as if he has no bones. Even in repose, he is the perfection of grace. But it is when he makes one of those electric catches that a mere writer feels inclined to drop his pen. The thing has to be seen to be believed. The almost psychic sense of anticipation, the miraculous activity and sureness which gets the hands to the ball however desperate the effort required to reach it, the determination which ensures that though the heavens fall the ball will not. And then the courage, the sense of power which faces Hendren at half a dozen yards and will not flinch. He seems to have cast a spell on the M.C.C. batsmen. Some of them play slow bowling as if they had never played before, and the cause of it is that sinister figure ...boldly waiting for catches two feet from the bat [...] Nor does he spare himself. Where Hendren husbands his energy Constantine expends his with a reckless, a positively regal, prodigality. It is Europe and the Americas over again – the old world and the new.

Although the passage occasionally echoes colonialist discourse (Constantine casts a “spell” and is a “sinister” figure) it is a reading of Constantine largely based on habitus and history rather than on race. All James’s writings on West Indian cricket (including the early chapters of *Cricket and I*) place its exponents within the

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86 Ibid., 178.
87 Ibid., 179.
historical, geographical, social and economic contexts of their origins; thus when he stated in *Beyond a Boundary* that “[E]verything they were came into cricket with them,” we are reminded of Bourdieu’s “second sense” transposed into the logic of the cricket field. And, because through cricket and other forms of colonial culture, the boundaries of Englishness extended to great swathes of the Caribbean, these players possessed the requisite *habitus* to enter and succeed in the cricket field, however incremental that entry may have been for their predecessors.

A passage in *Beyond a Boundary* describing Constantine’s batting against an English touring side in 1926 is again crucial for a reading of James that provides an understanding of the practice of cricket (albeit one ultimately mediated through language) as potentially counter-hegemonic at the level of both performance and discourse:

Late one afternoon he walked in to bat to the bowling of Hammond. Hammond bowled him a ball pitching a foot or so outside the off-stump, breaking in. Constantine advanced his left foot halfway to meet the ball and saw the break crowd in on him. Doubling himself almost in two, to give himself space, he cut the ball a little to the left of point for a four which no one in the world, could have stopped.”

Here James describes a remarkable act of complex improvisation enacted within a split second: the checking of an initial reaction in response to the guile of the bowler, the adoption of an unorthodox bodily posture and, from that position, a brilliant re-enactment of a classical stroke – a gesture both from within tradition and external to it. James goes on:

What made us sit up and take notice was that he had never in his life made such a stroke before ...and he had no premeditated idea of making any such stroke. I do not remember seeing it again. He went in, there was the ball, and on the spur of the moment he responded. Every few years one sees a stroke that remains in the mind, as a single gesture of an actor in a long performance

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88James, *Beyond a Boundary*, 109.
remains in the mind … It stamped Constantine as a batsman who could do anything he wanted to do.\(^89\) This re-articulation of the performative grammar of cricket (a grammar so inextricably bound-up with the disciplinary and identity-forming procedures of empire) is a Bourdieusian “act of resistance,” a complex mediation of *habitus* enacted within the structured field of cricket that gestures towards the possibility that cricket can become both the product and the producer of alternative, post-colonial discourses of nationhood. The stroke is irretrievably enacted at the level of bodily hexis but enshrined both in James’s memory and in the pages of *Beyond a Boundary* where it and its executor are historicised and afforded symbolic and political significance. As Neil Lazarus has correctly noted, James’s description of this stroke is “reminiscent of, and strictly comparable with, Walter Benjamin’s observation that ‘all great works of literature found a genre or dissolve one.’”\(^90\) But it is not just the innovative performative practices of West Indies players such as Constantine that in rewriting the English coaching manuals discussed earlier in this project, modified and disturbed the disciplinary discourse of cricket. In *Beyond a Boundary* James quite literally founded a new genre – a hybrid form constituted by autobiography, social history, political tract, treatise on aesthetics and cricket book – that at the level of discourse paralleled the embodied adaptations of cricket’s performative grammar enacted by players such as Constantine and Sobers.

Although this sense of the intimate and symbiotic relationship between discourse and practice is at times lost in the Hegelian/Marxist aesthetic explicitly theorised by James, such an approach is nevertheless implied in all of his writings. In the opening chapter of *Beyond a Boundary*, entitled “The Window,” James recalls his

\(^89\)Ibid., 109.

\(^90\)Lazarus, 344.
first aesthetic experience. As in the corresponding chapter of Cardus’s *Autobiography*, the literary recuperation of early aesthetic experience is fundamental to the construction of authorial identity. As a boy, James informs us, his bedroom overlooked an adjacent recreation ground and from his window he would watch the local men playing cricket. Whilst the image of the window suggests a relatively unmediated experience of cricket, the bodily performance of the local players is pointedly juxtaposed with James’s youthful immersion in literature:

By standing on a chair a small boy of six could watch practice every afternoon and matches on Saturday ...From the chair also he could mount on to the window-sill and so stretch a groping hand for the books on the top of the wardrobe. Thus early the pattern of my life was set. 91

One of the players James watched was a certain Matthew Bondman, the local “ne’er-do-well,” whose dissolute lifestyle and crudeness of manner offended the James family’s puritanical values. Yet with bat in hand Bondman was all grace and his majestic stroke play made an indelible impression upon the young James:

He had one particular stroke that he played by going down on one knee ...whenever Matthew sank down and made it, a long, low “Ah” came from many a spectator, and my own little soul thrilled with recognition and delight. 92

Here James’s recollection of the roguish Bondman’s batting is crucial to his view of the meaning of cricket in colonial Trinidadian society. Bondman, so foul-mouthed and dissolute beyond the boundary, was transformed into “that genus Britannicus, a fine batsman” when he entered the identity forming space of the cricket field. 93 Yet Bondman’s stroke play did not neatly conform to the prescriptions of English

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91 *Beyond a Boundary*, 13.
92 Ibid., 14.
93 Ibid.
coaching manuals. As with Constantine, the unorthodoxy of the stroke enacts a remaking of cricket’s performative grammar; it is a structured gesture of resistance, a mediation of the *habitus* of working class colonial life realised at the level of bodily hexis. James then further develops this notion of embodiment by re-emphasising the idea that particular re-enactments of cricket’s performative grammar can constitute modes of social representation. Later in the chapter, the following description of Arthur Jones’s cut stroke is deliberately juxtaposed with Pycroft’s canonised account of William Beldham, one of the most stylish and innovative of John Nyren’s Hambledon cricketers:

> My second landmark was not a person but a stroke, and the maker of it was Arthur Jones. He was a brownish Negro, a medium-sized man, who walked with quick steps and active shoulders. He had a pair of restless, aggressive eyes, talked quickly and even stammered a little. He wore a white cloth hat when batting, and he used to cut. How he used to cut! I have watched county cricket for weeks on end and seen whole Test matches without seeing one cut such as Jones used to make, and for years whenever I saw one I murmured to myself, ‘Arthur Jones!’

Here again is a sense of cricket as a mediation of emancipatory energies. Jones’s stylish mastery of this very difficult stroke emblematises a West Indies performance of cricket that is counter to the functional English cricket of a contemporary “Welfare State of Mind.” James then presents the passage from Pycroft as follows, with a careful juxtaposition of bookish recollections, a canonical work of cricket literature and a memory of his first bodily response to that work:

> The years passed. I was in my teens at school, playing cricket, reading cricket, idolizing Thackeray, Burke and Shelley, when one day I came across the following about a great cricketer of the eighteenth century:

> “It was a study for Phidias to see Beldham rise to strike; the grandeur of the attitude, the settled composure of the look, the piercing lightning of the eye, the rapid glances of the bat, were electrical. Men’s hearts throbbed within them, their cheeks turned pale and red. Michael Angelo should have painted him.”

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94 Ibid., 15.
This was thrilling enough. I began to tingle.

"Beldham was great in every hit, but his peculiar glory was the cut. Here he stood, with no man beside him, the laurel was all his own; it seemed like the cut of a racket. His wrist seemed to turn on springs of the finest steel. He took the ball, as Burke did the House of Commons, between wind and water – not a moment too soon or late. Beldham still survives ..."95

Here the revelatory discovery of a canonical piece of cricket literature confirms and gives literary expression to initial childhood experiences of bodily performance. As James's interjection suggests, such aestheticising discourse heightens the sense of bodily fantasy on the part of the young male reader and has the ability to literally write itself upon the body. At the same time, this entire passage is structured so as to set up an absolute cultural equivalence between cricket and other, more validated art forms. Indeed, James’s self-representation in the narrative is constituted by his immersion in English and Classical Literatures, visual art and the cricket canon:

By that time I had seen many fine cutters, one of them, W. St. Hill, never to this day surpassed. But the passage brought back Jones and childhood memories to my mind and anchored him there for good and all. Phidias, Michelangelo, Burke. Greek history had already introduced me to the Parthenon; from engravings and reproductions I had already begun a life-long worship of Michelangelo; and Burke, begun as a school chore, had rapidly become for me the most exciting masters of prose in English – I knew already long passages of him by heart. There in the very centre of all this was William Beldham and his cut.96

In this passage a disparate series of texts and artefacts, including Pycroft’s description of Beldham and the embodied performance of the otherwise ineloquent Arthur Jones, merge into a trans-historical equivalence of cultural status. A cricketer and a particular enactment of cricket’s performative grammar (albeit one mediated through a literary text), far from being culturally peripheral, are pointedly placed at the very centre of the aesthetic spectrum. Through his mastery of the cut stroke, Arthur Jones,

95Ibid., 15-16.

96Ibid., 16.
an obscure Trinidadian cricketer, is placed in a cultural continuum with the great figures and monuments of European culture. Yet, in mediating the habitus of his West Indies background through his particular performance of the stroke – a performance untainted by the Keynesian economics that James believed so stifled the liberatory potential of art – Jones enacts a stylised gesture of resistance. James suggests that Jones, like Bondman, did not merely slavishly imitate the technical models of English cricket discourse, but inevitably created something new from both within and outside this tradition. Likewise, James’s initial reading of Pycroft is mediated via Jones, causing him to create something new from within and beyond the bounded space of the cricket canon. This suggests a relationship between the pedagogic (or discursive) and the performative than cannot be subsumed into a simple binary; rather, the bodily practice of cricket is both produced by discourse and constantly interrogates and revises its discursive givenness. In turn, as the pages of Beyond a Boundary eloquently testify, new discursive articulations occur that suggest that Englishness itself is open to reinterpretation and revision from the peripheries of the former empire.

In James’s writings the aesthetic always mediated social, economic and political context, therefore Sobers’ and the West Indies team’s foregrounding of the aesthetic function at the time of decolonisation was a rich expression of this particular historical moment. In his Sobers essay James was therefore concerned to find the appropriate literary register through which the cultural and political significance of this cricket could be conveyed. This was as skilful and conscious an act of position taking within a canon as was James’s earlier entry into the field of American
James’s aesthetic thus emerged from within the boundaries of the English cricket canon and went beyond the permissible limits of this discourse by refusing to disavow its politics. It was a critique of a system of representation that attempted to render the workings of culture invisible. James understood the tradition of English cricket writing (typified in the work of Neville Cardus) as part of a broader discourse of Englishness that functioned aesthetically by concealing its operations and rendering culture no longer a construct to be fought over. Against this James provided a dialectical formulation of cricket as a field in which social contradictions are played out: despite and because of its English provenance; despite and because of the Victorian discursive transformation of it into a moral discipline; despite and because of its important role in the British imperial mission, cricket in the West Indies had been refashioned into a cultural field capable of articulating emerging senses of Caribbean nationhood. As John Agard wrote in the poem quoted at the beginning of this chapter, when viewed from the perspective of the margins of the former empire, cricket refuses to be the apolitical field it is constructed as in English literary culture.

In his critique of Cardus, James revealed that bourgeois aesthetics constructed a separation of “fine arts” from “popular arts” that ultimately served to reproduce capitalist social relations. His historiography of the aesthetic is therefore consistent with that of theorists such as Eagleton and Bourdieu. In Beyond a Boundary, James singled out Cardus for criticism because his writings on cricket were symptomatic of an elitist logic of distinction that reveals the underlying contradictions of the aestheticisation of cricket more generally. The objective of this aesthetic was to simultaneously deny and reinforce the divisive class politics of the cricket field.

97 Donald E. Pease, “Introduction” to C.L.R. James, Mariners, Renegades and Castaways: Hermann Melville And The Way We Live Today, vii-xxxiii.

98 Bourdieu, Distinction; Eagleton, The Ideology of the Aesthetic.
James used the example of Cardus, the most influential and canonised cricket writer, to critique a broader view of art in cricket discourse: not only did writers such as Cardus claim that the aesthetic subtleties of cricket were lost on the majority who watched it, but espoused a logic of distinction in which the full expression of “significant form” (or style) was most clearly manifest in the play of cricketers from the higher social orders. James argued that significant form is not only recreated in the purple prose of writers such as Cardus but is experienced directly by the demos who have direct, relatively unmediated experience with the bodily performance of cricket. They in turn, both individually and collectively, invest such performances with meaning. James’s aesthetic is therefore a radical rewriting of the aesthetics of cricket for it suggests that the performative can destabilise the elitist discourse of cricket at the level of both practice and reception. However, James’s radically democratic reformulation of the aesthetic of cricket still retains a profound commitment to the role of the discursive as a shaper of meaning in the context of postcolonialism. This aesthetic provides a means of accounting for cricketing style that avoids recourse to simplistic notion of class and race. James’s problematic Hegelian/Marxist schema nevertheless enabled an account of significant form as the dialectically produced expression of a performer’s *habitus*. When he wrote of Sobers: “He being what he is (and I being what I am), for me his command of the rising ball in the drive, his close fielding and his hurling himself into his fast bowling are a living embodiment of centuries of a tortured history,” he provided a structured interpretation of a text in which a particular (re)-enactment of cricket’s performative grammar (one that cannot be aesthetically euphemised but which emerges from within cricket’s givenness) embodies a collective historical experience. Only a sophisticated popular art from like

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99 James, “Garfield Sobers,” 389.
cricket, James argues, is able to convey such a complex historicity, and this in turn demands a more sophisticated critical practice on the part of its chroniclers and analysts:

Mr Neville Cardus circumscribes his vision of Lancashire and Yorkshire professionals within the muse of comedy. Their West Indian counterparts would crack such limitations like egg-shells. Everything they were came into cricket with them.100

The bounded discursive practice of English cricket writing is thus wholly inadequate as a means of writing a distinctively Caribbean mode of play because it was a complex mediation of an accretion of shared historical experience. Referring to conventional English interpretations of Constantine, James wrote: “We are [still] in the flower garden of the gay, the spontaneous, tropical West Indians. We need some astringent spray.”101 This “astringent spray” is a method of cricket criticism, both empirical and theoretical, underpinned by a materialist understanding of history and conveyed in a prose style that is itself the dialectically-produced expression of historical processes. For a writer like James who had lived on the other side of the colonial divide, but who nevertheless saw Caribbean identity as intimately bound-up to Englishness, the racialised rhetoric of the English cricket canon could not account for the aesthetic specificity of West Indies cricket. Within cricket’s givenness, West Indian players did indeed create new forms, but these innovations, James showed, were merely in the tradition of Grace, Ranjitsinhji and Victor Trumper: there was nothing “exotic” or “primitive” about them. After the West Indies team triumphed in Australia in 1962 under the leadership of their first black captain, Frank Worrell, James wrote:

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100 Beyond a Boundary, 86.

101 Ibid., 131.
Clearing their way with bat and ball, West Indians at that moment had made a
dpublic entry into the comity of nations. Thomas Arnold, Thomas Hughes, and
the Old Master himself [W.G. Grace] would have recognised Frank Worrell as
their boy. 102

Constantine, Worrell and Sobers were indeed the embodiments of new cultural
energies emanating from the colonial peripheries, but their innovations came from
within the given grammar of English performativity and the given codes of an
essentially Puritan Englishness. Their performances are homologous to the literary
enterprise of James who occupied a position within the field of cricket discourse to
radically reconfigure it, rewriting cricket as a democratic and postcolonial cultural
practice.

102Ibid., 252.
CONCLUSIONS: “THE PLAY IS A POEM”?

Bat on heat, clash, ball bouncing century.
The play is a poem.¹

James’s radical subversion of the English cricket canon exemplifies that cricket, like any cultural symbol or practice, possesses a degree of fluidity of meaning. Cricket - apparently a sport so indelibly inscribed with ideas of Englishness and empire - was subject to revision at the peripheries of that empire and re-articulated as an instrument of colonial and postcolonial subjectivity and agency. By connecting James’s re-articulation of cricket to the canon of English cricket literature, the three interconnected theoretical concepts utilised in this thesis are shown to be ongoing processes through which emerging ideas of nationhood (still constituted by issues of class, race and gender) are produced and reproduced through cricket. This concluding chapter further develops this idea in order to suggest a number of lines of further scholarly enquiry.

In the former British West Indies and its Diaspora, the legacy of James produced an important counter-hegemonic tradition of Caribbean cricket literature including a particularly rich body of both oral and written cricket verse. One particularly resonant example of this genre is “Cricket’s in My Blood” from *Days and Nights in the Magic Forest* (1986) by the Anglo-Trinidadian author, Faustin Charles. Along with two other cricket poems in this collection - “Viv” and “Greenidge” celebrating two of the greatest West Indies batsmen of recent times (Vivian Richards

and Gordon Greenidge) - Charles appropriates the metaphor of cricket in order to explore the complexities and ambiguities of Caribbean identity within the context of postcolonialism. To do so Charles eschews the pastoral conceits and nostalgic yearnings of English cricket verse to utilise language and imagery conveying historical patterns of violence, from pre-Colombian Aztec and Mayan rituals, through the imposed violence of the Spanish conquistadors, to that of 1980s Brixton. As in James’s “Garfield Sobers” the violence of cricket is not euphemised but equated with the violence of empire and its ambivalent “gift” of civilisation:

Rising to conquer, propelled by a gift
And a hunger.
The ball swerves, lifts, and strikes
Widens with pain and anguish
Breaking heights beyond the sun,
And the light circles all,
Screaming in the extremity
Of lives laid out bare in the height of sacrifice.

The poem is replete with alliterative and onomatopoeic effects that replicate the rhythms and sounds of cricket and with punning references to the sport’s distinctive lexicon. Even more significant, however, is the notion that British Caribbean and diasporic identities are carved out from a sedimented accretion of different traditions and mythologies, including those of cricket. The “lives laid out bare in the height of sacrifice” include the great West Indies cricketers of the past who reside in the mythical magic forest of the collection’s title. These ghostly embodiments of tradition are the postcolonial counterparts of Francis Thompson’s avatars of England’s past. The poem’s spectral cricketers - including important literary figures such as the white liberal imperialist, Pelham Warner, and the path breaking Learie Constantine - are

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3Charles, 41-42.
rendered as mythical figures who connect the past, present and future of the English-speaking (and cricket-playing) West Indies. Here a series of organic images produce an alternative canon of Caribbean cricketing heroism, one which nevertheless inevitably grew from within the culture of colonialism:

Through the searching trees, eye-balls racing
Challenor melting boundaries spurring Warner spread-eagled
Through Constantine gliding magic cutting loose,
Seeding heroes thundering Martindale budding Ollivierre

The passage develops through a series of primitive hunting images towards an apocalyptic vision of the great inter-war batsman, George Headley (who was commonly known as “The Black Bradman”\(^4\)). Headley’s mastery of the coloniser’s game symbolically reverses the power relations of empire and thus presages the end of colonial rule:

The fierce sun reels,
Scatters a ray of fielders
Stunned by the batsman’s plunder;
The curving sling-shot of Ramadhin and Valentine,
Mesmerises, and into the trap
The striker plunges.
Cricket’s in my blood,
As the play tightens my soul into steel;
Blasted by the fanfare, the winds swell
Headley wheeling the conqueror’s wand
On the ticking time-bomb horizon.

In the text the folklore of the rural Caribbean fuses with the spectral tropes of English cricket discourse to produce a culturally hybrid pastoral mythology of cricket:

Every night Worrell’s ghost walks
Through the village
Delivering inspiration.\(^5\)

\(^4\)In the Caribbean Bradman was commonly known as the “White Headley”.

\(^5\)Charles, 42.
However, whereas the aesthetics of English cricket discourse represent the game as an organic part of a tranquil and immutable English rural landscape, here the colonial landscape is the repository of brutal historical experience, as another poem in the collection states:

The landscape does not forget
The conqueror’s stumbling hand
blocking the sunlight\

As a repository of historical patterns of violence the cricket landscape cannot be aesthetically euphemised according to English models because it is a site in which the violence of empire is symbolically re-enacted rather than resolved. The historical entry of the West Indies into the field of cricket, their politically resonant reworking of its performative grammar, is not merely a Bourdieusian re-configuration of the cricket field, but is explicitly rendered as a “shattering [of] the field,” a revolutionary transformation of its discursive givenness. In “Viv” Charles suggests that this Caribbean appropriation of the sport’s terms of play in turn produces an alternative culture of spectatorship, a series of spontaneous, Carnivalesque bodily responses:

Through the covers, the warrior thrusts a majestic cut
Lighting the day with runs
As bodies reel and tumble,
Hands clap, eyes water
And hearts move inside out.\

However, although the bodily performance of cricket elicits further performance, as the image of “the play is a poem” suggests, Charles’s poetry is to some extent a meta-discourse preoccupied with the vital issue of the relationship between sport and its literary representations. Charles’s analogy posits the idea of cricket itself as form of text, and thus as a meaningful cultural practice that can be read and interpreted. It also

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7“Viv,” in ibid., 43.
suggests that cricket is an aesthetic form that demands the utilisation of particular rhetorical strategies, or of a particular poetics, in rendering it upon the page. Charles thus foregrounds the act of constructing alternative, postcolonial narratives of embodiment. Nevertheless, because language inevitably creates boundaries, it is simultaneously struggling to escape the entrapment of the colonising discourse figured by cricket. The texts remain, to an extent, implicated within the rhetorical patterns of empire as the recurrence of apocalyptic, violent and animalistic imagery suggests. Cricket is shown to be a crucial element of anti-colonial struggle and postcolonial subjectivity but even these processes do not occur outside the boundaries of writing. There are distant echoes of the schematic patterns of English cricket discourse (“Swings and shines Golden / For the love of the game”) but these are hastily sublimated into vital and energetic images of colonial violence. The post-Jamesian literaturisation and aestheticisation of West Indies cricket are therefore ambiguous processes that are paradigmatic of the broader literary construction of postcolonial Caribbean identity and the region’s perception of its relationship to residual and emergent structures of power and cultural authority. This alternative canon of cricket literature is therefore a rich source for future scholarly research.

8Spurr, The Rhetoric of Empire, 164.
9Charles, 41.
Another area of potentially fruitful research was briefly alluded to in chapter four. Here it was noted that there were many parallels between the discursive re-definition of cricket in England during the nineteenth century and that occurring in Australia at the same time. Clearly if cricket was to become part of the stabilising and disciplinary culture of colonialism it needed to be inscribed with the same series of doxa that were enabling it to fulfil its cultural work in Britain. The Australian experience suggests that the spread of cricket was both partially enabled, and accompanied by print culture, and that the sport was distanced from its associations with gambling and violence, rendered more respectable, culturally validated and inscribed as symbol of the bonds of empire through forms of print media. More research needs to be done into these processes, not only in Australia but in other white settler colonies such as New Zealand and South Africa. A small amount of preliminary research suggests that in Australia at least, the early literaturisation of cricket closely paralleled that in England.

In shifting from a number of historically-focused case studies to a more formalistic approach to the inter-textual relationship between Cardus and James, this analysis has partially overlooked an important moment of cricket's literaturisation - the period from 1945 to the early 1960s. Consistent with the overall argument of this thesis, this period produced a wave of literaturisation through which constructions of Englishness were constituted in response to perceptions of prevalent socio-economic, political and cultural conditions. The important post-war work of writers such as John Arlott, Dudley Carew, Terence Prittie, E.W. Swanton and A.A. Thomson (as well as Cardus and James) needs to be re-examined as a response to, and a mediation of, this

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post-war context. For example, it is significant that the election of the Labour
Government in 1945 and the establishment of the Welfare State led to a series of
coded critiques of political and economic conditions, and the retrospective rewriting
of inter-war cricket as a “Second Golden Age” or “Silver Age.”

**Afterword**

In that textual embodiment of the intimate relationship between cricket and
English Literature, *Cricket Country*, Edmund Blunden sought to petrify cricket’s
literary canon by calling for the establishment of a “Poet’s Corner” at Lord’s adorned
with busts of Nyren, Cowden-Clarke and Mary Mitford. Yet, as the example of
James showed, the constructedness of canons implies a degree of malleability. Hence
in recent years the English literary canon has been challenged and reconfigured,
particularly by feminist and postcolonial scholars. A consciously more modern and
internationalist anthology of cricket writing recently collected by the Indian historian,
Ramachandra Guha, points to a similar reconstruction of the cricket canon. Alongside
many established English writers, Guha’s anthology includes examples of the work of
Australian, Indian and West Indian authors including Jack Fingleton, Ray Robinson,
Sujit Mukherjee and C.L.R. James, as well as the Anglo-American Marxist, Mike
Marqusee, whose work represents the most radical challenge to traditional cricket

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11For example, John Arlott, *Concerning Cricket: Studies of the Play and
Players* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1949); Dudley Carew, *To the Wicket*
(London: Chapman & Hall, 1950); T.C.F. Prittie, *Mainly Middlesex* (London:
Hutchinson, 1946); E.W. Swanton, *Cricket and the Clock: A Post-War Commentary*
(London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1952); A.A. Thomson, *Cricket: The Golden Ages*

historiography and literature since James. A new anthology of cricket verse, published under the auspices of the M.C.C. in the summer of 2004 is pleasingly international and pluralistic in its selection, although its title reveals its essential conservatism by alluding to Newbolt’s jingoistic “Vitae Lampada.” Another welcome recent publication is a collection of the work of Chris Searle, a writer acutely sensitive to issues of class, race and gender within cricket. It is not clear, however, if the self-professed “New Cricket Writing” represents a meaningful challenge to conventional English belletrism or is merely the literary wing of the Barmy Army. However, in the conditions of postcolonialism the ongoing literaturisation of cricket dictates that the meaning of this highly symbolic cultural practice will continue to be a matter of negotiation at the level of discourse. Cricket writing has constantly made the past visible, rendered the past in the present and has testified at the level of representation to the nation (and empire’s) continuity across time. But, as the reading of James in chapter five suggested, the cricket field has constantly been a site in which the present recreates the past and, by implication, England and its former empire can be repeated differently. Perhaps the printed word will effect a transformation in the meaning of English cricket, rewriting the still deeply nostalgic cricket field into the symbol of a new, less backward-looking, more pluralistic sense of national identity. But if that wish is hopelessly textualist, perhaps one day we will all recognise something of ourselves in a great cricketer of Asian or


14David Rayvern Allen and Hubert Doggart eds., “A Breathless Hush ...”: The M.C.C. anthology of cricket verse.


Afro-Caribbean descent, a stylish stroke-maker whose elegant off drive is at once a symbol of England’s colonial past, its uncertain present and its harmonious and vibrant multi-ethnic future. Emanating from within cricket’s given performative grammar, yet itself a highly-symbolic re-creation of that givenness, the stroke will produce a spontaneous discourse, a Jamesian “long, low ‘ah’ of recognition” that will testify to the possibility of such a future.
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