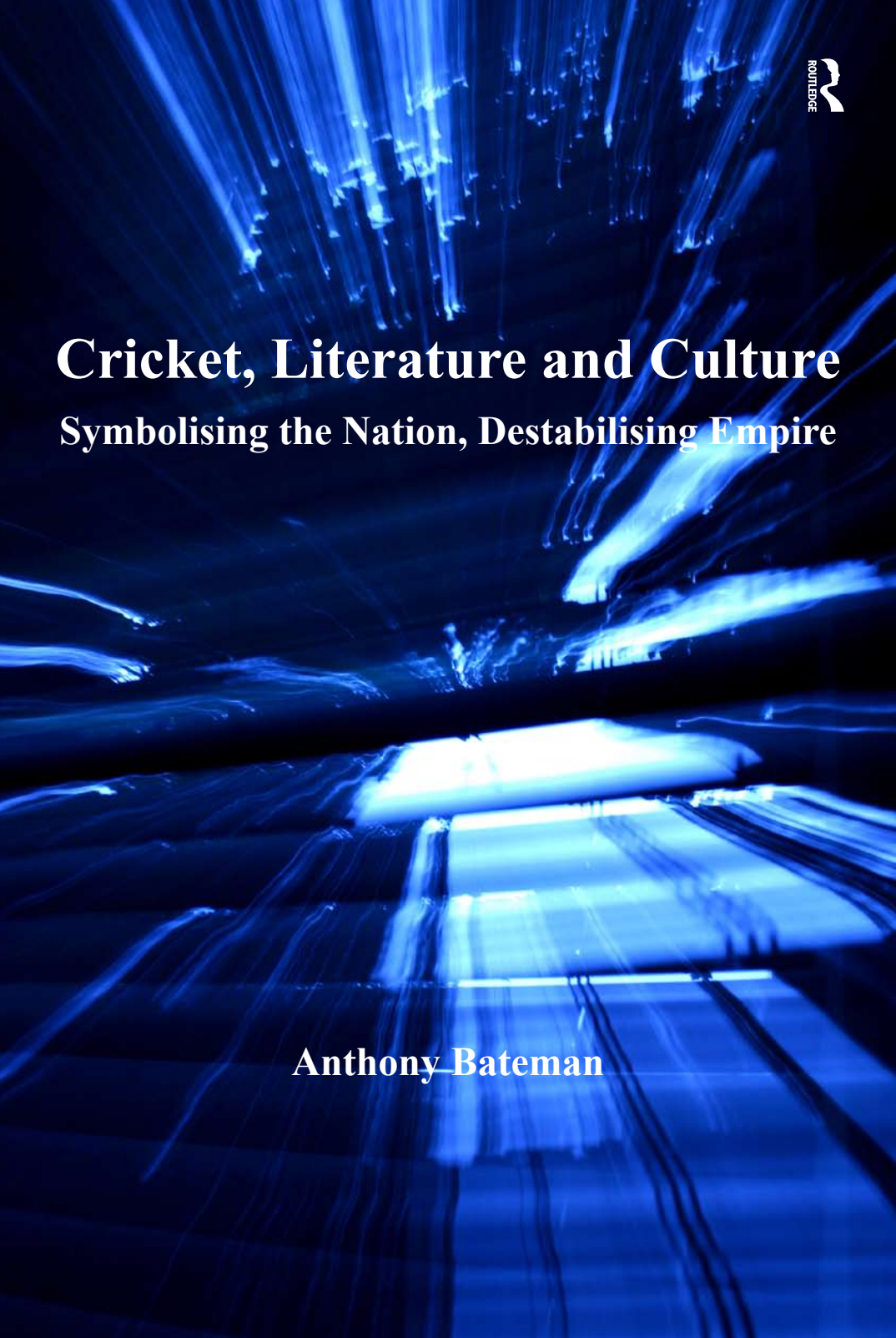
ROUTLEDGE
Cricket, Literature and Culture
Symbolising the Nation, Destabilising Empire
Anthony Bateman

CRICKET, LITERATURE AND CULTURE

To my father, and in memory of my mother

Cricket, Literature and Culture

Symbolising the Nation, Destabilising Empire

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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.

Benny Green, *A History of Cricket* (1988)

Cricketer was written all over him – in his walk, in the way he took guard, in his stand at the wickets.

P.G. Wodehouse, *Mike* (1909)

But cricket was no mere game. Cricket was important. He could never help reading about cricket.

Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* (1925)

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, the various bumps of order, obedience, and good humour, with an unruffled temper, are indispensable. […] 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 quotation is taken from a book entitled *The Cricket Field* published 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 and the bodily, the passage foreshadows the discourse of what was later to become known as 'Muscular Christianity': essentially a doctrine that saw physical weakness as evidence of spiritual shortcomings against which Christian faith, clean living, self-discipline and exercise in the form of team sports was the only cure. The Muscular Christianity espoused by Pycroft and many others – which also had a strongly literary dimension – has been well documented and analysed by a number of scholars, but there is more to be said about the literary representation of sport during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[3] For example, in seeing cricket as 'a panegyric on the English character', Pycroft advances a view of culture as a public proclamation or expression of a national identity that

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[1] James Pycroft, *The Cricket Field or The History and the Science of Cricket* (London: Longmans, 1851), 14–15.

[2] David Rayvern Allen, *Early Books on Cricket* (London: Europa, 1987), 28.

[3] J.A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

pre-exists representation. The self-confirming logic of the writing thus 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 meaning of the sport of cricket, or the Englishness it supposedly expresses, are actually the *product* of literature such as this.

This book, therefore, 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 mid-1980s. 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 and the British Empire. The sport's incorporation into the curricula of the elite schools, the development of the railway network, the closely-related processes of industrialisation and urbanisation (with their resultant effects on leisure patterns), and the emergence of the discourses 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 taking root in British 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 India and the West Indies, of the success of the British civilising mission. At the same time, the sport was inscribed with a strong parochial and rural identity. With the English urban middle class struggling 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 which, against a background of social Darwinism and fears of racial degeneration, was seen as a repository of Anglo-Saxon purity. In the 1920s and 1930s, 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 salutary indicator of the economic, political and cultural tensions of the new. By the post-Second World War period, cricket in the newly independent India and in the Anglophone Caribbean was being wrested from its discursive links to Englishness and rearticulated in the cause of anti-colonial and postcolonial agendas. Alternative discourses of the cricket field were emerging which used and subverted the game's metaphors and moral codes in order to create new, and often problematic, conceptions of cultural identity. Two fundamental questions therefore structure this book. First, what role did literature play in the dissemination and acculturisation of cricket within the nation and empire? Second, what role did literature play in the counter-hegemonic re-articulation of cricket within the colonial dispensation? To answer

these questions three inter-related concepts are used: literaturisation, the canon and the aesthetic.

Literaturisation

The concept of literaturisation has been borrowed and adapted from Steve Redhead's study, *Post-Fandom and The Millennial Blues: The Transformation of Soccer Culture*. Redhead describes a process by which prominent literary figures such as Roddy Doyle and Nick Hornby attempted to improve football's image, so damaged in Britain during the 1980s by factors such as hooliganism and the Hillsborough and Heysel Stadium disasters.[4] Although Redhead's concept of literaturisation is a peculiarly post-modern phenomenon of cultural crossover, an interpenetration of football and an increasingly complex popular culture by which literary treatment of soccer increases the sport's marketability to middle-class consumers, his insights are nevertheless relevant to the study of cricket literature. 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. Cricket'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 class, newly empowered by the 1832 Reform Act, adopted the sport, and as cricket became an integral part of the curricula of the recently reformed public schools, the game underwent a process of discursive transformation that afforded it a range of moral, religious and aesthetic attributes. As the sport was distanced from the more unseemly elements of the old popular culture, forms of literature endowed it with the necessary cultural validation to become a symbol of nation and subsequently, empire.

This weight of political and cultural responsibility partially explains why cricket is such an intensely literary sport. According to one of its historians, Benny Green: '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.'[5] Green's view, almost poststructuralist in its overt textualism, has sound quantitive, if not qualitative, foundations. An extensive, but not exhaustive, bibliography of cricket published in 1977 lists over 8,000 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.[6] That such a work of scholarship should have been undertaken is itself testimony to cricket's sheer

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[4] Steve Redhead, *Post-Fandom and The Millennial Blues: The Transformation of Soccer Culture* (London: Routledge, 1997), 88–92.

[5] Benny Green, *A History of Cricket* (London: Barrie and Jenkins 1988), 14.

[6] E.W. Padwick, *A Bibliography of Cricket* (London: The Library Association, 1977).

bookishness. Indeed, in the course of their research the compilers were able to draw upon an already established tradition of cricket bibliographies going back to the late nineteenth century (cricket's literariness is such that there is a bibliography of cricket bibliographies[7]). However, even John Arlott, an important literary figure in the sport from the 1940s to his death in 1991, and the author of several essays on the subject of cricket writing, held that only half a dozen cricket books were of true literary value.[8] At the same time cricket has self-consciously sought and received literary authorisation. The sport has featured (admittedly in some cases only briefly) in the work of many canonical writers such as William Blake, William Wordsworth, Charles Dickens, Anthony Trollope, George Meredith and, more intriguingly, James Joyce. Anthologies of cricket writing (of which there are many) brim with the musings of canonical writers. Such collections are a means through which the game is raised above the level of mere sport into the supposedly higher domain of the literary and aesthetic. These essays and anthologies fulfil a self-serving function, embodying the supposedly special relationship between the fields of cricket and literature whilst reinforcing and perpetuating the relationship. When famous literary figures have actually played cricket, such as Lord Byron, John Keats, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle or Samuel Beckett (the only Nobel Prize winner to have played first-class cricket),[9] this provides further material for literary reflection. That H.G. Wells's father was once a professional cricketer, or that Doyle's only first-class wicket was that of the great Victorian cricketer, W.G. Grace, become literary nuggets used to draw the two fields together. This need to endow cricket with cultural capital through literary allusion has at times gone to absurd lengths: a recent writer informs us that when Wells's father (a professional bowler for Kent) claimed four wickets in as many balls in 1862, his second victim was one of Jane Austen's great nephews.[10]

Cricket historiography also has a strong literary dimension and this has lent it, at times, a distinctly fictional quality. For example, in 1912 one of cricket's most important literary gatekeepers, Andrew Lang, argued that cricket was played as far back as 100 BC, basing his claim on evidence supposedly provided by the ancient Irish epics and romances, works he identified as the oldest in Western literature. According to Lang cricket was played by the ancestors of Cuchulain, and by the Dalraid Scots from northern Ireland who invaded and annexed Argyll in about 500

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[7] David Rayvern Allen, *A Catalogue of Cricket Catalogues, Booklists, Biographical Sources and Indexes Etcetra* (London: by the author, 1977).

[8] John Arlott, 'Cricket Literature of The Wisden Century,' in *Wisden Cricketers' Almanack 1963* (London: John Wisden, 1963), 1077.

[9] Roy Clements, *The Alternative Wisden on Samuel Barclay Beckett 1906–1989* (London: Dari Press, 1992).

[10] Eric Midwinter, *Quill on Willow: Cricket in Literature* (Chichester: Aeneas Press, 2001), 45.

AD.[11] Lang thus afforded cricket heroic status and a mythological past even if his idiosyncratic belief in the Celtic origins of cricket was at odds with most historical accounts. The interest in cricket of many figures involved in literary production is often evidenced by the creation of such mythologies based upon spurious interpretations of scattered and often ambiguous allusions to ball games in English and European Literature. There are many examples of these dubious discoveries of cricket references in the literary canon such as *Mockett's Journal* in 1836 claiming Virgil had described a cricket match,[12] the astonishing revelation that Rabelais' Gargantua had played cricket,[13] and the assertion that cricket appears in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and even before in a poem by Joseph of Exeter dating from 1180.[14] There are even a number of essays on the unlikely subject of Shakespeare and cricket.[15] Nevertheless, in seeking a spurious textual history to validate itself, cricket provided itself with the veneer of antiquity so necessary for this sporting symbol of nation and empire.[16] Cricket needed Chaucer and Joseph of Exeter just as the institutionalised field of English Studies needed Chaucer and *Beowulf*.

The Canon

During the nineteenth century, as literaturisation established cricket as England's national game, cricket began retrospectively to organise its discourses so that a canon of cricket writing emerged. Cricket's self-image demanded a body of canonical texts just as the Christian Church venerated its scriptures in order to justify its ongoing existence. 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. The cricket canon was a body of authorised texts that were deemed both 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 prodigious quantities of critical commentary and interpretation. The canon's associated meta-discourse includes essays on cricket literature, on cricket in literature, on cricket poetry as well as studies of particular cricket writers and famous authors who have portrayed the game. To read such material is to detect the construction of a 'Great Tradition' of cricket

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[11] Andrew Lang, 'The History of Cricket', in *Imperial Cricket*, Pelham Warner, ed. (London: The London and Counties Press Association, 1912), 54.

[12] Allen, *Early Books on Cricket*, 8.

[13] Edmund Blunden, *Cricket Country* (London: The Imprint Society, 1945), 161–71.

[14] *Bell's Life*, 29 September, 1850.

[15] For example, Charles Box, 'Shakespeare and Cricket: An Enforced Dissertation', in *The English Game of Cricket* (London: The Field Office 1877), 467–74.

[16] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 44.

literature from John Nyren (the author of the first full-length cricket book, who is perhaps cricket's real Chaucer) to Sir Neville Cardus (whose prime importance within the canon make him something of a Shakespeare figure) underpinned by the quasi-religious authority of the yearly *Wisden Cricketers' Almanack* (which is often referred to as cricket's 'Bible'[17]). The Trinidadian Marxist, C.L.R. James, is a somewhat Miltonic figure, greatly admired for his knowledge of cricket and the quality of his prose, but whose revolutionary politics remain something of an embarrassment.

Given the construction of a canon there has often been a strong sense of cricket writers yearning to be part of an established tradition and thus self-consciously positioning themselves in a sort of apostolic line of succession. The *fin de siècle* cricket *litterateur*, E.V. Lucas, undertook and described quasi-religious literary pilgrimages to the Hampshire village of Hambledon (the setting of Nyren's *The Cricketers of my Time*). Here he invoked John Bunyan as he trod the hallowed turf of the cricket field with Nyren's book in hand, just as his contemporary Hilaire Belloc went on pilgrimages to other parts of southern England in search of the true meaning of Englishness and a rooted sense of national identity.[18] Titles of many cricket books have also enforced a sense of tradition and give the impression of writers placing themselves in a line of literary succession. Some publications have flaunted their literariness by employing titles taken from a broader literary context: Jack Fingletons's account of the 1947 Australian cricket tour of England, *Brightly Fades the Don* parodies Sholokhov. However, more common are allusions to the cricket canon: E.W. Swanton's *The Cricketers of My Time* (1996) being a recent example. Likewise G.D. Martineau's *The Field is Full of Shades* (1946) recalls a line from Francis Thompson's elegiac and wonderfully ghostly poem, 'At Lords', and Dudley Carew's dark novel about an inter-war professional cricketer, *The Son of Grief* (1936), and his collection of cricket essays, *To the Wicket* (1946), echo a stanza on the game in another *fin de siècle* poem of English elegiac memorial, A.E. Housman's *A Shropshire Lad*:

> Now in Maytime to the wicket
> Out I march with bat and pad:
> See the son of grief at cricket
> Trying to be glad.[19]

However, this should not suggest that cricket's literary canon is a totally exclusive enterprise. Many anthologies have reflected and produced cricket's national popular status by including, along with the work of canonical writers, examples

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[17] For example, Pelham Warner, *Book of Cricket* (London: Sporting Handbooks, 1945), 115.

[18] E.V. Lucas, *Cricket All His Life: Cricket Writings in Prose and Verse* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1950), 58.

[19] A.E. Housman, *A Shropshire Lad* (Ludlow: Palmers Press, 1987), 12.

of cricket songs and doggerel verse, much of which expresses popular patriotic sentiments. Albert Craig, who in his role as 'The Bard of the Oval' peddled his poorly scanned cricket verse at the south London cricket ground in the 1890s, emerges as the sport's William McGonagall:

> When I was a bit of a youngster, I cared for nothing at all;
> I've gone without food a hundred times for an hour with bat and ball;
> Age didn't improve me either, if anything, I grew worse,
> I may say our village parson vowed cricket would be my curse.[20]

The Aesthetic

Beyond the boundary of the cricket field the making of national literatures and literary canons were elements in a broader aestheticisation of modern national cultures.[21] Within this wider context cricket literature produced particular aesthetics of cricket, of its landscapes and of its bodily movements that were intimately tied up with the ongoing reproduction of Englishness. Many writers have claimed cricket is aesthetically superior to other sports because its episodic structure and measured tempo allows for the sustained display of individual style. This book is not concerned to establish or refute cricket's aesthetic status, rather it conceptualises the aesthetic flexibly as a series of historical uses. For example, in the 1820s and 1830s an aesthetic of cricket emerged that served to euphemise the sport's violence and distance it from the more disreputable elements of the old popular culture. Later in the century the notion of cricket as an art form created the image of it as somehow standing outside the cash nexus. Furthermore this aesthetic of cricket both obscured and highlighted the sport's unequal social relations. From the mid-century onwards cricket had been promoted amongst the urban working class, as well as the more privileged, as an antidote to a whole host of physical, social and political ills. At the highest competitive levels of English cricket the sport's cross-class appeal registered itself in a rigid division between amateurs (or 'Gentlemen') and professionals (or 'Players'). Amateurs were largely from the higher social classes and often excelled at the more genteel practice of batting, whilst professionals tended to be working or lower-middle class, many of whom were involved in the more strenuous and less glamorous activity of bowling. As George Meredith succinctly put it: 'Gentlemen-batters were common: gentlemen-

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[20] Albert Craig, 'Dedicated to the Famous Notts and Surrey Elevens', in *'A Breathless Hush…': The MCC Anthology of Cricket Verse*, David Rayvern Allen and Hugh Doggard, eds (London: Methuen, 2004), 78.

[21] Gregory Jusdanis, *Belated Modernity and Aesthetic Culture: Inventing National Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 81.

bowlers were quite another dish.'[22] Amateurs and professionals had separate dressing rooms and entered the field through different gates but were equal under the game's laws. Within cricket discourse an aesthetic emerged which codified cricket's social relations; it afforded the predominantly 'gentlemanly' art of batting more cultural and symbolic capital than the apparently more mechanical skill of bowling. The most eloquent advocate of the gentlemanly batting aesthetic was Neville Cardus. In the following passage he lovingly recalls two of his childhood cricketing heroes, A.C. 'Archie' MacLaren and R.H. 'Reggie' Spooner, both of whom were successful and stylish amateur batsmen for Lancashire and England before the Great War. As is so often the case in cricket discourse the authentically aesthetic is located in the past:

> He [MacLaren] was a batsman of sculpturesque rhythm in his driving to the on. He seemed always erect, bat on high. When he made runs with Spooner at the other end, we could understand the difference between sonorous blank verse and melodious lyric poetry. Spooner rippled the grass with a bat all light curves, easeful and unselfconscious; but in MacLaren's strokes we heard the roll of deliberate measures, a rhetoric not a little arrogant. I shall never cease to be moved by the recollection of MacLaren hooking a short ball of great pace from Lockwood one day […] it rose at MacLaren's head with dreadful velocity. MacLaren stood straight up and swept his bat across the line of the flight and hit round to leg, as though over his shoulder, to the boundary. Do I say 'hit'? Nay, he dismissed the ball from his presence.[23]

As well as being stylistically distinguished through contrasting literary metaphors, MacLaren and Spooner's shared class status is registered through the quasi-Wordsworthian recollection of imperious and insouciant bodily performance. Cardus is explicit about the potential physical dangers of batting – indeed this lends the description a sublime quality – but MacLaren's split-second response to Lockwood's hostile fast bowling displays courage, panache, and that quantity held in abundance by the leisured classes, time. Finally, in a stylised act of self-editing, Cardus employs a metaphor which both euphemises the striking of the ball with the bat and emphasises MacLaren's social superiority to the bowler Lockwood, a former Nottinghamshire lace worker who became a professional for Surrey and England.

Cardus and other inter-war writers usually reserved the aesthetic frame for amateur batsmen, but with the gradual democratisation of British society liberal and left-leaning writers began to address this rhetorical imbalance by aestheticising bowlers. John Arlott, active on the left wing of the British Liberal Party for a

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[22] George Meredith, *The Adventures of Harry Richmond* (London: Constable, 1914), 660.

[23] Neville Cardus, *Good Days* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1934), 89–90.

Fig. i.1 A.C. MacLaren. Source: *The David Frith Collection.*

Fig. i.2 Maurice Tate. Source: *The David Frith Collection.*

number of years, retrospectively described one of his own boyhood idols, the Sussex and England fast bowler, Maurice Tate, in this way:

> You would hardly have called Maurice Tate's physique graceful, yet his bowling action remains – and not only for me – as lovely a piece of movement as even cricket has ever produced. He had strong, but sloping shoulders; a deep chest, fairly long arms and – essential to the pace bowler – broad feet to take the jolt of the delivery stride and wide hips to cushion it. His run-in, eight accelerating and lengthening strides, had a hint of scramble about it at the beginning, but, by the eighth stride and well before his final leap, it seemed as if his limbs were gathered together in one glorious, wheeling unity. He hoisted his left arm until it was pointing straight upwards, while his right hand, holding the ball, seemed to counter-poise it at the opposite pole. Meanwhile, his body, edgewise on to the batsman, had swung its weight back on to the right foot: his back curved so that, from the other end, you might see the side of his head jutting out, as it were, from behind his left arm. Then his bowling arm came over and his body turned; he released the ball at the top of his arm swing, with a full flick of the wrist and then plunged through, body bending into that earth-tearing, final stride and pulling away to the off side.[24]

Earlier in the essay Arlott had stressed the physical dangers posed to batsmen by Tate's bowling ('The ball lifted like a rocketing partridge about the knuckles – and even the chest – of Harry Makepeace.'[25]), but here he focuses on the elegant biomechanics of Tate's bowling action and on the way that its different elements form an aesthetic unity. The passage was later respectfully quoted in C.L.R. James's masterpiece on cricket and colonialism, *Beyond a Boundary*, in order to advance a fully formulated Marxist aesthetic of cricket, an aesthetic that democratically embraced all aspects of the embodied performance of cricket: batting, bowling and fielding. As this book shows, the literary ascription of aesthetic value to cricket often has an inescapably political subtext.

Chapter one of this book is a broad overview of the emergence of cricket discourse. First, a number of the earliest written references to cricket are examined to suggest that cricket initially emerged into life as a discourse through its prohibition and censure. It is then shown 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 then shows that from about 1820, cricket began to undergo processes of literaturisation and aestheticisation. These processes are revealed to have been crucial elements in the middle-class appropriation of cricket. Finally, it shows that the construction of cricket's literary canon in the second half

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[24] John Arlott, 'Maurice Tate', in *Cricket Heroes*, John Kay, ed. (London: The Sportsman's Book Club, 1960), 98.

[25] Ibid., 95.

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 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 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 shown to have disturbed the English imaginary so closely associated with the literary cricket field. In chapter two the work of a number of influential cricket writers, anthologists, editors and historians are examined to suggest that the literaturisation of cricket was intensified during the period as the ideal 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. The chapter considers cricket's rare appearances in the more arcane recesses of literary modernism before examining examples of the explicitly political use of cricket imagery during the period.

Chapter three further develops the previous chapter's major themes by focusing on the work of Neville Cardus, a writer whose work forms the keystone of the sport's literary canon. By contextualising Cardus's writings, it is here argued that his and other cricket writing 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. This is structured around the analysis of a number of key texts and events. First, 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 imperial 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. Nevertheless, the second section considers representations of a number of colonial cricket tours, seeing them as important events that frequently gave way to a sometimes-troubled dialogue concerning English national identity and the stability of empire. Following this, the third section analyses representations of a great colonial cricketer, the Indian, Prince Kumar Shri Ranjitsinhji – a figure who was an important mediator of empire as a cricketer, as text and as writer. 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 and, by

extension, metropolitan culture more generally. Finally, the chapter concludes with an analysis of the discourses surrounding the notorious 'Bodyline' Test series in 1932–33, an 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 juxtaposes C.L.R. James's political cricket aesthetic with the canon of English cricket literature, and particularly the influential contemporaneous writings of Neville Cardus. It begins by examining early representations of West Indies cricket, including those of Cardus, before discussing the hitherto unexplored inter-textual relationship between James and this most resoundingly canonical writer. 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 aesthetic 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. The chapter concludes with a critique of James's ultimately problematic, trans-historical aesthetic, 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.

Chapter six briefly considers two developments in the discourse and practice of cricket that occurred in the 1970s and 1980s: the emergence of a Caribbean tradition of cricket verse (here examined through a discussion of poetry by Faustin Charles) and the controversial 'Packer Affair' of the late 1970s. After some concluding remarks there is an extensive bibliography, which, it is hoped, may be of interest and use to other students of cricket and its literature.