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# Media And Literary Representations Of Latinos In Baseball And Baseball Fiction

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## Abstract

The first chapter of this project looks at media representations of two Mexican-born baseball players – Fernando Valenzuela and Teodoro “Teddy” Higuera – pitchers who made their big league debuts in the 1980s and garnered significant attention due to their stellar play and ethnic backgrounds. Chapter one looks at U.S. media narratives of these Mexican baseball players and their focus on these foreign athletes’ bodies when presenting them to the American public, arguing that 1980s U.S. news media focuses its attention on each pitcher’s body but constructs differing media narratives when doing so, with Valenzuela’s body discussed in terms of culture and Higuera’s body in terms of on-field performance. The narratives differ despite both pitchers sharing nearly identical builds, ethnic backgrounds, and rags-to-riches stories. This study utilizes articles between the years of 1980-1994 from each player’s “hometown” newspapers – The Los Angeles Times and The Milwaukee Journal – as well as from national publications Sports Illustrated and Sporting News. Chapter two of this study shifts to a literary analysis of three short stories from Robert Paul Moreira’s 2013 text, *¡Arriba Baseball! A Collection of Latino/a Baseball Fiction*, that challenge the traditional narrative largely established by white, male authors. Previous portrayals of Latinos in baseball literature are limited and often appear negative or in an unflattering light. Moreira’s anthology marks the arrival of a Latino counter-narrative that brings together a collection of short stories and several poems, penned in both English and Spanish, giving voice to a Latino experience. The selected short stories, Dagoberto Gilb’s “Uncle Rock,” Wayne Rapp’s “Chasing Chato,” and Nelson Denis’s “Juan Bobo” find commonality in their use of a Latino baseball history as a backdrop for Latino protagonists who embark on coming-of-age journeys that culminate in dramatic baseball moments. These baseball moments give voice to characters previously lacking agency, all the while providing positive constructions of Latino characters that in the past are few and far between.

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