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Umpire, Empire: Kamau Brathwaite, Athletic Education, and the Literature of Self-Rule

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Abstract: This article sheds light on a remarkably widespread trope in the literature of decolonization: the pivotal, political sports scene. It documents a shared experience of Victorian athletic education that persisted in colonial schools well into the twentieth century and explains how writers as varied as R. K. Narayan, Chinua Achebe, Tsitsi Dangarembga, and Derek Walcott turn to sports to understand the broader cultural contest over their work. In dramatic scenes from major decolonial texts, the article argues, local playing fields reveal the true parameters of the world's literary field. Whereas the academy characterizes this field using disciplinary terms such as comparative or world literature, and whereas scholars increasingly emphasize its cosmopolitan or global dimensions, this article builds on the athletic analogies of decolonial texts to propose that the literature of the last century is, instead, competitive and international. Strategizing for this international competition in the short story "Cricket" and the poem "Rites"—and following a playbook first drawn up by James Joyce's *Ulysses* and Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable*—Kamau Brathwaite fixates on the figure of the imperial umpire. To win his independence in an international league, Brathwaite takes the power of arbitration for himself, building his own explanatory system around his poetry and becoming a self-ruled referee.

Keywords: decolonization, international sports, world literature, colonial education, referee

In the course of defining "nation language" in "History of the Voice," Kamau Brathwaite illustrates the forces working against an original Caribbean literary style by looking back at the writing exercises used in local schools. He cites two versions of an essay assignment: the first, a phrase assigned by an "educational system" designed to "carry the contours of an English heritage" (262); the second, a creative child's attempt at a "creole adaptation" (263), "to have both cultures at the same time" (264):

1. "The snow was falling on the playing fields of Shropshire" (263), and
2. "The snow was falling on the cane-fields." (264)

Brathwaite's principal interest here is the incongruity of snow with the Caribbean landscape—a complementary anecdote for his famous aphorism "the hurricane does not roar in pentameter" (265)—but the assignment also reveals another incongruity in the colonial syllabus. In reality, it was not the snow that threatened to overtake the landscape but the playing fields. The particular "English heritage" at the heart of the essay assignment is the union of Victorian sports and Victorian literature, typified by the snowy sporting verses of A. E. Housman's *A Shropshire Lad* (1896). Along with the tradition of "Shakespeare, George Eliot, [and] Jane Austen" that dominated the colonial curriculum (Brathwaite, "History" 262), the common ground between the islands and the empire was—same as today—the cricket field or the football pitch. The customs of Victorian athletic education, long ago dethroned at home, survived and thrived well into the twentieth century across an international system of colonial schools. As Brathwaite recalls, his own Harrison College prided itself on "turning out good little Etonians" (4) as late as the 1990s by juxtaposing the following lessons: "The playing fields of Eton. The Charge of the Light Brigade. Waterloo. Imperialism" ("Caliban's Guarden" 4). The British cultural empire was established in the classroom, but like Waterloo, it was also won on the playing fields—whether those of Eton, Shropshire, or Bridgetown. It was up to the rebel writer to change the field of play from cricket to cane.

The endurance of Victorian athletic education outside England is borne out time and time again in the memoirs and *Bildungsromane* of

colonial Anglophone writers, who remember how the English games ethic defined their schooldays. In his celebrated monograph on cricket and the Caribbean, *Beyond a Boundary*, C. L. R. James recognizes how English games and William Makepeace Thackeray's novels intertwined to teach him the code of British "restraint" (51). Advancing the thesis that "cricket and football were the greatest cultural influences in nineteenth-century Britain, leaving far behind Tennyson's poems, Beardsley's drawings and concerts of the Philharmonic Society" (86), James observes that, as a child in Trinidad, "[t]wo people lived in me: one, the rebel against all family and school discipline and order; the other, a Puritan who would have cut off a finger sooner than do anything contrary to the ethics of the game" (*Beyond a Boundary* 36). R. K. Narayan fictionalizes the same internal struggle in his 1935 novel *Swami and Friends*, in which the title character shifts his loyalties (in back-to-back chapters) between revolutionary rallies and his new Malgudi Cricket Club. In part a comical, colonial response to *Tom Brown's Schooldays*—the "sacred book" of Victorian athletic education, as identified by James (*Beyond a Boundary* 219)—*Swami and Friends* reveals how English sport disciplines the rebellious student in South India not just as a schoolchild but as a political subject. In Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988), set in the 1960s and 1970s in colonial Rhodesia, protagonist Tambudzai describes the same phenomenon for a new generation on a third continent. At her Sacred Heart mission school, alongside the "structures" of Latin, French, and Portuguese, Tambu succumbs to the "interesting rules and intricate scoring procedures" of basketball, tennis, and hockey (Dangarembga 199).

Because writers throughout the British Empire grew up with this shared experience of Victorian athletic education, scenes depicting English sport turn out to be pivotal in major works of the literature of decolonization. As I will demonstrate, sport carried special cultural and political significance not only for James, Narayan, Dangarembga, and Brathwaite, but also for James Joyce, Kazi Nazrul Islam, Mulk Raj Anand, and Chinua Achebe. Within their athletic educations, these writers had to contend with a veritable athletic literature, and they added to it in turn. In his extensive study of *Cricket, Literature and Culture* (a title

that needs no comma), Anthony Bateman explains that students from Trinidad to India consumed a century of "cricket discourse"—a canon featuring William Wordsworth, Lord Byron, William Blake, Thomas Hughes, Henry Newbolt, and Housman, alongside cricket journalists and commentators—as part of their literary integration into empire (126). Figuring out how to respond to this tradition was as fraught as playing the game of cricket itself. As Mark Kingwell argues, colonial writers and players were in a "double bind": "to beat the masters at their own chosen game" was "proof of submission (the natives have no identity of their own)," but to disregard the game was "proof of subordination (the natives are not even civilized)" (375). Per the terminology of cricket, these were not so much rules of play as they were imperious and incontrovertible laws.

So, while it may be clear from the shared imperial curriculum why writers and artists would turn to sport at the moment of decolonization, it is less clear how they might best choose to do so and which sports might be most relevant. The writers listed above refer to a range of options and attitudes about sports—pitting netball against basketball (Dangarembga 191), Gaelic sports against Anglophiles' "shoneen games" (Joyce, *Ulysses* 12.889–91), or Indian kushti wrestling against English field hockey (Anand 37). These rivalries between games offer writers a way to think about the bigger cultural contest at hand, between pre-colonial, indigenous materials and Anglo-European imports—or, in broader terms, between the aesthetic programs of nationalism and imperialism. With the benefit of hindsight, Simon Gikandi offers a way to resolve these athletic and artistic tensions in *Maps of Englishness*. He considers what happened to "the school, Shakespeare, and cricket" after independence (ix), arguing that postcolonial cricket, like postcolonial literature, "worked its way out of this ambivalence [toward the master culture of Englishness]" by transforming the game with a "mode of play and ritual that has been redefined by Indian and West Indian players well beyond its original configuration" (11).[1] For Gikandi, this "radical reinvention of the terms of play" (11) is nothing less than one of "the true marks of postcoloniality" (14). I am interested in the transitional period *before* postcoloniality, during the process of "reinvention." These

are the decades—the uneven, decolonial decades—when major writers, pondering the futures of their nascent national cultures, made Gikandi's athletic analogy for themselves.[2] Taking a pointed interest in the "terms of play," these writers turn to colonial playing fields to make sense of the world's literary field.

As theorists of that same field, we would do well to take this recurring athletic analogy seriously. While the academy has attempted to reckon with the range of decolonial and postcolonial literatures through the study of comparative literature and world literature, it is worth noting how many decolonial and postcolonial writers think of their work in sporting terms as competitive literature and international literature. This is the principle that connects such far-flung poets as Nicolas Guillén and Wole Soyinka, who, shortly after winning the 1954 Stalin Peace Prize and the 1986 Nobel Prize for Literature (respectively), compared themselves in verse to world-champion boxers. In these poems, they are fellow victors of "gold / And glory" (Soyinka 185) who walk tall "next to the Yankees and the Frenchman" (Guillén 49).[3] While the basic idea of a competitive literary field is shared among several major theorists of world literature and the sociology of culture—such as Pierre Bourdieu, Pascale Casanova, and James English, all of whom use ludic or athletic analogies for literature's "Great Game"—those theorists almost always frame the competition in economic terms, prioritizing the vocabulary of literary capital over political alternatives.[4] This is part of a broader critical trend: of the many adjectival phrases we use to describe the "world" in "world literature," ranging from the cynically descriptive to the aspirational or revisionary—the world-system (Immanuel Wallerstein), the global (Arjun Appadurai, Alexander Beecroft), the supranational (Aamir Mufti), the cosmopolitan (Kwame Anthony Appiah), the transnational (Homi K. Bhabha), the planetary (Gayatri Spivak)—each term generally attempts, in its own way, to erase political borders. To be sure, the long twentieth century and its literature are marked by economic globalization and transnational migration, but they are equally marked by world war, totalitarianism, treaty blocs, leagues of nations, independence movements, and, yes, even international sport: histories that confirm the continued power of national boundaries and national cultures.

The last century has been one of internationalism as much as one of globalization, and therefore a period of international literature as much as a period of global literature. We should recover the "I.E." in *ARIEL* as more than incidental to the acronym. "International English" denotes a different structure for the field of English-language literature than "Global Anglophone," and this is the structure that many decolonial and postcolonial English-language writers recognize and reflect upon. Even writers who become literary world champions know that they continue to compete under a national flag. This concept of literary internationalism, so prevalent in decolonial literature and athletic literature, is hardly absent from the body of criticism referenced above, but it is generally latent. Among the critics mentioned, the reality of literary borders and the use of the term "international" recur as countercurrents, sometimes as concessions amid larger arguments but also as part of descriptivist commitments to the *realpolitik* of world literature. Even as Mufti sets out to identify the "supranational role and presence of English" in world literature (149) and the hemispheric logic of "Orientalism-Anglicism" (33), for example, one of his central goals is also to recognize "that *world literature has functioned from the very beginning as a border regime* . . . rather than as a set of literary relations beyond or without borders" (9; emphasis in original). In her essay "Literature as a World," Casanova elides two prefixes in the phrase "a trans- or international mode of thought" (78), but she persists in using the second one, promoting the study of "inter-national literary power relations" (79) and the category of "international writers" (81). In the process of defining "global literature," Beecroft recognizes that "global literatures continue to represent themselves as systems of national literatures" and observes that "[t]hey are in that sense inter-national" (98).[5] One of my aims is to bring this concept of "inter-national" literature to the fore. The utility of "internationalism" as a concept is that it captures, internally—in the space between the "inter" and the "national"—the tensions within the world literature debate or between the "Global" and the "Anglophone." In this article, I use "international" not as a normative ideal but as a descriptive term for how writers, artists, and athletes are inevitably situated in the world.[6]

Like international sport, international literature bears only the illusion of fairness.[7] Whereas Guillén and Soyinka, fixating on the figure of the world champion in 1954 and 1986, momentarily embrace the possibility of victory in an integrated international league, writers going through the throes of decolonization understand the contests of international sport and literature to be inherently uneven, played by rules that are out of date and far from impartial. Their focus falls instead, therefore, on the umpire. If, after all, the global success of English sport was a legacy of imperial educational discipline and Victorian cultural standards, the person on the field with the most symbolic power was not the skillful player but the guardian of the rules. The umpire was, effectively, the schoolmaster of the playing field or its governor-general. When Joyce, Anand, and Brathwaite put this authority figure in their narratives, he embodies an array of other authority figures as well, including God, the King of England, the father, the sepoy, and the corrupt official—until, finally, he stands in for the British imperium itself, when Brathwaite makes the inevitable and summative pun between "umpire" and "empire" ("Rites" 202). These writers are invested in sport and its referees not merely because they want to track down the cultural authorities who write and enforce the rules but because they want to usurp those powers. As Bourdieu writes, in literary and artistic fields "the rules of the game are being played for in the playing of the game" (226): new contenders can change the terms of the contest. The best literary strategy for new competitors is to write their own rules as they play. Brathwaite, as both a playful writer and a prodigious essayist, puts his alternative games and alternative rules—pitted against the standards of English cricket and English poetry—into glossaries, recitations, revisions, section titles, and essays to set up an explanatory apparatus around his work. Perhaps paradoxically, his insistence on placing "nation language" at the center of this apparatus is what makes him an international victor: in part because nation language is really an "inter-nation language" (part-English and part-Barbadian) and in part because Brathwaite's descriptions of nation language tell foreigners how to read his poetry on his terms. By wresting power away from the umpire, Brathwaite practices decolonization on a personal scale—exercising, as it were, self-rule.

I. Decolonial Literature and Commonwealth Games

The culture of international sport has always been an imperial pedagogical culture. When Pierre de Coubertin created the modern Olympic Games at the end of the nineteenth century, his most immediate source of inspiration was not the ancient Panhellenic festival at Olympia; it was the athletic and aesthetic tradition of Thomas Arnold, Thomas Hughes, and John Ruskin, along with the existing "Wenlock Olympian Games" (events staged, since 1850, on the same Shropshire fields that Caribbean students would one day encounter in their school assignments).[8] Imagining the future international reach of his games, Coubertin was not shy about his debts to the English: in a 1912 essay titled "Sports and Colonization," Coubertin writes that "English sport has conquered the indigenous upper class" (7) as a "vigorous instrument of discipline" (9). Of his own ambitions, he remarks: "The British example is there. Well: we will go farther" ("Sports" 9). Returning to this theme in a bulletin for the International Bureau of Athletic Education in 1931, Coubertin makes the link between international sport and imperial pedagogy even clearer. Citing the success of the "Far-East Games," the "African Games," and the "Hindu Games" as part of the "'Kindergarten' of Olympism," he credits "*Pédagogie* sportive" with bringing "indigenous" and "primitive" races from a "semi-savage state" to that of the "ultra-civilized" (*Textes Choisis* 676–77).

This history is not lost on decolonial and postcolonial writers who, in some of their major works, scrutinize the Olympics (ancient and modern) as an instrument of cultural imperialism. It is no random chance that Achebe opens *Things Fall Apart* (1958) by describing pre-colonial, inter-village Igbo Games. Achebe's first assertion of a local, historical culture is a sporting contest to rival Homer's funeral games or the festival at Olympia, with Okonkwo and Amalinze competing not only with each other but (in literary terms) with Ajax and Odysseus. In *Omeros* (1990), Derek Walcott associates the presence of Olympic traditions in St. Lucia with the presence of Catholicism and British public-school rituals: the "village Olympiad" takes place on St. Peter's Day, and the winner's crown is inscribed with the Latin phrase "*victor ludorum*" (32). Dangarembga puts a fine point on the matter in *Nervous Conditions* when Tambu's

friend Maidei accuses her of being a traitor to her race and to the sport of netball by changing schools: "[H]ockey and tennis and swimming. That's what you'll be doing. With your Whites. Knowing you, the next thing we'll hear is that you've gone to the Olympics" (191). Perhaps the most thorough response of all, however, was that of W. B. Yeats, who helped organize an entire cultural program for the Irish Tailteann Games of 1924—a genuine alternative to Coubertin's Olympics. As unofficial cultural director for the first modern *Aonach Tailteann*—a festival organized in celebration of Irish independence, open only to athletes of Irish descent and barring most English sports—Yeats devised literary prizes, judged art competitions, and used the opening banquet to give a speech on national culture (Foster 263–67).[9]

As a tool of colonialism, international sport was also necessarily transformed by colonial players. Here I am adapting Gauri Viswanathan's argument about the history of English literary culture in *Masks of Conquest*: just as "the discipline of English came into its own in an age of colonialism" (2), the same can be said for the discipline of English sport. In fact, the two histories are intertwined. As the accounts of James, Brathwaite, Narayan, and Dangarembga make clear, the study of an English canon and the practice of English games in the colonies acted as twin pillars in "education for social and political control" (Viswanathan 3) while also giving shape to new institutions of sport and literature in England (Bateman 121). Andrew Smith makes these connections explicit, building on Bateman's work to argue that "the emergence and codification of [cricket] are . . . surprisingly analogous to the history of English Literature's disciplinary formalization" (104). The rules of cricket and the discipline of English were formed and formalized as part of the Victorian empire, in the exchange between domestic missions and colonial outposts. In the same way that the English began to worry, in Viswanathan's account, that their literature was teaching Indians to challenge authority and rise above their stations (143–44), sport generated similar possibilities and anxieties by training colonial subjects to compete against and defeat regimental squads. As Allen Guttmann argues in *Games and Empires*, it may be true that "[f]rom the British Isles, modern sports went forth to conquer the world" (2), but those same sports could

also "provide an organizational framework for a movement of national liberation" (181). Individual victories against English teams by the likes of the New Zealand All Blacks rugby team in 1905 and the Indian soccer club Mohun Bagan in 1911 gave rise to a recurring revolutionary myth that sporting upsets anticipate political independence (Guttmann 180; Chatterjee 318). Partha Chatterjee points to the history of soccer in colonial Bengal—where local clubs beat regiment squads by using their bare feet to their advantage with more "flexible movements"—as a real-life parable for Indians that demonstrated "the ability to prevail over a technologically superior opponent by sheer courage, skill, and cleverness" (320). The Mohammedan Sporting soccer team even inspired a victory poem by Kazi Nazrul Islam, who found in their footwork a call to action: "May the power of all of India rise from those very feet" (qtd. in Chatterjee 330).

At the height of the Irish Home Rule movement, the Indian *Swadeshi* movement, and the various post-war Caribbean independence movements, there was plenty of material for this genre of epinikian exuberance. Irish boxers like Jack Nonpareil Dempsey and Tom Sharkey claimed world titles in the 1890s; India dominated international field hockey in the late 1920s and early 1930s, going unbeaten at three straight Olympic Games; and in the 1960s, the West Indies fielded one of cricket's most famous and successful teams under the leadership of their first Black captain, Frank Worrell. However, when three major writers chose to take on these very sports in their landmark decolonial texts—Joyce in *Ulysses* (1922), Anand in *Untouchable* (1935), and Brathwaite in *The Arrivants* (1973)—each chose, instead, narratives of defeat snatched from the jaws of victory. Joyce begins by giving a sportswriter's treatment to an Irish boxing victory over a British soldier in the "Cyclops" episode, but he follows this up with a grudge match in the "Circe" episode when Private Carr (another soldier from the same barracks) flattens Stephen Dedalus. Anand has his protagonist, Bakha, glimpse the possibility of hockey heroics with an improbable goal, but immediately afterward his opponents attack him and a riot breaks up the game. And Brathwaite, recalling a test match from his youth, describes a West Indian innings at bat that inspires the crowd but falls

short of overwhelming the English side. These sporting scenes are not incidental moments within their respective works but intimately personal stories and important narrative turning points used to capture the struggle between national and imperial cultures over the direction of postcolonial literature. It is remarkable, then, that a crooked referee stands at the center of each episode.

Joyce is perhaps at his most discerning on the politics of empire when he is writing about sport. At any rate, he is certainly at his most discerning about the culture of sport when he is writing about empire. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) subtly tells the history of Victorian education and the rise of the Gaelic revival by recording the relative popularity of different games. Our first glimpse of the curriculum at Stephen's boarding school is a rugby match (Joyce 6), and Part I of *Portrait* ends with Stephen listening to the sounds of cricket bats (52). In Part V, however, when Stephen converses with Davin (the nephew of a co-founder of the Gaelic Athletic Association, or GAA), they're either discussing a hurling match or watching Gaelic handball (159, 177).

The "rebellion with hurleysticks" (177) that Stephen jokingly references toward the end of *Portrait* apparently fails to materialize in *Ulysses*: in "Nestor," Stephen is on the other side of the lectern at the colonial school, where wealthy Dalkey students recite John Milton and play field hockey.

Joyce's use of English and Irish sports as a synecdoche for a greater contest between Victorian and Gaelic cultures reaches its resolution in "Circe" when Stephen is forced into an imaginary ring with Private Carr. The surreal boxing match between the red and the green (*Ulysses* 15.4518–20) rallies two rival cultural mascots: Lord Tennyson (incarnating Stephen's previous joking references to "Lawn Tennyson" [3.492]) appears as "*gentleman poet in Union Jack blazer and cricket flannels, bareheaded, flowing bearded*" (15.4396–97; emphasis in original), while "the citizen" (returning from "Cyclops" as another co-founder of the GAA [12.880–82]) appears "*with a huge emerald muffler and shillelagh*" (15.4524; emphasis in original). Presiding over the bout is no greater authority than King Edward VII, summoned as the inventor of international "arbitration" (15.4436). Edward's opening dialogue—"Peace,

perfect peace. For identification, bucket in my hand. Cheerio, boys. . . . We have come here to witness a clean straight fight" (15.4458–63)—betrays him as the most partial of umpires, for whom "[w]e" is the royal "we" and whose identifying bucket makes him not so much a Freemason as a cornerman for one of the two fighters. It is no wonder that Stephen refuses the terms of the fight; he asserts that he has "no king" and no intention of dying for his country (15.4470). When Stephen is confronted with referees, he attempts to take away their power: in the "Nestor" episode, conversing under a portrait of "Albert Edward, Prince of Wales" (2.266) and hearing a referee's whistle, he promptly demotes God to a "shout in the street" (2.386); in "Circe," he shakes hands with "Edward the Seventh" in an imaginary boxing ring, then rejects the king and calls himself the "judge of impostors" (15.4490). The final trial should turn Stephen into the defendant, but he claims a place on the bench instead.

Though it is always dangerous to put too much trust in resemblances between Stephen Dedalus and Joyce, in this case Stephen's reaction is a telling reflection of Joyce's perspective on empire and revolution and their cultural demands on his art. The power in dispute is twofold: Edward VII, appearing as a referee, embodies not just the empire's political power but its soft power. Stephen and Joyce are not exactly political rebels, but they do resist English cultural imperialism. This is the power represented by "Lawn Tennyson"—or by "Lord Tennyson" in cricket flannels—combining Victorianism's globally popular sports with the period's pre-eminent poet laureate. *Ulysses* shares its title with one of Tennyson's best-known poems, but Joyce measures himself against Homer, not Alfred. Like Stephen, Joyce attempts to preside above and outside the cultural contest between English tradition and Irish revival. For Joyce to reach back to ancient Greece for a map of modern Ireland gives him the freedom not to submit himself to a particular cultural team.

If, for Joyce, the image of an imperial umpire is a hallucination, for Anand it is something far more personal: it is the image of his father, of his own earliest ambitions, and even of caste injustice. In his memoir *Pilpali Sahab* (1990), Anand remembers how, as a boy, he idolized his father's role as sepoy and field-hockey referee for the British regiment in

Peshawar: "I wanted to learn to be refree [*sic*] at hockey matches. . . . I wanted to speak Angrezi as fluently as he did to the sahabs" (316–17). As in Ireland, athletic training and the study of English were intertwined in India, in line with the disciplinary presence of the military while also in tension with local athletic traditions. After discovering the Indian sports of *kushti* and *kabaddi*, Anand committed himself to studying both English for British games and Hindustani for "Natu" games (Anand, *Pilpali Sahab* 210). Anand famously ascribes the form of his most well-known novel, *Untouchable*, to the influences of Joyce, Bloomsbury, and Gandhi ("On the Genesis of *Untouchable*" 133–35), but the origins of the plot go back to the hockey field. Among the many stories in *Pilpali Sahab* about Anand's friendship with a latrine sweeper named Bakha, the most dramatic and personal is an account of a local boys' match that placed them on the same hockey team. After Bakha scores three times, the opposing captain proclaims that "[a]ny goal scored by a sweeper is no goal!" (241) and a fight breaks out. When the young Anand is struck in the head with a stone, Bakha picks him up and carries him home, where Anand's mother scolds the sweeper for touching him. This dramatic childhood episode exposed Anand to the range of injustices that sweepers faced and brought him into literal contact with Bakha, the future protagonist of *Untouchable*.

Anand retells this scene nearly play-by-play near the end of his novel, but with two important changes. First, the game in *Untouchable* is now between the sons of two military camps: the 38th Dogras team—which consists of "mostly the poor sons of the Untouchables" (35–36) and other working-class children—and "the orthodox boys of the 31st Punjabis team" (113). Second, the young "babu's son" (i.e., Anand) is too young to play, so he volunteers to be the referee. When he is rebuffed, the regiments' sons—particularly on the "orthodox" Punjabi side—become the *de facto* referees of the match. This self-officiated contest between a low-caste team and a regimental team gives the game from Anand's childhood a new political meaning, particularly when the fight occurs. After Bakha scores and the goalkeeper for the Punjabi side strikes him, the Punjabi captain calls a belated "Foul!" only after the Dogras retaliate. In this fictional rendition, Anand describes a complete breakdown

of the British games ethic and the supposedly impartial arbitration that upholds it (115). Whether we see these players as future imperial servants or as a community of Indians, the game is rigged against Bakha and the young Anand, who are not allowed to become victors or arbiters themselves. The mature, authorial Anand, however, surpasses his childhood desires and those of the babu's son. Criticizing the hypocrisies of British order and the injustices of Hindu hierarchy in a single sporting scene, he becomes something more than a referee: not an enforcer but a reformer of rules.

As novels with a keen sense for the politics of colonial sport, *Ulysses* and *Untouchable*—perhaps *the* representative texts of European modernism and global modernism, respectively—assert their modernism in part by writing against Victorian rules and Victorian games. This helps explain the continued appeal of modernism for decolonial writers in different territories and decades whenever sport arises. One thinks of the opening anecdote in Mary Lou Emery's *Modernism, the Visual, and Caribbean Literature* (2007), which finds James holding up a picture of Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* while watching a cricket match (1). As Emery recognizes, the question is how to "*see through* colonial imitation" (101; emphasis in original) which James does by turning to "a freer, self-reflexive, and politically charged modernist aesthetic" (101). If imperial sports and revival sports represent the opposing pressures put on decolonial writers to conform to either metropolitan or nationalist aesthetics, modernism offers the possibility of autonomy. As Peter Kalliney argues with regard to African literature of the 1950s and 1960s, decolonial writers often adopt the principles of modernist aesthetic autonomy while remaining politically engaged (334–35): in the context of decolonization and the Cold War, that autonomy "could be adapted to assert political freedoms" (335) or "to reject ideological binaries" (337). The Nighttown brawl from *Ulysses* and the field-hockey match from *Untouchable* acknowledge these binaries, but direct their criticisms in multiple directions. In defiance of the Victorian school's games ethic, in which "the subject is taught that sport is an aesthetic activity divorced from the realities of race and class" (Gikandi, *Writing in Limbo* 5), these texts dwell on those realities, exposing the false promise of the upset,

the significance of defeat, and the power of the referee in both political and artistic terms. In so doing, they prepare the way for the likes of James and Brathwaite, who find themselves even closer to the culture of sport and recognize in modernism the first attempts at a "colonial breakthrough" (Brathwaite, "Jazz and the West Indian Novel" 73).

If the modernist serves as one model of critical, discerning neutrality, the cricket umpire serves as another. The title of "umpire" itself designates disinterest, derived from "*noumpere*": i.e., non-peer, non-equal, non-partisan ("Umpire"). The first Laws of Cricket legislate that the Umpire is the "sole Judge" and that "his Determination shall be absolute" (*The Original Laws of Cricket* 59). Since 1947, the Laws have specified that umpires must control the game "with absolute impartiality" ("Laws of Cricket 1947 Code," Law 3). In *Cricket and the Law*, David Fraser explains that this principle extends so deep into the sport that the umpire must avoid any impulse to "level out" or "balance" calls, instead treating each individual moment and appeal with the same objectivity (29). Cricket, then, is particularly resistant to revolutionary metaphors: players who make "any show of dissent" are in "violation of the normative structures" of the game (Fraser 78), while umpires act under strict directives not to correct for past errors and injustices.

This creates a paradox for colonial players and commentators—a paradox for Brathwaite to solve. On the one hand, in practice, this kind of power, vested in foreign laws and a supreme viceroy, seems inherently unbalanced and unjust. On the other hand, in principle, the spirit of the law and a truly impartial umpire would be the basis for a level playing field. Barred from questioning the predetermined standards of the game, colonial subjects are left with the task of trying to uphold these standards—either ironically or in good faith. Kingwell argues for the former, proposing that the most effective colonial strategy is "an ironic maintenance" of cricket's principles of civility—"just those values that the ruling classes profess to admire"—to expose how "the masters" fail by comparison to live up to them (380). Smith, less cynically, suggests that the spirit of cricket is worth defending for its own sake. He observes that James stands up for this spirit for the same reason that Bourdieu stands up for the "intention of autonomy": because these standards of

neutrality, when exercised properly, are the pre-conditions for disinterested critique (Smith 107). Brathwaite, I argue, has it both ways: his solution to the problem of the umpire's power is to reveal and replace it. Exposing the "empire" under the *noumpere*'s new clothes, he plays on cricket's traditional vocabulary with an ironic flourish, opening to ridicule a principle of neutrality that is itself proprietary. But this is also a coup: directing his judgments in multiple directions, Brathwaite becomes the new figure of impartial authority. Across his poetry and his criticism, Brathwaite is a self-ruled referee, giving outs to others while writing new laws for himself.

II. Brathwaite and the Empire's Hand

When Brathwaite burst onto the international literary scene in 1967—a year after the Barbados Independence Act—he came out with more than a book of poetry. In the same year that he published *Rights of Passage* (the first volume of *The Arrivants*), Brathwaite also published an essay that revealed his project's origins and a short story that foretold a piece of its future. The essay, "Jazz and the West Indian Novel," issued in three installments in the Barbados literary magazine *BIM*, puts the problem of "the playing fields of Shropshire" and "good little Etonians" in explicit terms: "I'm trying to outline an alternative to the English Romantic/Victorian cultural tradition which still operates among and on us" (72–73). Even then, according to Brathwaite, "the battle rage[d]" between the "Romantic/Victorian virtues of the 'head'" and a "belly-centered" alternative tradition: the "deep rhythmical and formal influence of Africa" (74) that underlies *The Arrivants*. That Brathwaite understands the enduring presence of Victorian culture in terms of intercontinental competition explains the subject of his short story, "Cricket," published that same year in Andrew Salkey's *Caribbean Prose: An Anthology for Secondary Schools.* This story is the first version of Brathwaite's poem "Rites," which Brathwaite published two years later in the final volume of *The Arrivants*. Within Salkey's anthology, Brathwaite's story finds itself appropriately sharing space with an excerpted chapter from James' *Beyond a Boundary*. As part of Salkey's new syllabus for Caribbean students, James' reprinted essay and Brathwaite's original story take on

the same sporting topic to contend in their own ways with the legacies of Victorian athletic education and the international contest over the Caribbean's cultural future.

Though Brathwaite disguises "Cricket" as a dialogue among fictional Barbados fans, he relies, like James, on memories from his youth, and he singles out details that speak to the cultural and political significance of the game. Gordon Rohlehr and Claire Westall identify the cricket match at the center of the story as the First Test at Kensington Oval in Bridgetown between the West Indies and England in 1948. Brathwaite, age seventeen, had helped with scorekeeping.[10] The innings that Brathwaite recounts was an auspicious one for the West Indies—the team was batting well, and would go on to draw the match and win the series—but Brathwaite presents the action instead as a rise and fall, changing details such that the innings starts with promise and ends in disappointment (Westall, "What Should We Know" 216).[11] Using the voice of a Bridgetown tailor, Brathwaite also bookends the piece with descriptions of local cricketers who play on Brownes Beach. These alterations and additions to the 1948 match, along with the guiding voice of the tailor in his shop, allow Brathwaite to focus on the local resonances of international sport: this is a story primarily about Caribbean customs, fandom, and politics. At the same time, by invoking the historical visit from the fabled Marylebone Cricket Club—the "M.C.C.," home of Lord's Cricket Ground and keeper of the Laws of Cricket—Brathwaite also addresses the continuing imperial presence of Victorian culture as an overbearing opponent, on the field and on the page. As Rohlehr writes, "[f]or the colonizer the crucial question in politics, cricket or art was whether the Blacks could or would maintain the 'traditions and standards of the game'" (228). Literature itself is very much part of that game.

Brathwaite's unmistakable literary rival in this game is Newbolt and his "Vitaï Lampada" (1897). Perhaps Britain's most famous cricket poem, "Vitaï Lampada" epitomizes—more explicitly than Housman's "To an Athlete Dying Young" (*A Shropshire Lad* 26–27)—how Victorian England conflated athletic education with imperial military values. Newbolt's poem begins on a cricket field at a boarding school in Bristol and moves to the deserts of Sudan, where schoolboys learn to "Play

up! play up! and play the game!" (a repeated refrain: 287–88), whether going in to make up ten runs at Clifton College Close or rallying against Mahdist forces at the Battle of Abu Klea.[12] Brathwaite—writing for Salkey's secondary-school students in the Caribbean instead of public-school boys in England—replaces the "breathless hush in the Close to-night" with "de silence that suck in it breath at de Oval," a distant homeland ("And England's far" [Newbolt 287]) with visiting foreigners ("all de way out from Ingland!" ["Cricket" 63]), and the analogy of imperial duty ("This they all with a joyful mind / Bear through life like a torch in flame" [Newbolt 288]) with that of colonial revolution ("All over de ground you could see fellers shakin' hands . . . as if it was them had the power" ["Cricket" 63]). He also comes up with an alternative refrain, far more cynical than Newbolt's. Whereas Newbolt (both as a poet and an eventual contributor to the War Propaganda Bureau during World War I) exhorts Britain's youth to "Play up!" in the face of disaster, Brathwaite's tailor laments that when the going gets tough "you can't find a man to hold up de side" ("Cricket" 62, 64, 66). As these comparisons suggest, Brathwaite offers less of a direct response to Newbolt than a distinct alternative: "Cricket" is not a piece of rhetorical counter-propaganda but a whimsical, vocalized, ironizing take on the myths surrounding sport, designed to dismantle both the Victorian claims on the game as well as the false hopes it inspires in Caribbean fans.

This all comes together when Brathwaite's spectators turn on the umpire. For context, in James' contribution to *Caribbean Prose*, the essayist remarks twice on the importance of umpires as part of his disciplinary training. On the cricket field, James recalls, "We were a motley crew. . . . Yet rapidly we learned to obey the umpire's decision without question" ("Two People" 17). Reading cricket literature and playing the sport begin to shape James personally: "I had acquired a discipline for which the only name is Puritan. . . . I never argued with the umpire" (19). But by the 1960s, attitudes had changed. When James famously appealed for Frank Worrell to be made the first Black captain of the West Indies team, it was in response to a riot at Queen's Park over a disputed call. In his letter to the Queen's Park Cricket Club, James wrote, "The public is not satisfied that the umpires appointed in Trinidad carry

out their duty with the impartiality that they should. They have felt this for years" (qtd. in *Beyond a Boundary* 326). In "Cricket," Brathwaite reveals similar suspicions about referees on his own island. As the West Indies' batting streak begins to fall apart, the crowd accuses the English bowler of "peltin'"[13] and the umpire of taking bribes:

> You int see that the umpire buy out a'ready! You t'ink that the MCC come over here, all de way from they Lords an' Buckin'ham Palace where I hear they got the Ashes hide 'way; you think they gwine come all de way over here an' let some poor-tail small-islander side throw stick in de pooch o' de very game they invent?
>
> . . . de umpire buy-out, I tell you! If they cahn win by fair means, they got win we by foul. (66)

The apparent satirical target of this passage is the speaker himself: the over-zealous fan, the sore loser. But the fan's anxiety that the game is rigged in favor of the inventors and arbiters of the rules resembles Brathwaite's own literary anxieties—that an ongoing "Romantic/ Victorian" tradition continues to overpower colonial and folk underdogs. The aura of Lord's or Buckingham Palace is the same as that of "the playing fields of Shropshire," pentameter, or the Victorian novel. If one's rivals—artistic, political, or athletic—are the custodians of the "Laws," then the game is inherently unfair. Teachers, officials, and umpires are all suspect.

In 1969, Brathwaite adapted the story "Cricket" into the poem "Rites," and in the process condensed the entire conversation around corrupt umpires into a single pun, turning "umpire" into "empire."[14] Omitting the showdown between West Indies batsman John Lucas and English bowler Jim Laker that led to the controversy in the original story, Brathwaite instead writes this empire/umpire pun twice into Clyde Walcott's turn at bat. Revising his parody of Newbolt's "Vitaï Lampada," which sets the scene with "a breathless hush in the Close" (287), Brathwaite describes the silence falling over the Oval in more comic terms: "Mister man . . . could'a hear / if de empire fart" (Brathwaite 202). Walcott has just missed the ball, but as he continues

batting, the chance to embarrass the empire remains. Then the next bowl comes:

> an' Clyde swing de bat but de bat miss
> de ball an' de ball hit he pad
>
> an' he pad went *biff*
> like you beatin' bed
> an' de empire han' stick
>
> in de air
> like Francis who dead
> an' de bess o' we batsmen out. (202–03; emphasis in original)

Relative to "Cricket," Brathwaite cuts out a description of "de whole o' de MCC side in the air" ("Cricket" 65) when the ball hits the pad, he re-writes "a man who dead" (65) as "Francis who dead" ("Rites" 203), and (most importantly) he turns "de umpire hand" ("Cricket" 65) into "de empire han'" ("Rites" 202). Removing the aggressive appeal of the jumping English players—"wid a loud HOWZATT like they want to fight" ("Cricket" 65)—Brathwaite puts all responsibility for the fatal call in the solitary raised hand. In sum, Brathwaite trades play-by-play and post-game analysis for political allegory, dropping the context of player influence and fan suspicion in favor of the simple image of an imperial umpire. That the "empire's" hand now resembles a Christian relic—the arm of St. Francis Xavier, known as Apostle of the Indies[15]—adds to the symbolic, historical sting of colonial defeat.

III. Nation Language and International Limbo

"Rites" is a poem about defeat in athletic and political terms—about the fallibility of cricket heroes and cricket fans or of local leaders and their constituents—but it is also a victory lap in artistic terms.[16] Throughout *The Arrivants*, Brathwaite presents himself as a poet who has broken free from his imperial education, already assured in his use of nation language and his newfound home-field advantage. Nearly each poem in each section and book showcases the sounds of a distinctive local Caribbean English set against the visual setting of African and

Caribbean landscapes, with few signs of snowscapes or imperial pedagogy more broadly. When Brathwaite needs to illustrate an alternative to Shakespeare's pentameter in "History of the Voice," he quotes his own Kaiso rhythms from "Calypso," a poem in *Rights of Passage* that locates the reader in "islands ruled by sugar cane" (*The Arrivants* 48). By returning to "Cricket" in the third volume of the trilogy with "Rites," Brathwaite backtracks a bit, recognizing how he got to this point. The references in "Rites" to the M.C.C., to the umpire/empire, and to Newbolt, juxtaposed with descriptions of local crowds at Brownes Beach and the Kensington Oval, capture the internal tension that Brathwaite and James remember from their upbringings: between snow scenes and cane fields or between "English literature and cricket, and the realism of West Indian life" (James, *Beyond a Boundary* 27). Brathwaite's revision from short story to poem makes possible a (near) rhyme between "de MCC, man" and "from Inglan" ("Rites" 199), linking up two English titles by way of a typical Caribbean sentence tag.[17] The very act of recomposing the short story "Cricket" as a cricket poem treads on English turf, adding new sights and sounds to a tradition of Romantic pastorals and Victorian slogans in the idiom of a Bridgetown tailor.

"Rites," in fact, is one of the few poems in Brathwaite's trilogy that explicitly impersonates and identifies a speaking voice, and this voice acts as proof-of-concept for Brathwaite's critical writings. I return, here, to Brathwaite's search for "an alternative" to Romanticism and Victorianism, which he finds in the "'colonial' breakthrough already achieved by [T. S.] Eliot, [Ezra] Pound and Joyce" and in the "folk tradition" of the Caribbean (Brathwaite, "Jazz and the West Indian Novel" 73). Gikandi observes that, among the modernists Brathwaite mentions, he found inspiration in Eliot's work in particular, reading him as a New World poet whose success depended on his own folk sources: the creolity, jazz, and blues of his St. Louis origins (*Maps of Englishness* 158). In "History of the Voice," Brathwaite credits Eliot with introducing Caribbean poetry and literature to "the notion of the speaking voice, the conversational tone" (286). But when Brathwaite explains, in a footnote, that this "breakthrough" came from Eliot's actual recorded voice, he adds an unlikely second source of inspiration:

> Another influence must have been the voice of John Arlott, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) test cricket commentator, who stunned, amazed, and transported us with his natural "riddimic" and image-laden tropes in his revolutionary Hampshire burr, at a time when BBC meant Empire and Loyal Models and Our Master's voice, and cricket, especially against England, was the national sport—our solitary occasions for communal catharsis one way or the other. Not only was Arlott "good" (all our mimics tried to imitate him), but he subverted the establishment with the way he spoke and where: like Eliot, like jazz . . . (286n34; ellipsis in original)

The building blocks for "Cricket" and "Rites" are apparent on this page of the essay: the conversational tone of the narrative, the "riddims" of the tailor's speaking voice, and (most pertinent of all) the power of regional cricket commentary to chip away at monolithic imperial English. As Walcott writes of the "*victor ludorum*" crown in *Omeros*, "[t]he Latin syllables would drown / in the clapping dialect of the crowd" (32). If Arlott's voice could shake the foundations of "Empire," then perhaps a local Barbados voice could unseat England's literary, pedagogical, and cultural umpires.

Brathwaite nearly said as much when reciting "Rites" at Robin's Bookstore in Philadelphia in 1982. There, he prefaced the cricket poem by explicitly telling the crowd that he was moving on to "nation language[,] . . . the language of the people" ("A Game of Cricket"). In this instance, he argues—as Gikandi does in *Writing in Limbo* (11)—that West Indies cricket is a new form of the game, itself analogous to nation language and Caribbean poetry: "Cricket is much more complicated; it is an English game. But the way it is played in the Caribbean it is no longer English. It is again an erosion of the pentameter. Let us say that the English cricketers play cricket in the pentameter; we play it in the Kaiso, the Calypso. But above all, it is the only time that we can defeat the superpower" (Brathwaite, "A Game of Cricket"). In the service of an argument about his art—about pentameter, nation language, and poetic victories over standard English—Brathwaite compares his lyrical

stand against the Victorian canon to the Caribbean cricket victories of the 1960s. Perhaps Brathwaite even alludes, here, to the real outcome of the 1948 Test series: in the recitation that followed, Brathwaite stopped reading at the moment the fictional collapse begins—before Laker comes onto the field and bowls Clyde Walcott out—such that the poem ends on a more hopeful note. It seems almost as though Brathwaite's own success with Kaiso, Calypso, and nation language occasions a reassessment of the match and a revision of the poem.

But "Rites" remains, in print, suspicious of easy victories. For its readers, the question has always been how to reconcile the self-conscious triumph of nation language with the poem's narrative of national defeat. Mervyn Morris (for whom "Rites" is "a West Indian classic, our quintessential cricket poem") points out the contrast between the game's empowering rituals and the team's eventual collapse (127). For Nathaniel Mackey, the "'umpire/empire' rendering" (133) and other instances of "linguistic play" (134) elicit a history of "cultural domination" (135) without necessarily offering hope of future victory and liberation. As Rohlehr writes, the failed rally and the tailor's refrain allegorize "the general failure of both leaders and people in the Caribbean" to "sustain a prolonged and purposeful struggle against imperialism" (232). What is the effect of a poem combining, in this manner, defiant nation language and defeatist political allegory around a game of cricket? Westall devises at least one theory, interpreting the punning onomatopoeia and enjambment of "*prax!* / is" ("Rites" 200)—when Clyde Walcott's bat hits a four-run shot—as a subtle attempt to break apart the poetic and athletic imperative of political "praxis" ("Reading Brian Lara" 151). This seems to me a step in the right direction: this reading not only signals Brathwaite's caution at "heroic over-investment in Walcott and singular cricketing episodes," as Westall argues (151), but also his caution at heroic over-investment in any single poet or poem. As Brathwaite applies his critical eye to multiple targets, he refuses to put his "nation language" solely in service of praxis-minded "national literature." Brathwaite borrows from modernism not just its use of voices but its belief in authorial autonomy: he does not offer a political ruling except to assert his own freedom from outside rule.

Following previous "colonial" innovators, he is less interested in being a poet of national revolution than in joining an international effort to revolutionize English itself.

To the extent that "Rites" offers an artistic and political moral, it is more complicated than either Brathwaite's triumphalist preface at Robin's Bookstore or his defeatist refrain within the poem. Even if one could "fine a man to hole up de side" ("Rites" 198, 201, 203) among Caribbean leaders, true independence cannot be won in a foreign game. Brathwaite's position in this respect becomes clear when one considers the biggest difference between "Cricket" and "Rites": when he publishes the poem, Brathwaite cuts the original story's epilogue. In "Cricket," an alternative, optimistic statement—"Many a time I have seen him *savin'* the side" (61, 66; emphasis added)—not only opens the story (as in "Rites") but returns at the end. The ending of "Cricket" places hope in a beach cricketer, Bebe, who performs the ritual of dipping his bat in the sea, leaving "the tide's silver chains" behind as he returns to the sand (67). This conclusion suggests that cricket, played on local grounds according to local customs, might yet be able to "save" (as Brathwaite would have it), or free the Caribbean. When Brathwaite cuts this ending from "Rites," he leaves only the defeat of the prologue (when the tailor's team loses on the beach) and the corresponding negative refrain at the end ("you cahn fine a man"). The final image of "Rites" is not Bebe carrying his bat across the beach but the umpire/empire's raised hand silencing the crowd (203). In other words, Brathwaite dispenses with the myth of a local savior who plays the game his own way; he ends, instead, with the figure of the arbiter who controls the game. "Cricket," like the schoolchild completing the "creole adaptation" of the essay assignment, wants to have both cultures at once—playing cricket on the sand—whereas "Rites" recognizes the futility of trying to win at English games in the first place. In "Rites," Brathwaite would rather replace the umpire than identify himself with the batsman.

Failing that, Brathwaite has an alternative game to propose. "Rites" is contained within the section of *Islands* titled "Limbo." As Brathwaite explains in his glossary, limbo is not a sport in the European sense so much as it is a "dance": a dance that (purportedly) originated on the

narrow decks of slave ships and was transformed into night-club entertainment (*The Arrivants* 274). Brathwaite repeats this description in his essay "The African Presence in Caribbean Literature" and elaborates by citing Guyanese writer Wilson Harris, for whom limbo is many other things as well: a "gateway or threshold to a new world," "a kind of shared phantom *limb*," a dance performed often near the ground but also sometimes on stilts, and a rite involving drums and divine impersonation (qtd. in Brathwaite, "The African Presence" 89; emphasis in original). By placing the cricket-poem "Rites" beside the limbo song of "Caliban" and within the "Limbo" section,[18] Brathwaite guides his critics to these associations. Rohlehr argues that Brathwaite uses European and Caribbean definitions of limbo to scrutinize both cultures (206); Westall places the action of "Rites" in a "Limbo" moment of Caribbean history from which Brathwaite can assess decolonization ("What Should We Know" 211); and Gikandi, most famously, titles his study of modernism and Caribbean literature *Writing in Limbo*, contending that Brathwaite found in limbo "a metacode for New World writing in general" (14). By establishing his own rules for his poetry—across glossary entries, citations, essays, and lectures—and positioning them against the inherited poetic traditions of colonial schools, Brathwaite steers the critical conversation to a different game with different laws.

Insofar as limbo is still something of an alternative sport, Brathwaite's limbo is above all an act of agile evasion. Whereas the hopes of the crowd in "Rites" rest on batsmen, whose stick-work makes the people believe that "*they* wheelin' de willow" (Brathwaite 200; emphasis in original),[19] "Caliban" calls upon different rules and different stakes in its stick game: "*limbo / limbo like me* / stick is the whip / and the dark deck is slavery" (194; emphasis in original). While the batsmen of "Rites," taking hold of the colonizer's stick, fail at "savin' / the side" (197), "Caliban" ends with the speaker moving forward and upward, thinking in the final verses, "the music is saving me" (195). Rather than cursing in the language his master has taught him—as Shakespeare's Caliban does, or as the "little Etonian" in the colonial school might do—this new Caliban turns to a different form of expression. Brathwaite's poetry throughout *The Arrivants*—nimbly evading the confines of imperial English forms

and instead relying on Afro-Caribbean musicality as its "saving" grace—turns away from cricket and toward limbo. Limbo is an apt symbol for the decolonial poet's independence: the successful dancer is the one who goes untouched. For Brathwaite, the narrow space of limbo is no longer as fraught as the one he represents in "Caliban," between the whip and the deck, but it is a difficult crossing nevertheless: above the playing fields of Shropshire and below the umpire's hand.

Having managed a similarly difficult journey through geographical space, across the rhythms and traditions of three continents, Brathwaite's *Arrivants* has already become a classic text of contemporary world literature. But if one were to attempt to categorize the work among the many descriptors of world literature catalogued at the beginning of this essay, the task would prove appropriately elusive. Brathwaite's diasporic use of African and Afro-Caribbean rhythms might suggest the adjective "transnational"; his shifts between different registers of English might evoke the power of the "supranational"; his consecration by Oxford University Press and the Arts Council of Great Britain might confirm the cultural hierarchy of a "world republic" or the commercial hierarchy of a "world-system"; and his movements from city to city across the Atlantic (real or lyricized) might identify him as "cosmopolitan." Each of these terms captures an important dimension of Brathwaite's poetry, of decolonial literature, and of twentieth-century literature generally. But, of course, I am returning to this list of terms so as to return to my alternative proposal. After Brathwaite chose to call his signature style "nation language," chose to exhibit that style in a poem that pits Barbadian rhythms against a Victorian lyric predecessor, and chose to play out that lyrical contest through the story of a united West Indian team competing against a national English team, he invites the term "international" above all. Brathwaite is not naïve about the continued power of cultural referees, but he also believes in the possibility of artistic self-determination. In political terms: Brathwaite submits a new "nation language" to be legitimated by an international body—taking care not to submit himself *to* that body. In athletic terms: Brathwaite becomes a world champion by championing a national style—taking care to play by his own rules.

Notes

1 Bateman uses similar language to characterize how James "took up a position within the field of cricket discourse in order to *reconfigure* it radically" (195; emphasis added). As I will discuss, Brathwaite reconfigures all three parts of Gikandi's triad, "the school, Shakespeare, and cricket," across "History of the Voice," "Caliban," and "Rites."

2 Another major text on cricket and postcolonial culture is Appadurai's *Modernity at Large*, which devotes a chapter to the game in India. For Appadurai, the important political feature of cricket is that "it is now an instrument for mobilizing national sentiment in the service of transnational spectacles" (109). Writers like Brathwaite anticipate both Gikandi's idea that cricket inspires transformative play and Appadurai's idea that cricket captures international antagonism.

3 Guillén makes these comparisons explicit in his poem "Sports," but I recognize that I am making an interpretive leap with Soyinka's "Muhammad Ali at the Ringside, 1985." On the surface, "Ali at the Ringside" is an ode to a retired boxer, but I see it as reflecting back on the poet's own victories in the final stanza, when Soyinka treats his subject with the tropes of poetic immortality: "When kings were kings, and lords of rhyme and pace. / The enchantment is over but the spell remains" (Soyinka 185).

4 The very idea of a literary "field" comes from a work with a ludic metaphor as its title and premise—Bourdieu's *The Rules of Art*—but for Bourdieu, winning the literary "game" is a matter of "mastering its specific *capital*" (101; emphasis added). Casanova seems to promise different guiding analogies between her political title, *The World Republic of Letters*, and her recurring vocabulary of "rivalry" (4, 12, 35, 108, etc.), but for her, too, "the competition in which writers are engaged" is based on "literary capital" in a "literary economy" (13). English, in his study of modern prize-culture, acknowledges how much the competitive arts resemble "International Sport" (per the title of one of his chapters: 249–63), but his guiding logic in *The Economy of Prestige* is (as announced in the title) fundamentally economic. None of these writers ignores the political dimensions of the field, and Bourdieu even acknowledges the "reductionism" of "the economic theory of the field" (183), but that economic vocabulary nevertheless takes precedence.

5 Another, more complex instance is Bourdieu's call, in his postscript to *The Rules of Art*, for a new "*Internationale of intellectuals*" to overthrow the economic order of cultural production and restore artistic autonomy (344; emphasis in original). My use of the term "international," like Casanova's or Beecroft's, is not meant to evoke this history of socialist "Internationals." Still, it is worth recognizing that the successors of the "First International" are certainly part of the importance of "internationalism" as a term across the long twentieth century.

6 Vadde precedes me most of all, here, making the case that "the keyword[s] *internationalism*" and "modernist internationalism" continue to be useful for charac-

terizing twentieth-century Anglophone literature even after the "cosmopolitan cultural turn" (3) or in an era of "globalization talk" (30). I agree—with the one distinction that while Vadde takes "internationalism" to be the "unachievable" utopian ideal among these terms (4), I take it to be, instead, the more modestly descriptive term.

7 See Smith, quoting Bourdieu: "[C]ultural games . . . are not 'fair games'" (99).

8 On Coubertin's debt to these Victorian figures and events, see MacAloon pp. 51–53, 118–20, 123–24, and 147–50, and Young pp. 8–11, 24–29, and 62–92.

9 As Yeats' biographer Foster relates, Yeats' selections for and contributions to the cultural program at the Tailteann Games were not in line with the general aims of the Gaelic revival: "For WBY, the chief point was to honour great Irish artists, however controversial" (Foster 264). In this respect, Yeats clung to a sense of personal aesthetic autonomy, situated between national and imperial tastes, much like the other writers analyzed in this article. Among Yeats' provocative attempts "to nail his colours to the mast of avant-garde outspokenness" (Foster 263) was a speech in praise of Joyce, who was barred from prizes as an expatriate. Given the chance, Yeats would have given a Taliteann medal to *Ulysses* (Foster 267).

10 Brathwaite shared this detail with Westall after a lecture in 2006: see "What Should We Know" 216n27.

11 While Brathwaite has confirmed that he based his story on the First Test (see note 10), certain details seem to be drawn from other 1948 Tests: Frank Worrell and Johnny Wardle first appeared in the Second Test and Everton Weekes only passed fifty runs in the Fourth Test. As Westall notices, Brathwaite also changes the batting order to put more weight on Clyde Walcott's shoulders. The important (and odd) point about this connection to cricket history is that this is not an especially pivotal moment in the 1948 series, nor does it presage a failure of the West Indies team. Brathwaite twists a quite successful innings into a kind of defeat ("What Should We Know" 216). (In addition to citing Westall's explanation, I would like to thank Joshua Landy and Bernard Vere for helping work out these details.)

12 Newbolt makes reference to a celebrated boarding-school cricket ground ("the Close" at Clifton College) and an 1885 defeat for the British Army at the Battle of Abu Klea in the Sudan ("[t]he sand of the desert"). See Newbolt pp. 287, 457.

13 "Pelting" is a term used to imply that bowlers are cheating by bending their arms when they throw the ball. The crowd suspects that the umpire at this match has deliberately ignored an illegal motion.

14 I am not the first to make special note of this pun—though as far as I can tell no critic has pointed out the revision between "Cricket" and "Rites." Morris calls the "umpire/empire pun" characteristic of word-play in *The Arrivants* (128). Mackey writes that it "underscores the centrality of slavery, the plantation system and colonialism" in Caribbean history (134–35). And Westall argues that "power still lies with the seat of imperial (umpirial) authority" ("What Should

We Know" 223). What I find striking is that the pun on "empire" in "Rites" stands in for the much more complex protestations in "Cricket": the suspicion that the umpire has been bought out, that the MCC will not let a colonial team win, and that England continues to lay claim to the game it invented.

15 "Apostle of the Indies" is, of course, just one of Francis Xavier's titles—and "Indies" refers to the East Indies rather than the Caribbean. But I suspect, because of the relic and title, that this is still the "Francis" that Brathwaite has in mind.

16 Another layer to this contradiction is that the innings in "Rites" ought to be a harbinger of victory even in cricket terms, given the outcome of the Test series in 1948. See note 11.

17 In the short story "Cricket," rhymes do not fit the genre, and Brathwaite makes no special effort to make the two words sound alike. In the story, "Inglan" is spelled "Ingland" (63).

18 The poem "Caliban" precedes "Rites" by a few pages, and both appear in the second section of *Islands* (within *The Arrivants*) titled "Limbo." In "Caliban," Brathwaite makes explicit references to limbo dancing, as I describe in the next paragraph.

19 This is another change between "Cricket" and "Rites": the original line is "as if it was they who was makin' de strokes" ("Cricket" 63).

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