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# Bodyline, Jardine and masculinity

Douglas Robert Jardine was born to Scottish parents in the exclusive Malabar Hill section of Bombay in October 1900. In retrospect, his birth came arguably at the absolute apex of the British Empire. Bloemfontein, Johannesburg and Pretoria had all recently been captured, and the war in South Africa was (erroneously) thought to be won. The aged Queen still sat comfortably on her throne and oversaw an empire upon which the sun famously never set. The viceregality of Lord Curzon was less than a year old and gave no sign of diminishing prospects for the Raj. Even far off in the Antipodes, the upcoming federation of the six colonies into the Commonwealth of Australia on the first day of the new century seemed to be more a culmination of the promise of empire than a harbinger of its dissolution. In short, Malcolm and Allison Jardine welcomed their only son into a predictable, stable world in which any person in their position could feel confident about the future, secure in the knowledge that British values had shown themselves to be the basis for civilisation as proven by a great empire. In keeping with the tradition of the time, young Douglas was sent back to Britain at the age of nine to be educated. He attended Horris Hill Preparatory School and Winchester before going up to Oxford in 1919, where his cricketing prowess outshone his academic performance. Although he quickly earned his blue as a freshman, he finished with only a fourth-class degree in modern history. Upon graduation, Jardine supported himself as a bank clerk while playing as an amateur for Surrey and later England. He topped the first-class batting averages table in 1927 and 1928. Jardine was named 'Cricketer of the Year' in 1928 by *Wisden*, which declared: 'Nobody plays with a straighter bat; few hit harder in defence whether in a forward or a backward stroke, and not often does he lift the ball. As with all really sound batsmen, fast bowling possesses no terrors for him.'<sup>1</sup>

In a biography entitled *Douglas Jardine: Spartan Cricketer*, Christopher Douglas described him as 'the epitome of the old-fashioned amateur'.<sup>2</sup> This, I believe, is the crux of the matter when it comes to explaining and

understanding Jardine and his role in Bodyline. In 1932/33, Jardine's vision of cricket and sportsmanship was firmly rooted in the past. He learned his cricket from his father, a distinguished university and county cricketer, and from H. S. Altham, who was renowned as a cricketer, schoolmaster and cricket historian. High Victorians approached cricket as a deadly serious affair, success at which depended on both mental and physical endurance. Indeed, *Wisden's* praise of Jardine's 'mental gifts for cricket', which Jardine 'possesse[d] in abundance', rivalled its praise of his actual batting.<sup>3</sup> For Jardine, leg-theory bowling was simply an adaptation of previous tactics for the purpose of exploiting Don Bradman's admittedly limited weaknesses. He expected that this would present a supreme test of a batsman's physical courage and skill and mental fortitude, as Test bowling rightfully should. What he clearly did not expect was the vehemence of Australian opposition which, as it transpired, only caused him to stand his ground ever more firmly. The British Empire was not built by Britons who backed down when challenged but, to paraphrase Kipling, by men who kept their heads while others lost theirs.

Of course, the Australians also saw themselves as defending the long tradition of cricket by demanding fair play and by not abandoning the match even though Bodyline bowling put them at risk of serious injury. Australian bowler Bill O'Reilly described Australian captain Bill Woodfull as 'heroic' for containing the anger of the Australians and thought that his continued batting after being struck in the chest was 'the stuff that Empires were made of'.<sup>4</sup> The imperial crisis which was Bodyline resulted in part from a confluence of circumstances beyond anyone's control – Harold Larwood's incredible pace, Australian summertime wickets, tensions frayed by the Depression, the growth of Australian nationalism, the emergence of the singular Bradman, etc. – but it also was a product of the certainty possessed by all the actors that their position was the morally sound and manly one. Jardine honestly believed that Bodyline was indeed cricket and the Australians believed the opposite. That, coupled with the heat of the moment, meant that compromise was not easily forthcoming.

The 1932/33 Ashes tour was not Jardine's first. After a Test debut against West Indies in 1928, Jardine toured Australia in 1928/29. His later troubles there were clearly foreshadowed during this first antipodean campaign. Fielding on the boundary for much of the time, Jardine was exposed at close range to Australian crowds for whose boisterous nature he was unprepared and ill-suited. With his aristocratic Harlequin cap and his intense single-mindedness, he found favour with the Australian crowds only as an object of their scorn. With the obvious exception of Bradman – who was a national hero despite his less than outgoing personality – Australians

preferred their cricketers to be jovial, gregarious and democratic. These were three words that would not leap to mind when describing the dour Scotsman. By the time his Harlequin cap had become an iconic emblem of mutual hostility during Jardine's second visit to Australia on the infamous Bodyline Tour of 1932/33, Australian contempt for Jardine had reached unprecedented levels. English bowler G. O. 'Gubby' Allen wrote in a letter home to his parents from Australia, 'Jardine is loathed and, between you and me, rightly, more than any German who fought in any war'.<sup>5</sup> Writing half a decade after the tour, H. S. Altham and E. W. Swanton's verdict on the tour in their *History of Cricket* was that 'the price paid for victory was terribly heavy. Future generations may find it hard to imagine the resentment evoked in Australia'.<sup>6</sup> That Jardine reciprocated the crowds' feelings is undoubted.

The Australian summer of 1932/33 marked both the summit and nadir of Jardine's career. He accomplished the greatest goal of any English cricket captain when he led his side to a 4–1 Ashes victory. But the uproar over the tactics that brought about that victory left an indelibly dark mark on his name ever after. It is fair to ask how this could come to pass. How did the captain of the MCC team – an Oxford blue and county captain, leading a distinguished group of English cricketers – reach the point that he endangered relations with Britain's closest dominion over the results of a game? These were men for whom 'cricket' was a watchword for all that was right and noble in their civilisation, and Jardine was as exemplary a specimen of gentlemanly manhood as one could imagine. It was, after all, axiomatic that it did not matter whether one won or lost, but how one played the game. Even now, nearly eight decades later, it is still difficult to accept that an English captain in his position would pursue a course of action that he knowingly believed to be unsportsmanlike. The answer lies, I would argue, in the fact that Jardine truly believed that his behaviour was sportsmanlike and in the finest traditions of the game. The problem lay in the fact that the game of cricket relied on both the laws of the game and the spirit of the game to organise itself. As times changed, disputes over what constituted sportsmanship arose. No incident illustrates this more than Bodyline, as the scandal that convulsed the world of international cricket during the 1932/33 Ashes campaign came to be known.

The controversy began when the Jardine-led tourists adopted new bowling tactics against a formidable Australian team, particularly young Bradman. O'Reilly argued that it was Bradman, like a 'modern Napoleon ... laying waste their cricket grounds as he waged his brilliant 1930 batting campaign', that made Bodyline possible, even necessary from the perspective of the English. He writes: 'This had to be met with true British fighting spirit'.<sup>7</sup>

These new tactics, called ‘fast leg-theory’ by the English and ‘Bodyline bowling’ by journalists hoping to limit expensive international telegraph charges, entailed short, fast balls bowled on the leg-side and often bouncing to chest and head height, while surrounding the batsman with a ring of close fielders. This was not just the attack used by Fred Root in the mid-1920s in England, which employed inswingers on a good-ish length at fast-medium pace to a packed leg-side field. With Larwood and Voce’s fantastic pace, bowling short on the hard, dry Australian wickets with fielders encircling the batsman, this attack gave the batsman, in essence, no sporting chance, while at the same time imperilling his health. In the third Test at Adelaide, which was described by *The Times* as ‘the most disagreeable match that has been played since the game began’,<sup>8</sup> Australian wicketkeeper Bert Oldfield suffered a broken skull when he was struck in the head with a ball while facing the English fast bowlers, albeit not against Bodyline. To add insult to injury, Jardine switched to a Bodyline field placement immediately after Woodfull was ‘struck over the heart’, which infuriated the Australian spectators. Trying to placate an enraged public, the Australian cricket authorities cabled their English counterparts and decried the tactics as unsportsmanlike – the gravest charge one could level in the world of imperial sport – and threatening to the heretofore good relations between dominion and mother country. The English, seeing little choice but to defend their captain and team, refused to accept the charge of unsportsmanlike behaviour and, in return, levelled perhaps the second gravest charge possible at the Australians: they compared the Australians to women.<sup>9</sup> Larwood, the English bowler at the centre of the controversy, argued, ‘If certain critics had not made such an effeminate outcry about it during and after the third Test the whole bother would be too childishly ludicrous to merit further consideration by grown-up men.’<sup>10</sup> In a line of argument that was typical of the general English tone of reporting, one columnist asked: ‘Would they have us believe that the manly game of cricket must, to suit their taste, be mutilated to be fit for eunuchs, not men?’<sup>11</sup>

While the English tour of the southern dominion would conclude under an uneasy truce, English commentators continued to insist that the tactics were fair and sporting. A change of heart would come about only when a West Indian cricket team came to the British Isles in the northern summer of 1933 and employed these same tactics against the English at home, where they could witness them for themselves. Even the watered-down West Indian version of Bodyline, rendered much less intimidating by the heavier atmosphere and damper wickets of England, which lessened the danger posed by fast bowlers Learie Constantine and E. A. Martindale, was enough to lead to the banning of the practice, although not an apology, by the English.<sup>12</sup>

The controversy is important for historians because it produced voluminous commentary that strayed from the technicalities and clichés of everyday cricket reporting and instead revealed why the game was important to the societies that played it. In this commentary, we see that the game was a vital way in which hierarchies of gender, race and nationality were maintained and/or challenged and national visions of true manhood could be promulgated. Race, gender and class all contributed to the importance attached to this contest and for men in the empire – West Indian, Briton and Australian alike – defending their definition of cricket became equated with defending their very manhood, especially as the hold of the Great Depression seemed to squeeze ever tighter and national morale was low.<sup>13</sup>

For imperial Britain, cricket was more than just a game; it was a code of conduct and the expression of a British and imperial sense of right and wrong. The common usage of the phrase that something was ‘not cricket’ meant simply and succinctly that it was not morally right. It was a game in which how one played mattered more than the outcome. In a letter to *The Times* about the kerfuffle, the author A. A. Milne called for calm heads to consider the English tactics since the ‘bitter feeling already aroused by the colour of Mr. Jardine’s cap has been so intensified by the direction of Mr. Larwood’s bowling as to impair friendly relations between England and Australia’.<sup>14</sup> A letter to the editor of the *Morning Post* stated that regardless of whether the English are right or wrong about the appropriateness of the tactics, ‘If one side or another thinks that the tactics of its opponents are “not cricket” in any sense of the word, that should be quite sufficient for those tactics to be dropped. After all, cricket is a game, and while it remains a game it does not matter who wins.’<sup>15</sup> Even at the time, in the midst of the matches, the speedy unravelling of so much cricket tradition seemed unintelligible to observers and participants alike. Bradman bemoaned how, by the middle of the tour, ‘players of both sides got to passing each other without a word of greeting’; he lamented, ‘Oh, that cricket should ever have got to that.’<sup>16</sup>

So it was doubly shocking when the bad blood emerged on a cricket tour between England and her closest dominion, Australia. Cricket tours were meant to celebrate common values and cement imperial fellowship, but in 1933 the game revealed very deep divisions instead. At the root of the issue was whether it was unmanly to employ this tactic (the Australian position) or whether it was unmanly to complain about it rather than simply facing it and taking whatever lumps might come one’s way (the English and West Indian position). Larwood wrote that any attempt to curtail Bodyline bowling would ‘make of cricket a less manly game. That would be an Imperial disaster’.<sup>17</sup> However, from the perspective of history, it is clear that the true

imperial disaster from the point of view of the English was not that the game would become less manly, but that the English claim to be the arbiters of both civilisation and manliness would be challenged. An article in the *Australian Cricketer* that was reprinted in the *Barbados Advocate* makes this argument explicit by stating: ‘Australia, by practically claiming the right to make laws, automatically ranked herself as equal first in cricketing nations.’<sup>18</sup>

The ruling ethos of cricket, and indeed all imperial sport, was that games provided an arena for a fair contest under pre-set rules to determine which side was better at that moment, at that game. Essential to this vision of sport was that the game was fairly and honestly played. The English language is littered with expressions that use sport as a metaphor for justness: ‘level playing fields’ imply an equality of opportunity for everyone, ‘to play with a straight bat’ is to be honest and trustworthy, etc. However, being better in a particular moment in a particular contest quickly became a synecdoche for being the better man overall. This, however, became more complicated as colonies and dominions challenged British superiority. Two quotations from C. L. R. James’s autobiographical cricket book *Beyond a Boundary* sum up the basic tensions between English sporting ideology and conceptions of race and gender in the empire. The first highlights the disparity between the ideals of sports and the realities; he wrote: ‘The British tradition soaked deep into me was that when you entered the sporting arena you left behind you the sordid compromises of everyday existence. Yet for us to do that we would have had to divest ourselves of our skins.’<sup>19</sup> Likewise, he demonstrated the intimate connection between games, conceptions of masculinity and power when he stated: ‘I knew we were man for man as good as anybody. I had known that since my schooldays. But if that were the truth it was not the whole truth.’<sup>20</sup> It is important to remember that the basic ideals of the game and its relationship to masculinity were shared by all three groups in this controversy; what differed was the interpretation of how those ideals would be played out in real life. For the British in general, and Jardine in particular, by the time the fateful Ashes tour commenced, ‘may the best man win’ became not an invocation of good luck to a competitor, but something which needed to be confirmed by an English victory.

Although sportsmanship is often defined as a list of attributes and behaviours, Australian Test player Alan Kippax provided a more nuanced definition when he wrote: ‘Sportsmanship is not a strictly defined and absolute code ... It is, in fact, a convention, established by public opinion as a result of experience.’<sup>21</sup> Bodyline, while strictly within the laws of the game, seemed to most Australians to be outside the spirit of the game. To the English, the practice was well within the traditional bounds of acceptable play; people

had set close fielders before; people had bowled fast bumpers before; and people had consistently attacked the leg-side before. For English commentators, there was nothing new in the attack except a sensationalist name created by journalists hungry for increased circulation. The fact of the matter is that both positions are valid. Intimidation by fast bowlers had long been part of the tactical arsenal of every first-class cricketing team since over-arm bowling was first legalised. However, the bowling attack devised and employed by Jardine and implemented by Larwood and Bill Voce on the hard wickets of Australia endangered the batsmen to an unprecedented level. The resulting conundrum sent international cricket into a major crisis. The fact that two prominent amateurs on the English side objected to the tactics as unsporting illustrates that the tactic was far from universally accepted, even among Jardine's own men. Gubby Allen refused to bowl Bodyline and was subsequently estranged from Jardine. Similarly, Muhammad Ibrahim Ali Khan, the Nawab of Pataudi, refused to move from the off- to the leg-side and take up a Bodyline fielding position, a refusal which prompted Jardine to acidly observe: 'I see His Highness is a conscientious objector today.'<sup>22</sup> Pataudi was dropped despite having hit a century in the first Test at Sydney, which England won by ten wickets.

The Australians, on the other hand, were nearly unanimous in their disapproval. As the tour progressed, the rhetoric surrounding the tactics grew more and more heated. *The Australian Worker*, a Sydney newspaper with the motto 'An Australian Paper for Australian People', declared that the 'MCC will either have to denounce the basher gang methods which its team has employed or forfeit the esteem in which it is held wherever the game of cricket is played'.<sup>23</sup> When E. T. Crutchley, the British government's representative in Australia, met members of the Australian Board of Control to get the charge of unsportsmanlike behaviour withdrawn, *The Australian Worker* wondered: 'Perhaps they are uneasily wondering if there is any possibility of an incident resembling the historical tea raid in Boston Harbor prior to the American War of Independence arising out of this cricket imbroglio'.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, O'Reilly asserted in his memoirs: 'I am as certain of it as of the cosmic fact that night follows day ... that violence would have erupted mid-field during that disgraceful season had it not been for the magnificent character of the heroic William Maldon Woodfull ... Woodfull knew, and through him we knew, that we were being called upon to make a colossal sacrifice for the good of the game'.<sup>25</sup>

The English defenders of the tactic claimed that the Australians had departed (in a particularly unmanly way) from the traditions of the game by complaining about an opponent's tactic. It was largely unspoken, but the implication was certainly that this was especially bad form if that opponent was the

MCC. Many English critics based their arguments on the premise that it is inconceivable for the tactics to be unsportsmanlike simply because they have been used by an English captain, which, in the minds of many English, by definition made them fair. Larwood argued that if he were not a fair bowler then MCC would not have selected him and his captain would not have continued to play him.<sup>26</sup> This, it would seem, brings us back to the central actor in the Bodyline drama – Jardine. In the end, it was his decision to employ the tactics. While well-off amateurs like Allen and the Nawab of Pataudi might have the freedom to object, for the sons of Nottinghamshire coalminers like Larwood and Voce, there was little choice but to implement the captain's game plan as instructed to the best of their abilities. Jardine's worldview was that of the high Victorian period, when the British ruled the waves and waived the rules. Jardine's expectations of behaviour fit squarely in a world in which colonial subjects of the Crown deferred to Englishmen in matters of taste and culture, including in cricket. The English way was, by definition, the proper and civilised way, contradictions and hypocrisy be damned. Yet the world in which the Bodyline tour occurred was a very different one. Three decades after federation, Australians saw their country as a full-grown man, not a child. And, like a man who still loves his nagging mother, Australians held England in great regard, but she was no longer an unquestioned authority. This was an Australia that had come of age at Gallipoli, shortly before Britain was shaken to its core at the Somme. Times had changed and neither Australian nor West Indian acquiescence was forthcoming.

In a chapter with the perhaps overly dramatic title 'Decline of the West', James contended that Bodyline was much more than simply a response to Bradman's batting or a moment of lost composure or poor judgement. Rather, he argued:

Bodyline was not an incident, it was not an accident, it was not a temporary aberration. It was the violence and ferocity of our age expressing itself in cricket. The time was the early thirties, the period in which the contemporary rejection of tradition, the contemporary disregard of means, the contemporary callousness, were taking shape. The totalitarian dictatorships cultivated brutality of set purpose ... It began in World War I. Exhaustion and a fictitious prosperity in the late twenties delayed its maturity. It came into its own in 1929. Cricket could no more resist than the other organizations and values of the nineteenth century were able to resist. That big cricket survived the initial shock at all is a testimony to its inherent decency and the deep roots it had sunk.<sup>27</sup>

Although, generally speaking, one disagrees at one's own peril and usually to one's detriment with James's position on the cultural significance of cricket, I think that James is mostly mistaken here. James was arguing that

Bodyline was part and parcel of the age of nascent fascism and Stalinism on the one hand, and of industrialised, mechanical, Taylorist efficiency, on the other. And perhaps it was in part those things. However, I believe it would be more accurate to see Bodyline less as the modern world asserting itself, than as a clash of Jardine's insistent Victorian masculinism with a modern world for which it was no longer suited. James believed that 'modern society took a turn downwards in 1929 and "It isn't cricket" is one of the causalities'.<sup>28</sup> However, it is not James's view of the 1930s that is too harsh, but his view of Victorian culture that is too rosy. W. G. Grace may have been the most emblematic and popular figure of the age, but the Victorian period is not best understood in terms of good sportsmanship, white flannel and afternoon tea. Rather, I would argue that the response to the Indian Rebellion of 1857 is the truer face of England and the British Empire in the age of Victoria. Decorum, noble values and attention to good form ruled the day until they were insufficient to maintain British hegemony, and then they were replaced by a willing brutality that could be set alongside any act of barbarism in the history of man.

Jardine's actions make sense when considering them through the lens of the high Victorian British masculinity that combined the ideals of sportsmanship with the concrete reality of British material superiority. This is not dissimilar to the way that the Victorian belief in free trade remained dominant as long as Britain's industrial and imperial power made that ideology profitable. This is not to suggest that these ideologies were insincerely held; the fact that an ideology works in the self-interest of its proponents does not necessarily render that belief insincere. It is not that Jardine did not believe that the best man should win; it was simply that he could not believe that the English side were not the best men.

To that end, it is worth exploring the nature of Jardine's conception of manliness, which would have encompassed his understanding of sportsmanship as well as imperial relations. There are two often-repeated stories about Jardine that are used to explain his insistence on employing a dangerous and unsportsmanlike bowling attack against the Australians. The first is a remark made by the West Indian-born manager of the 1932/33 English team, Pelham Warner, who stated that 'when [Jardine] sees a cricket field with an Australian on it, he goes mad'.<sup>29</sup> Although pithy, this is certainly an inadequate explanation of Jardine's steadfast refusal to abandon the controversial tactics. Whatever Jardine was, he was neither crazed nor out of control due to an over-exuberance of emotion. His whole personality was methodical and calculating, and so was this decision. Cold-blooded and ruthless he may well have been, but mad he was not. To be sure, Jardine hated the behaviour of the Australian crowds as much as they detested

him. He wrote: ‘It is often suggested in Australia that ... every free-born Australian has an absolute and inalienable right to self-expression. Whether one subscribes to this Article of Faith is not of much importance. My objection is limited to the hostility and lack of taste to which this self-assumed licence gives rise.’<sup>30</sup> ‘Taste’ is of course decided by its relative proximity to middle-class English mores. Similarly, in what seems like a pure case of the pot calling the kettle black, Jardine wrote: ‘Australians, however, would do well to remember sometimes that there are other standards of behaviour besides their own, and that it is possible that there is much to be said in favour of those other standards.’<sup>31</sup> Nonetheless, playing the game the best way he knew how was more important to Jardine than smoothing over the ruffled feathers of his colonial opponents, much less the Australian masses and press. In fact, according to Larwood, Jardine donned this multi-hued hat just to annoy the Australian crowds.<sup>32</sup>

The second popular anecdote relates that, upon learning that MCC had selected Jardine captain of England, an old schoolmaster of his at Winchester is said to have remarked: ‘Well, we shall win the Ashes – but we may lose a Dominion.’<sup>33</sup> This is, I believe, a more accurate assessment of Jardine’s motives. Over the course of the Victorian and Edwardian period, sport had obviously come to be more than a pastime, especially for public school and Oxbridge old boys. For many who excelled at games, athletic achievement came to be an all-encompassing worldview, from which one could divine an individual’s values and place in society. Modern sports were born in the British public schools where male administrators sought to control the energies (sexual and otherwise) of unruly boys; from that highly gendered beginning, sports came to be bound up with the development and policing of gender norms.<sup>34</sup> Games not only displayed the proper attributes of manhood, but they actively instilled those traits that were deemed essential for true manhood: physical strength, moral fortitude, discipline, co-operation and subordination to a group at the expense of individualism. Being born in an era of imperial expansion and dominance ensured that sport and its attendant gendering would be incorporated into a nexus of colonial power relations, both as a means to train and develop a ruling caste and in attempts to ‘civilise’ the ‘uncivilised’ colonial subjects.<sup>35</sup> In some cases – for example, cricket in Australia – sport normally worked to unite imperial elites with colonial subjects.<sup>36</sup> In others, such as Gaelic football and hurling in Ireland or baseball in the United States, sport worked to draw sharper distinctions between groups.<sup>37</sup> What is certain is the fact that, once modern sports were introduced into a new context, the intentions of the original proponents became nearly irrelevant, as the games and the meanings attached to them took on lives of their own. Jardine’s stubborn insistence on his own

correctness reflects his fundamentally Victorian attitude towards imperial sport, including the superiority of English manhood.

Connections between sport, gender and colonialism should be seen as fundamentally hegemonic, but also fluid. Not only were some men ‘more manly’ than other men, but manliness could be developed within an individual or group. For the purposes of historians, this also implies that what it meant to be a man – i.e. the attributes that would be seen as ideal and definitional – changed from time to time, place to place, class to class and race to race. Consequently, ideal manhood for an aristocratic amateur English cricketer, for example, was not necessarily the same as ideal manhood for a middle-class Australian playing against him. It is still nonetheless true that both would have seen the game as an integral way to instil, develop and perform manliness in line with their societies’ values. Yet the reception of games by colonial subalterns was influenced as much by the preference and dictates of colonial culture as it was by British attempts at cultural imperialism or social control. The Australians had learned cricket from the English, but how they played the game and the values they attached to various aspects were products of their own culture, not English culture. One example of this is when O'Reilly wrote that by the end of the campaign ‘Test cricket had lost all appeal. Indeed I felt that I could not care less whether I ever turned out again for Australia against England, and the thought occurred to me that it was a matter of some serious discussion whether there were any Englishmen worth playing against.’<sup>38</sup> Clearly, the English were not the only ones using the frame of masculinity to judge their opponents.

In his book *Anti Body-Line*, Australian Alan Kippax diplomatically wrote: ‘I don’t think any reasonable person, however partisan, has in cold blood accused either bowler, or Jardine, of wishing to injure a batsman. Such a suggestion is unthinkable; but I state without reservation that I believe that the campaign was from the first one of intimidation, aimed in the first place at Bradman and Woodfull, and, secondly, when it began to prove successful, at all the recognized Australian batsmen.’<sup>39</sup> Kippax took a long-sighted view of the affair and argued that it is possible for two sportsmanlike parties to disagree on whether a tactic is sportsmanlike or not. If, after a debate, it is deemed unsportsmanlike, the original practitioners should not necessarily be condemned. He wrote: ‘Occasionally there crops up in the arena of sport something new, something which public opinion has not yet been able to label.’<sup>40</sup> In general, Australians saw themselves as the true guardians of the shared imperial culture of sportsmanship, which had deteriorated in England. For example, the president of the Victoria Cricket Association, Cannon Hughes, stated: ‘Cricket is a game worth fighting for, and it is in peril now. All of us should see that the grand old traditions are not broken

down.<sup>41</sup> Likewise, in discussing British defences of Bodyline, *The Australian Worker* dryly noted: ‘Most comments contend that the ends justified the means, a new code of ethics in regard to cricket.’<sup>42</sup>

Jardine and the English would have none of this. They steadfastly held that the Australians were cowards and poor cricketers. Larwood explicitly stated so: ‘You ask why Woodfull could not stand up to my fast leg-theory bowling? These are the true reasons: Woodfull was too slow and Bradman was too frightened. Yes frightened is the word. Bradman would just not have it. He was scared of my bowling. I knew it as everybody did.’<sup>43</sup> This is a view that was shared, coincidentally, by Australian great Warwick ‘The Big Ship’ Armstrong, who covered the series for the London *Evening News*, and was very critical of Bradman for using batting tactics against Bodyline which he (Armstrong) thought were bred of fear.<sup>44</sup> Jardine believed that ‘upon good wickets if a good batsman is hit playing leg-theory he has no one to blame but himself’.<sup>45</sup> When one Australian writer pondered what Jardine would have done if he had been hit in the head when such a leg-side attack had been levelled against him, Jardine replied: ‘I should have said that it was a case of poor batsmanship on my part and that the time had come when I should very seriously consider the desirability of ceasing to play first-class cricket owing to my obvious lack of skill.’<sup>46</sup> While it may be easy to dismiss this as pure bravado, it is not inconceivable that that indeed would have been Jardine’s response. His belief in the stiff upper lip in that situation was undoubtedly quite deeply and sincerely held. Nonetheless, Jardine’s ability for self-criticism was limited.

Shortly after the conclusion of the Bodyline tour, Jardine published *In Quest of the Ashes* as a defence of his behaviour. For Jardine, the blame for the fiasco lay solely with the behaviour of the crowds, the press and the Australian cricketing authorities. One suspects that Jardine would have preferred a world without cricketing spectators, in which cricketers-cum-knights could engage in chivalrous combat as they supposedly had in the days of yore. For Jardine, it was the crowd – full of people made irrational because of the bets they had placed on the matches – which transformed a game into warfare, not the violent tactics ruthlessly employed by his team and at his instruction. In the foreword to the 2005 edition of Jardine’s book, former England captain and president of MCC Mike Brearley argued that Jardine was completely unrepentant about his use of Bodyline. He wrote:

If the crowd had been demure, chivalry would never have been in question. It looks rather as if the highwayman blames the darkness of the roads, or the reactions of the public, for hold-ups. Perhaps part of Jardine’s extreme loathing of the Australian public was down to their forcing him to examine (and doubt) the truth of his own supposed ‘chivalry’.<sup>47</sup>

Jardine's worldview could easily encompass accepting responsibility for a weakness in his batmanship while refusing responsibility for the reactions of others to his captaincy. His sureness in his own propriety was absolute. Brearley writes: 'one imagines that, like Socrates, if he were found guilty and invited to propose a penalty, he might well suggest being fed at the city's expense of the rest of his life.'<sup>48</sup> Jardine knew that he had acted with the highest sense of honour and the fact that most Australians and some of his own countrymen disagreed with him was reflective of their inadequacies, not his own. In fact, this disagreement was to be expected since it was one of the main objects of international cricket to teach the subjects of the empire how to behave. As MCC captain, Jardine was no more likely to feel obligated to listen to the complaints of the Australian masses than a public schoolmaster was obligated to listen to his pupils complain about their workload.

While this posture had worked well enough (for the English) in earlier decades, by the 1930s it was outdated. After the West Indies tour to England in 1933 concluded, Bodyline was effectively banned by MCC. Larwood never bowled in another Test match and Jardine's captaincy ended after leading MCC to India in 1934. In a way, then, Jardine was a tragic figure out of time. If his captaincy had come earlier when England was more self-assured and Australia less and before the modern telegraph provided the illusion of instantaneous coverage, or later in a more aggressive and well-padded age, perhaps Bodyline as we know it would not exist at all. Jardine would simply be remembered as a hard-nosed and insightful captain. However, to borrow from Marx, men make their own history even if not in circumstances of their own choosing. Jardine may have been unfortunate to play in the same era as Bradman at the height of his batting powers and in an unsettled age as the empire was evolving into a commonwealth. But play then he did, and the choices he made have left a legacy which still fascinates decades later and extends far beyond the boundaries of the cricket field.

#### NOTES

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