



Cricket, Literature and Culture: Symbolising the Nation, Destabilising Empire

Anthony Bateman

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In his important contribution to the growing field of sports literature, Anthony Bateman traces the relationship between literary representations of cricket and Anglo-British national identity from 1850 to the mid 1980s. Examining newspaper accounts, instructional books, fiction, poetry, and the work of editors, anthologists, and historians, Bateman elaborates the ways in which a long tradition of literary discourse produced cricket's cultural status and meaning. His critique of writing about cricket leads to the rediscovery of little-known texts and the reinterpretation of well-known works by authors as diverse as Neville Cardus, James Joyce, the Great War poets, and C.L.R. James. Beginning with mid-eighteenth century accounts of cricket that provide essential background, Bateman examines the literary evolution of cricket writing against the backdrop of key historical moments such as the Great War, the 1926 General Strike, and the rise of Communism. Several case studies show that cricket simultaneously asserted English ideals and created anxiety about imperialism, while cricket's distinctively colonial aesthetic is highlighted through Bateman's examination of the discourse surrounding colonial cricket tours and cricketers like Prince Kumar Shri Ranjitsinhji of India and Sir Learie Constantine of Trinidad. Featuring an extensive bibliography, Bateman's book shows that, while the discourse surrounding cricket was key to its status as a symbol of nation and empire, the embodied practice of the sport served to destabilise its established cultural meaning in the colonial and postcolonial contexts.



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