

*It's Not [Just] Cricket: The Art and Politics of the Popular – Cultural  
Imperialism, 'Sly Civility' & Postcolonial Incorporation*

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**Abstract:** Ashutosh Gowariker's critically acclaimed *Lagaan* (2001), is a marvellous piece of cinematic *troubling*, which, via an astute use of allegory, reflects upon identity politics and power relations in both colonial and postcolonial contexts. Bringing two cornerstones of Indian popular culture together, namely cricket and Hindi formulae films, Gowariker produces an engagingly, affective alchemy of image and sound, which intervenes critically in the discourses of British colonial rule. This article's intention is to demonstrate the mimetic devices inherent in *Lagaan*'s narrative, and how they mirror the regional resilience evident in the global success of both popular Indian cinema and the Indian performance of cricket. The sport of cricket and its role and effectiveness within a larger colonial project, is contextualized and reconsidered by tracing some resistant tangents in the sports evolution and performance in the Asia Pacific region. Making the most of the South Asian diaspora, which has exploited the networks and routes of the former British Empire, Indian popular cinema, likewise, serves to illustrate the point that local cultural dynamics can add their own nuances to global media flows. Interdisciplinary approaches are required to traverse within and between cultures, and to underscore the deep currents of contestation, as well as the radical and often surprising politics that characterise popular culture. In this respect, a range of scholars from different fields of study are consulted; Ashis Nandy, Arjun Appadurai, Chandrima Chakraborty and Homi Bhabha amongst them. Their voices will help to open up uncertainties in the conventional discourses, and to articulate some of the cultural politics and poetics at play in *Lagaan* specifically and the performance of cricket more generally.

**Keywords:** Postcolonial identity politics, popular culture, cricket, *Lagaan*.

*The image, the imagined, the imaginary - these are all terms that direct us  
to something critical and new in global cultural processes: the imagination  
as a social practice.*

- Arjun Appadurai

*Cricket is as an Indian game accidentally discovered by the English.*

- Ashis Nandy

## **Preamble: Winning the Toss**

I have taken the liberty of inserting Asia in the Pacific geographical focus of this collection of papers, but also am amplifying more Pacific regional reflections and insights. This is an article that ruminates on the *civilizing* imperatives of the very peculiar sport of cricket, and the way that unruly colonial subjects have embraced the game and made it their own. I also have focused on the Pax in the Pacific label, telling a tale of creative, (mostly) non-violent resistance to colonial authority – enacted through the cultural incorporation and appropriation of the game of cricket. It also affords me the opportunity to deliberate upon, and fashion a plausible absolution to vindicate the enjoyment of a game that has been an integral part of my own upbringing.

## **Limbering Up: Pacific Experience**

I have lived more than half my life on the shores and hinterland of the Pacific, and I was born in a city whose harbour embraces the ebb and flow of the great Southern Ocean's tides. Australia is an island in its wake – a feature that geographically imprints certain characteristics upon its inhabitants. However, lest I be lampooned for dabbling with a saccharine romanticism, I should like to garnish this with a bitter caveat. Contemporary Australia is not kind to the Pacific; we mine it, we pollute it, we allow too much heavy traffic through even the World Heritage Barrier Reef. Along the more populated areas of the eastern seaboard, we expel our waste and excrement into it, and when the tides conspire the ocean has its revenge upon us; floating our unsavoury offerings back upon our beaches. Perhaps this give and take is the origin of the Bronzed Aussie icon.

The Pacific is also the principal site of Australia's own colonising practices. Not only has Australia been subjected to the ravages of English colonialism – it has, since Federation, and before, practiced its own colonising tendencies in the Pacific region – Papua, Timor Sea and so on. One of the more recent manifestations of these imperial tendencies was the abhorrent Pacific Solution that the Howard Government enforced upon refugees seeking asylum in Australia. To Australians eternal shame, this was a political regime that was then re-elected not once, but twice, wearing such a criminally inhumane policy as a badge of honour.

In this paper, however, I want to spin a narrative that goes *beyond the pale*<sup>i</sup>; a yarn whose protagonists lampoon, mimic and subvert Eurocentric notions of civilisation. A tale that celebrates the playfulness, and simultaneously the gravitas, of the postcolonial condition; a condition beautifully articulated in Pau Fernandez Pitarch's etymological slide from civilisation to *syphilis-ation*.<sup>ii</sup> My muse for this yarning is cricket, a sport that can wonderfully illustrate the idiosyncrasies, contradictions and ever-shifting power plays of colonial and postcolonial experience. Cricket was deployed as a civilising mission of the colonial project, but in the best traditions of what de Certeau describes as the 'ingenious' 'practices of everyday life' (de Certeau 1984); it became a site of struggle and something more than what was intended by the colonial authorities. Poignant examples in the Pacific region include; the incorporation of cricket into the ritual practices of the Trobriand Islanders, and the very first Australian cricket tour to England, the *home* of cricket.

## **Pacific Cricket and 'Pommy Bastards': EnCountering the Colonial Project and Contesting Colonial Legitimacy**

In the Trobriand Islands, cricket has undergone a remarkable cultural transformation; the locals have forged the game into an "outlet for tribal rivalry, mock warfare, [and] community interchange" (Kray 2009: 1), replete with songs and dances specifically crafted for this manifestation of cricket. The missionaries introduced cricket to the Trobriand Islanders as an 11-a-side game, but this did not suit Trobriand traditions, and before long numbers on the pitch began to swell. So long as the sides are even, any number of players from the community can partake. In the custom of Trobriand *Kayasa* (Kray 2009: 3) the game is a performance of ritual display with gifts of food at its core. Trobriand cricket represents a clear example of the incorporation of colonial practice into the local culture, rather than the other way around, nothing short of an indigenization of the game itself. As Arjun Appadurai has articulated in a different context,

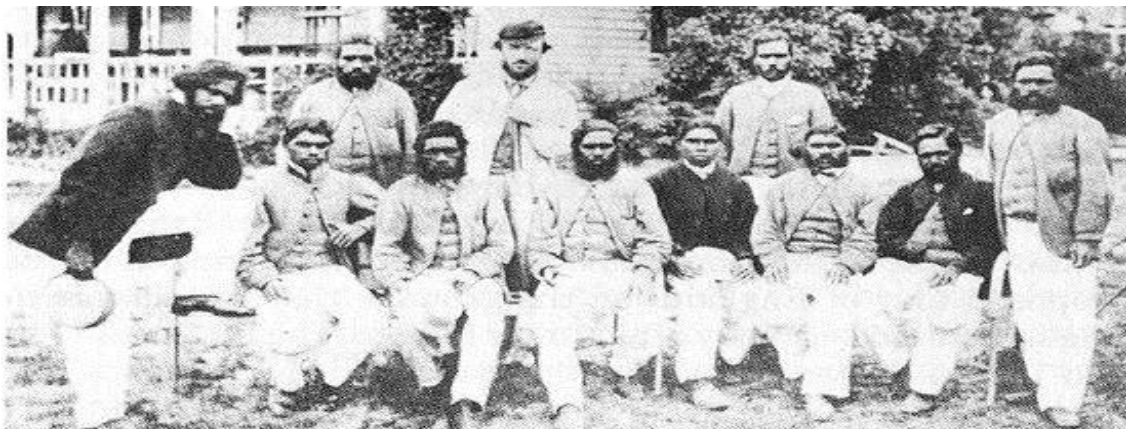
...indigenisation is often a product of collective and spectacular experiments with modernity and not necessarily of the subsurface affinity of new cultural forms with existing patterns in the cultural repertoire (Appadurai 1997: 90).

The Australia versus England rivalry on the cricket field continues to this day, to be a stage where a fiercely contested colonial/postcolonial struggle is played out. The history of this cricketing challenge is riddled with a folklore of heroic deeds against the odds; and underhand, win-at-all-costs instalments. The *Ashes* test match series between coloniser and colonised has traced expressions of national pride and international relations between the *old country* and the *Antipodean upstarts* since 1882, when Australia beat England at the Oval, and a satirical obituary was placed in a British newspaper to mark the event. The announcement declared that English cricket had perished, and gave notice that its: "body will be cremated and the ashes taken to Australia" ().

A lesser known, but perhaps more *extraordinary*, game took place at the same Kensington Oval some 14 years earlier, when the first Australian cricket tour to England

kicked off its punishing schedule of 47 matches in 6 months. Some 20,000 spectators turned out in May 1868 at The Oval to witness the all-Indigenous Australian cricket team take on the local Surrey Club (Mallett 2002). The tour was part curio-exhibit, (replete with tragic deaths due to the strain of long-distant travel and exposure to new diseases), but also part triumph of the First Australians beating their colonisers at their own game in their homeland. During their time in England, they won as many games as they lost<sup>iii</sup> and secured many admirers amongst a disbelieving British public. Amongst the touring squad were such stellar cricketers as Unaarrimin, Bullchanach, Jungunjinanuke, Zellanach, Bripumyarrimin (who died of tuberculosis whilst in England), Murrumgunarriman and Grougarrong. Murrumgunarriman and Unaarrimin, known to Anglo Australians as Twopenny and Mullagh respectively, continued to play representative cricket upon their return to the colonies, Mullagh becoming a professional cricketer with the Melbourne Cricket Club (Mallett 2002).

Two days after their first match the tourists were also engaged to: “go through a series of athletic exercises on the Surrey ground” (*The Sporting Life*, 16 May 1868). Post-match demonstrations of spear and boomerang throwing were a common feature of the tour, which gained considerable attention amongst the British public (*ibidem*). The popular fascination witnessed was undoubtedly tinged with racist undertones of a Eurocentric sense of cultural superiority, not uncommon with the curio and exotic exhibitions of the age. This was further fuelled by the fact that the Indigenous team arrived in the wake of the evolutionary debates, sparked by the publication of Charles Darwin’s thesis *The Origin of the Species* less than a decade earlier.



**Aboriginal Cricket Team at the MCG: from left to right, back row: Bripumyarrimin (King Cole), Tarpot, Tom Wills, Unaarrimin (Johnny Mullagh) , Jungunjinanuke (Dick-a-Dick). Seated: Jellico, Peter, Red Cap, Harry Rose, Bullchanach (Bullocky), Zellanach (Johnny Cuzens).**

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian\\_Aboriginal\\_cricket\\_team\\_in\\_England\\_in\\_1868](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian_Aboriginal_cricket_team_in_England_in_1868) Accessed 6 /6/ 12

A review of the touring cricketers in *The Daily Telegraph* exemplifies this mindset well:

It is highly interesting and curious to see mixed in a friendly game on the most historically Saxon part of our island, representatives of two races so far removed from each other as the modern Englishman and the Aboriginal Australian. Although several of them are native bushmen, and all are as black as night, these Indian fellows are to all intents and purposes, clothed

and in their right minds (*The Daily Telegraph*, 27 May 1868, cited in Stradling 2009: 16).

Both these Australasian stories are fine exemplars of resistance to, and troubling of, colonial power relations. They are distinct expressions of a negotiation of the cultural imperialism that accompanies the experience of colonialism. Each displays something about the way that cultural differences inflect the colonial systems that have been imposed around the globe. These differences need to be considered in both coloniser and colonised, as they each nuance the dynamics of the power relations of encounter.

### ***Don't Mention the War: Discourses of Denial***

It is not my intention to soften the critique of colonialism wherever it has been enacted, but I would like to make an observation about the Spanish Colonial encounters in the Americas. Spanish approaches to race and identity have a very different experiential compass to the Australian experience. In the Spanish speaking Americas, for instance Mexico, there is recognition and a scholarly engagement with the practical aspects and theoretical potentialities of miscegenation, both physical and cultural. As the official policies employed by colonial administrations with regard to miscegenation were often negative, the term *mestizaje* is more often employed in academic circles, in order to refer to the mixing of cultures and races in a more affirming fashion. Confronting, and often embracing, notions of contradiction and ambiguity; *mestizaje* has articulated strategies of cultural resistance to systematic, hegemonic racism (Roger Hutchinson cited in Palusci 2006: 126).

By contradistinction, the official Australian discourses are characterised by denial in this regard. Despite the fact that the English were themselves a mongrel race (and I do not use that term pejoratively), the administration clung to a ludicrous sense of blood purity and a heinous policy to try to preserve it. One of the determining factors in this difference is the specific era in which the respective colonial projects emerged. British 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century colonialism was framed through the cold, reductionist lens of late Protestantism; an entirely different beast to the Baroque Extravagances of the Catholic traditions of Christianity. At its heart, the British colonial enterprise was an Empiric expression of English superiority and Enlightenment xenophobia.

### **Taking Pleasure in Subverting Missions**

So now I have set the scene, I want to make a turn towards pleasure; the pleasure of a game that, despite its initial colonial imperative, has harboured a wonderful capacity for local cultural expression, subversion and the demonstration of skill and strategy. Cricket was employed as part of the colonial project. Although the colonial regimes of the empire never adopted a deliberate policy, cricket gradually evolved into an unofficial instrument of state policy, which contributed to the formation of a complex system of colonial values. As Hutchinson explains, "Cricket was quintessentially the imperial sport. British colonialists [. . .] carried cricket before them as (with the English language

and Christianity) one of the three great imperial totems” (Roger Hutchinson cited in Palusci 2006: 126). For Victorians, cricket represented Englishness and Christian morality and thus lent itself well to the colonial mission. “Cricket was seen as an ideal way to socialize natives [who were perceived as lazy, enervated, and effete] into new modes of intergroup conduct and new standards of public behavior” (Appadurai 1996: 93).

However, the cricket field simultaneously became a space where such imposed values and power structures could be challenged, where a different way could be imagined, without recourse to armed conflict. As Farred explains, “Cricket is the repository of overburdened cultural links. It is the defining cultural practice, the Indian national obsession, the Indian national pathology that contains within it the Indian poetic” (Farred 2004: 94). In the same vein, Majumdar contests the conventional cultural imperialist comprehension of the place and performance of cricket in relations between the British colonials and Indian Nationals. Instead, he claims “that turning the colonial ideology on its head, resistance and subversion were often dominant in the second phase of the histories of British games in the colonies, especially cricket and soccer” (Majumdar 2004: 16). The ideological contours of the game were not lost on the maverick politician, author, and broadcaster Woodrow Lyle Wyatt, who proclaimed, “No country, which has cricket as one of its national games has yet gone communist” (Wyatt 2012).

However, this is only to tell some of the story of cricket. The Indian encounter with, experience and negotiation of, the game of cricket provides a *wonderful* exemplar of pleasures and politics that inhabit popular culture, “[F]or the cricket field was both a theatre of imperial power and of Indian resistance” (Guha 2009: 494). The historian Ramachandra Guha emphasised the extraordinary popularity of the game in the subcontinent when he wrote, “when Sachin Tendulka is batting against the Pakistani swing bowler Wasim Akramr, the television audience exceeds the entire population of Europe” (Guha 2002: xiii).

### ***Lagaan*: Aligning Pillars of Popular Culture.**

Cricket and popular Hindi cinema (two of the great pillars of Indian contemporary culture) converged in a marvellous manner with the release of Ashutosh Gowariker's film *Lagaan*. As Anand commented, “for a subcontinent that so obsessively watches cricket & Hindi cinema, *Lagaan* offered cinema as cricket & cricket as cinema” (Anand 2002)).

As with imposed language, the colonial symbolic system gets bent out of shape to accommodate the local culture; and cricket is no different. As Majumdar comments in his appraisal of the extended coverage of the cricket match in *Lagaan*:

The 100-minute match becomes the site of an assertion of racial superiority. As Guran, the village godman, plays an impossible shot hitting the ball over the wicketkeeper, the audience erupts with joy. This shot can easily be perceived as that ‘moment of departure’ when an indigenous

brand of Indian nationalism takes off ... the colonial mission of importing sport as a civilizing tool, is successfully turned on its head. A non-violent arena of assertion, cricket is successfully transformed into a tool to subvert colonial rule (Majumdar 2001).

At the heart of *Lagaan*'s late 19th Century narrative is a cricketing challenge; the British colonials against the small village of Champaner; and the prize for the locals is an exemption from the punishing taxes (*Lagaan*) imposed by the colonial authorities. The team assembled by the village is a motley one, but one that nevertheless hints at the ethnic diversity and the collaborative practices evident in India, something not always apparent in Hindi blockbuster films.

Beside its widespread and entrenched popularity, Hindi cinema shares another attribute with cricket and that is duration. The film *Lagaan* runs a standard 3 and  $\frac{3}{4}$  hour journey, replete with copious song and dance routines. Local audiences feel they have been short-changed if their entertainment is any shorter. Cricket has an uncanny Medieval temporality; it is wonderful that, in the 21st Century, a test match can still go for 5 days and end in a draw. It perverts modern productive time, which is part of its enigma, and, for some at least, part of its appeal.

### ***Lagaan*: Closer Analysis**

I wish to concentrate on two aspects of the film *Lagaan*: Bhuvan, the film's main protagonist, who represents a kind of reincarnation of Gandhi merged with the *little master* Sachin Tendulka; and Elizabeth, the sister of the (total cad) British Officer Captain Russell; and her 'going beyond (the rules of) the pale' in siding with the *other*. Her actions are a race betrayal to some, and a significant moment of cross-cultural empathy and collaboration to others.

Mukul Kesavan writes, "as a totem of India's pluralism, cricket does its job admirably" (Kesavan 2007), and this is born out in the narrative arc of *Lagaan*, as well as its popular reception in and outside India's borders. In *Lagaan*, the stakes are much higher than the wager over tax. If our buff protagonist Bhuvan can bring the disparate ethnic and religious strands of his community together, then he can demonstrate a defiance of British colonial rule that may well nourish a kernel of national independence.

The film is set in the high-Raj period of the late-19th century, but is an allegory of India's past and concurrently, a vision of where it could and may be heading. Dressed in stick pads and using bats they carved by hand, they appear at first no match for the pristinely decked-out colonials. However, cricket is a funny game; and, in true cinematic form, this game meanders to a thrilling last-ball climax. Together the Champaner Village People<sup>iv</sup> embody a sort of Gandhian ideal of inter-communal cooperation. This then is forwarded as the best means, not only to beat the British at their own game (which thereafter would become almost an article of faith for Indians when they engaged the Brits – Australians know all about that) but, to establish an inclusive, postcolonial Indian nation. When you consider the rise of Hindu fundamentalism, which

is anything but inclusive of other ethnicities, *Lagaan* makes quite a bold statement about contemporary Indian politics.

### **1. Invoking the Spirit of Indian Colonial Resistance: Cricket and Politics in Bhuvan's Gandhian-Tendulka Performance**

Bhuvan's character draws on enormous reserves of integrity, charisma and iconicity. He is played by Aamir Khan, a huge Indian film star. Onto his character, Khan then projects the iconic cricket 'god' Sachin Tendulka. Bhuvan also invokes the spirit of Mahatma Gandhi – the greatest Indian icon of the 20th century; thus steering the films' ideological concerns with anti-colonialism, nationalism, intercommunal cooperation. The brew of sub-continental symbolism manifested in the incorporation of the ideals and attributes of Gandhi and Tendulka is a palpably potent one.

In *Lagaan*, there are echoes of the Indian nationalist cinema in the period leading up to independence from British rule. During the 1940's, Gandhian motifs were sprinkled generously through popular Indian film narratives; and their inclusion was met with rapturous applause from local audiences across the country. So much so that at the height of the peaceful insurgence, all Gandhian representations were banned from the cinema in India, even the most seemingly benign references ended up on the censor's cutting room floor (Vasudev 1978; Doraiswamy 1995; Kasbekar 1995; Barnouw and Krishwamy 1980).

*Lagaan* was a smash hit with audiences in India, but also importantly, internationally. The film made around \$900,000 domestically and \$2.5 million internationally at the box office (*Box Office Mojo* 2001). *Lagaan* also received a lot of critical attention, intensified no doubt by its Academy Award nomination (Tsering 2005; Elley 2001; Sengupta 2002; Ebert 2002; Bradshaw 2001; Singh 2001). Its release coincided with a noticeable shift in audience demographics for Hindi cinema outside of India. Traditionally well supported by sizeable diasporic communities fanned across the British Commonwealth; the last decade has seen a number of popular Indian films crossover to mainstream audiences in locales such as Canada, Australia, South Africa, and of course (with the most delicious irony) Britain itself. *Lagaan* is one such film, and stands as something of a marker to question any absolute assertions about globalisation and Western cultural imperialism.

The heady alchemy of cricket, celebrity and popular narrative formulas, is central to the way *Lagaan* has captivated domestic and international imaginations. As Appadurai explains:

The image, the imagined, the imaginary - these are all terms that direct us to something critical and new in global cultural processes: the imagination as a social practice. No longer mere fantasy (opium for the masses whose real work is somewhere else), no longer simple escape (from a world defined principally by more concrete purposes and structures), no longer elite pastime (thus not relevant to the lives of ordinary people) ... The imagination is now central to all forms of agency, is itself a social fact, and is the key component of the new global order (Appadurai 1996: 31).



Cricket and cinema have come together in a very potent blend in *Lagaan*. Box-office success, and the currency the film has inspired in important public discourses around nationalism, identity and postcolonial politics, demonstrates the way that regional and local cultural dynamics can, and do, resist homogenising forces and add their own inflections to global media flows. As Chakraborty suggests, “Popular Indian cinema, with its wide appeal and huge audiences can be a space where the Indian mind and imagination might be decolonised” (Chakraborty 2011). The process of indigenisation operates on a number of levels in *Lagaan*. Bhuvan manages to put together a team composed of eleven villagers of diverse religious and class origins. The local team is (with liberal cinematic license) also multi-ethnically and multi-religiously constituted, thereby crossing the boundaries of India’s sectarianism and rigid caste system. It includes Hindus, a Muslim, and, after a long and heated debate, also a Dalit, a member of the untouchable outcastes. The cricket players actively engage in what Homi Bhabha calls ‘projective disincorporation’ as they seek an *in-betweenness*, between the colonially determined axes of ‘self’ and ‘other’ in order to develop an identity in response to British colonialism. This is also achieved through various acts of mimicry, a process that Homi Bhabha describes as *sly civility* (Bhabha 1994: 93), which operates to surreptitiously oppose British colonial rule. The sly civility Bhabha invokes, subverts the colonial relations of power; it is a form of refusal or disobedience disguised under the veneer of an accommodating civility. Wielding ambiguity, sly civility undermines colonial authority by reconfiguring the relations of power between coloniser and colonised.

Interestingly, thanks to the rules of cricket, the villagers pull victory from the cinders of defeat. Just when all seems lost, there is an additional ball due to the bowler’s foot being over the bowling crease. This no ball affords one more opportunity to score an unlikely victory. With six runs required Bhuvan, who had crossed during the previous illicit delivery and now has the strike, summons up all his reserves and pride and majestically strikes the ball high in the air towards the boundary. In true dramatic fashion, it is Captain Russell who happens to be positioned under the ball’s trajectory, and it takes an eternity to return to ground level; the suspense is palpable. Russell catches the ball, but his conceited joy turns to dismay, as it is evident that he has stepped over the boundary line to secure the catch. The six runs is signalled by the umpire, and Russell and his cronies are inconsolable; but the villagers flood onto the pitch to celebrate, and just to underscore the significance of the moment the heavens suddenly open and the overdue rains provide a further dimension to their unbridled celebrations. The final ball victory provides the catalyst for the British to dissolve their encampment in Champaner, they are tripped up by their own rules; cricket becomes then an act of decolonisation, a peaceful form of resistance.

Bhuvan, the Captain Marvel of the Indian villagers, makes the observation that the British game of cricket resembles *gilli danda*, played with sticks and a ball, which he played as a child. In *The Tao of Cricket*, Ashis Nandy adds further weight to Indian claims over the coloniser’s game:

Cricket is an Indian game accidentally discovered by the English. Like chilly, which was discovered in South America and came to India only in medieval times to become an inescapable part of Indian cuisine, cricket, too, is now foreign to India only according to the historians and

Indologists. To most Indians the game now looks more Indian than English (Nandy 1989: 1)

## **2. Elizabeth's Cultural Crossing Over**

*Lagaan* sets up a passionate desire to see the cad Russell defeated. When the officer's own sister, Elizabeth, takes the dangerous decision to assist the villagers in comprehending this strange game, she goes 'out of bounds' ... beyond the pale; and has to arrange clandestine coaching sessions away from the prying eyes of her kinsfolk. In doing so, Elizabeth is displaying empathy and an ethical friendship that transgresses the code of her racial order. It also complicates the picture of the colonial master, by underscoring the patriarchal foundations of that project and nuances the gendered politics at play within the dominant order.

In *Friendship and Postmodern Utopianism*, Leela Gandhi asks, "Does loyalty to my own liberate me of ethical obligations to all those who are not of my nation, family, community, republic, revolution?" (Gandhi 2003: 15). Elizabeth answers this conundrum in a generous fashion: she sides with the strangers, against her own (brother, race) – partly because of an infatuation with Bhuvan, but also because she recognises that it is the right thing to do – that it is *just*. This is perhaps easier to incorporate for Indian audiences, but for an English or perhaps even by extension Western audience, this requires an unsettling self-consciousness. Certainly the task is made easier because Russell is such a one-dimensionally nasty man, but it still entails a kind of national or ethnic betrayal that demands a certain courage and moral fortitude.

In the Aristotelian tradition, (and perhaps the dominant western model), friendship is aligned with the *polis* (Aristotle 1999: 3) and is at the service of the state. We gravitate towards sameness, and by extension exclude difference. A different cultural tradition of friendship can be found in Epicurean ideals and is based on *philoxenia: a love for & sheltering of guests, strangers & foreigners* (Gandhi 2006: 26). Such Epicurean traditions could not abide the racial exclusivity that characterises recent Australian Immigration policies, and indeed the nation's chequered history of White Australia policy, both official and unofficial. It stands, for instance, in contradistinction to the Pacific Solutions policy of the Howard era. Elizabeth, by befriending and empathising with the villagers, is betraying the Aristotelian tradition of racial and even class allegiance; and it is perhaps her own position as a female in a patriarchal structure that gives her the capacity for empathy. There is, in her actions, recognition of difference that enables an ethics of hospitality; a quality seemingly beyond her brothers *pale* politics.

## **Conclusion: Somewhere Over the Boundary**

This allegorical, postcolonial text pitches itself across different temporalities to forge an imagined Indian utopia; what could have, and with faith, what might still become an Indian reality. What if Gandhian ideals of multi-ethnic and multi-faith harmony had

taken deeper root? What if the trauma of Partition had been avoided, or might still be overcome? This is the big picture at the core of Lagaan's moral storytelling. Still today then, it is *Not [Just] Cricket*. A cricket match against the ex-coloniser is also a re-enactment of the colonial struggle. By means of systematically re-membering the rules of the game from a minority perspective, the former colonies altered the shape of cricket and exposed its inherent fissures, thereby also unhinging the sport from its *Englishness*. Thus, the game of cricket as practised in India and elsewhere across the globe, most evidently in the British Commonwealth, provides a counter narrative, it employs the art of mimicry, which simultaneously critiques and celebrates. As Bhabha, eloquently explicates:

The ambivalence of mimicry – almost but not quite – suggests that the fetishised colonial culture is potentially and strategically an insurgent counter appeal. What I have called its 'identity effects' are always crucially split. Under cover of camouflage, mimicry, like the fetish, is a part-object that radically revalues the normative knowledges of the priority of race, writing, history. For the fetish mimes the forms of authority at the point at which it de-authorises them (Bhabha 1994: 90).

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<sup>i</sup> Baden Offord used this phrase, *Beyond the Pale*, as the centrepiece of his plenary Kathleen Firth Lecture *Pacific Solutions Beyond the Pale* at the Barcelona Australian Studies Centre Conference *Pacific Solutions*, December 2011.

<sup>ii</sup> Pau Pitarch Fernández plays with this connection between European notions of civilizing mission, and the rather less than holy reality and devastating repercussions for indigenous peoples, and syphilis. The Barcelona Australian Studies Centre Conference *Pacific Solutions*, December 2011.

<sup>iii</sup> They had 19 draws, 14 losses and 14 wins on tour in 1868 as cited in *The Cricket Archive*: <http://cricketarchive.com> accessed 27/5/2012.

<sup>iv</sup> I had to say that at least once – it seems so fitting given the musical attributes of the film and some of the moustaches that are an integral part of the films mise-en-scene.