

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

**The Journey Towards West Indian Identity,
Through The Eyes Of The Cricketer**

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This is an analysis of West Indian cricketers' autobiographies. Postcolonial literary audiences have elevated cricket literature to an aesthetic level occupied by no other sport. Although texts on baseball and soccer have traced similar journeys, cricket writings have presented a distinct discourse on West Indian identity. Thus, West Indian cricket texts carry more political and ideological luggage than those produced at other stations.

The cricketer-writers emerged from numerous backgrounds, giving rise to multiple personalities: cricketer-planter, cricketer-merchant, cricketer-politician, cricketer-professional, cricketer-entertainer, cricketer-labourer, cricketer-warrior, cricketer-superstar, etc. The body of this prose then represents a movement at different speeds and levels from the 1930s to the present, through imperialism to post-nationalist discovery.

These texts, the only substantial, coherent, formal autobiographical expression of West Indian males of all classes, ethnicities, colours and ideological persuasions interconnect those overlapping journeys through opening Caribbean spaces.

The objective of this project is to interrogate 70 years of cricket autobiographies as a discourse within the multiple expressions of West Indian modernity. The study has examined twenty autobiographical works by West Indian cricketers, and has referred to biographies and other socio-historical works. Interpretive tensions have emerged from a study of these texts as literature and cultural imaginings, as opposed to empirical data for social historicism. By analysing these representations of social agency and contested versions of modernity by diverse ethnicities and classes through cricket, a new layer of Caribbean self-perception has been exposed.

Keywords: Vaneisa Baksh; West Indies cricket; autobiography.