“WHAT SHOULD WE KNOW OF CRICKET WHO ONLY ENGLAND KNOW?”:
CRICKET AND ITS HEROES IN ENGLISH AND CARIBBEAN LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT
As the game of England and empire, cricket is a significant colonial and postcolonial cultural practice which has proven as important to anti-colonial modes of resistance, opposition and independence as its image of Englishness was to the hegemonizing project of British imperialism. Although the game has an immense literature of its own, little critical attention has been paid to its place in the field of literary studies. Consequently, taking its title and starting point from the interwoven questioning of Rudyard Kipling and C.L.R. James, this thesis explores cricket’s repeated presence in English and Caribbean literature as a symbol of interconnected national and imperial identities under constant renegotiation, concentrating specifically on the construction and problematization of the male cricket hero – real and/or fictional – from Tom Brown to Brian Lara. Organized around the territorial metaphor of the crease, Part One, ‘English Literature at the Imperial Crease 1850s-1950s’, offers two chapters which examine the place of cricket in the creation, imperial contextualization and post war decline of the English cricketing gentleman as a hero of the nation. Part Two, ‘Caribbean Heroes at the Literary Crease after 1950’, engages with cricket’s relationship to the masculine quest for independence in Trinidadian literature as well as a range of poetic representations of the Caribbean’s substantial investment in cricket heroes. Finally, Part Three, ‘The Straight White Line’, re-evokes the crease as line and territory to read the trans-gendered British Caribbean cricketing body of Neil Jordan’s *The Crying Game* (1992). The thesis argues that while cricket has been a valuable vehicle for the postcolonial expression of freedom in the
Caribbean and elsewhere it has also remained tied to an over investment in individual male heroes which continues to pose substantial problems to projects of collective emancipation.