

FOREWORD | Opening Up

DAVID FEATHERSTONE, CHRISTOPHER GAIR,
CHRISTIAN HØGSBJERG, AND ANDREW SMITH

Beyond a Boundary is that rarest of things: a serious book about popular culture, a book that reckons with the ways in which sporting practices can express political meanings and can act as the “muster points” of political struggle while also being shaped in themselves by the passions and divisions of the historical contexts in which people play and watch sports. Rarer still, perhaps, it is a serious book that has become profoundly popular, taken up not just by scholars or by the cricket cognoscenti but by audiences across the world. (The first translated version, to the best of our knowledge, has just been completed in Japan by Ted Motohashi, under the title *Kyokai wo Koete* [境界を越えて].) The enduring popularity of James’s book is, in that respect, both a testament to the lucidity of his writing and a vindication of his lifelong defense of the capacity for astute critical awareness on the part of ordinary readers. This volume brings together a collection of new essays and reflections on *Beyond a Boundary* by writers from the United Kingdom, the United States, and the Caribbean. In the wake of the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of the text, it provides the first collection of critical studies dedicated to James’s masterpiece. These essays acknowledge and celebrate James’s achievement, but they also recognize the truth of Stuart Hall’s injunction that to honor James means taking his ideas “seriously and debating them, extending them, quarrelling with them and making them live again” (Hall 1992: 3). In that respect they include critical questioning of—among other things—James’s treatment of gender, his historical analysis of crick-eting development, the representative qualities that he ascribed to leading players of the game, and the effects of James’s own background on his ideas and presumptions. We hope, in this respect, that they open up new ways to engage with and make use of *Beyond a Boundary* for the future.

This volume has its roots in a conference held at the University of Glasgow in 2013, timed to coincide with, and celebrate, the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of *Beyond a Boundary*. We received considerable financial support from a range of sources, which made the conference possible. In particular, we acknowledge the support of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)'s Centre on Dynamics of Ethnicity (ESRC Grant ES/K002198/1) and, at the University of Glasgow, the School of Critical Studies, the School of Social and Political Sciences, and the Human Geography Research Group. All sessions at the conference were filmed by the cooperative filmmaking group World Write, whose feature-length documentary on James, *Every Cook Can Govern: The Life, Impact and Works of C. L. R. James*, was released in 2016. Footage from the conference is available via World Write's online portal dedicated to James and his work (www.clrjames.uk). The site also includes the video record of a keynote address by Robert A. Hill that compellingly situates *Beyond a Boundary* in its historical and political context, as well as further keynote addresses by Wai Chee Dimock and Mike Brearley and a closing plenary discussion involving Selwyn Cudjoe, Clem Seecharan, and Selma James. The presence of the filmmakers at the conference was enabled by the support of the Glasgow University Knowledge Exchange Fund.

During the course of the writing of this volume a number of significant scholars and activists who contributed to our understanding of *Beyond a Boundary* and the wider politics of sporting and cultural practices in our world, died. By way of tribute we would just like to record their names here: Lionel Cliffe, both a pioneering political economist of Africa and an anti-racist campaigner in Yorkshire cricket; Stuart Hall, whose work engaged so persistently and originally with conjectures and intersections which were of interest to James; Darcus Howe, James's great-nephew and himself a theorist, activist, and West Indian cricket fan; Mike Marqusee, whose penetrating readings of the politics of contemporary cricket are so much in the spirit of James himself; Frank Rosengarten, whose critical study of James remains necessary reading for anyone interested in understanding his work. Finally, we owe a debt of thanks to all of those who attended the conference in Glasgow and whose papers and other contributions made it such a stimulating event, as well as to the many students and administrative staff who worked very hard, behind the scenes, to make sure that things ran smoothly.