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Marxism, colonialism and cricket: C.L.R. James' Beyond a boundary. Edited by David Featherstone, Christopher Gair, Christian Hogsbjerg and Andrew Smith; Duke University Press; London and Durham; 2018; ISBN 9781478001478 (paperback); pp.295.

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I first read *Beyond a boundary* in 2007, while compiling the literature review of my PhD thesis. I am not a Jamesian scholar. Indeed, I read the book, largely out of obligation, in that all the contemporary authors I was reading were making reference to it. At the time, I dare say that I neither understood fully what I was reading, nor its reach and significance. Nevertheless, I did read *Beyond a boundary* with fascination; fascination for the way James effortlessly weaved together discussions of 'race', Empire, post/colonialism, politics, Black cultural resistance, philosophy, literature, and art with cricket. I'll confess, it was the cricket I was fundamentally interested in at that time, but James, like so many others, encouraged me to think of cricket, not as sport *per se* – *What do they know of cricket who only cricket know?* – but rather as a phenomena rooted in history, politics and above all, power and inequality.

There is a long and large canon of literature which attempts to unpack James's writing in general and *Beyond a Boundary* specifically. This collection of essays was curated to mark 50 years since the publication of *Beyond a Boundary* and represents a thorough and nuanced interrogation of James's work. It consists of 15 chapters, including a substantial introduction from the editors. It is structured around four parts, variously examining the relationship between cricket, Empire and the Caribbean (Part I), politics of representation (Part II), art, history and culture (Part III), and a final section, entitled 'Reflections', which offers some personal analyses of the importance of *Beyond a Boundary* to contemporary Caribbean life (and cricket). While diverse, each chapter offers up a fairly consistent narrative, which captures well James's journey from 'seeming political and racial innocence ... into full-blown anticolonial cricketing and Marxist maturity' (Westall, p.177), while also reflecting a certain unease about James's politics and identity, as both an anticolonial activist *and* British sympathiser.

There is not space to describe the content of each chapter. Instead, and given that many of the themes herein are fairly well articulated and accepted elsewhere, I have chosen to focus my attention on three chapters I found especially interesting and original. The first, 'The boundaries of publication' by Roy McCree traces the publication journey for *Beyond a Boundary* through personal letters and correspondence between James and various editors/publishers. It is a fascinating chapter, which captures well the deeply transformative journey James was on, and his desperation to get the book published in the face of rejection. Secondly, I commend Anima Adjepong for her chapter, 'Reading the absence/presence of women in *Beyond a Boundary*' for laying bare some of the contradictions in James's politics. Here, Adjepong refers to how James 'does not maintain a consistently progressive position on women' (p.123) revealing 'an ambivalent relationship to the "women question".' (ibid.). She refers to how James uses the collective monika of 'we' throughout the text, thus failing to distinguish between the experiences of men, women or otherwise. Finally, I especially enjoyed 'My journey to James' by Sir Hilary Beckles. I confess to being drawn to Beckles, initially due to his references to playing cricket in Barnsley (my home town), but the main contribution of Beckles' chapter is his call for writers to think 'Beyond James' and to go 'Beyond' *Beyond a Boundary*. Here, Beckles is rightly arguing that *Beyond a Boundary* was from a particular time, and arguably the time is now to assess how it has influenced contemporary cricket, politics and culture. In finishing his chapter, he asks, 'After C.L.R. James, then what? ... There remains much to be said and written' (p.253). Indeed.

I enjoyed this book immensely. I have indulged in reading it cover to cover; revisiting certain chapters and ideas, seeking clarity as my mind became cloudy. The latter point should not be understated because this is a long, intense and challenging read. As much as I would advocate that all students of sport should engage with literature on race, Empire and post/colonialism (the same is also true that students in these other fields should not forget about sport), this is not a book for undergraduate students. It's primary audience, both because of the way it is written and the ideas it seeks to extrapolate and interrogate, is postgraduate researchers and existing academics.

Putting *Beyond a Boundary* at the core, this book epitomises the interdisciplinary application of James to fields as diverse as sport, sociology, cultural studies, history, literature and the arts. This necessarily interdisciplinary approach is both meat and poison in that, though clearly showcasing the numerous applications of *Beyond a Boundary*, presents a significant editorial challenge in pulling together sometimes fairly disparate contributions into a coherent whole. In my view, the editors should be commended for this. Nevertheless, in spite of all the additional accolades bestowed on C.L.R. James and *Beyond a Boundary*, for me, the most inspiring contribution of this book, and indeed, any book which centralises it, is in how sport has been elevated to being worthy of critical study. Indeed, as James himself reflected:

A professor of political science publically bewailed that a man of my known political interests should believe cricket had ethical and social values. I had no wish to answer. I was just sorry for the guy. (James 2005[1963]: 241)

References

James, C.L.R. (2005[1963]). *Beyond a boundary*. London: Yellow Jersey Press.