

MEDIA AND LITERARY REPRESENTATIONS
OF LATINOS IN BASEBALL
AND BASEBALL
FICTION

by

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To my family: the gratitude I have for what you all have provided me cannot be expressed on this page alone. Without your love, encouragement, and support, I would not be where I am today. Thank you for all you have sacrificed for me.

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Abstract

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The University of Texas at Arlington, 2015

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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 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 challenged 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 marked the arrival of a Latino counter-narrative that brought 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" found 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, were few and far between.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	iii
Abstract	iv
List of Illustrations	vii
List of Tables	viii
Chapter 1 Introducing a Latino Place in Baseball	1
Chapter 2 The Media’s Love of Mexican Pitching and its Hate for Mexican Bodies	11
Fernandomedia	15
Spanish-Language Fernandomedia	27
Where’s Higuera?	29
“Bad Teddy”	38
The Twilight Years	42
Chapter 3 “No más el equipo visitante” – Voice, Agency, and Positive Constructions of Latinos in Baseball Short Story Fiction	46
“Uncle Rock”	53
“Chasing Chato”	62
“Juan Bobo”	66
A Voice Gained	77
References	85
Biographical Information	95

List of Illustrations

Figure 2-1 Fernando Valenzuela's Pitching Motions 17

Figure 2-2 Babe Ruth and Fernando Valenzuela Similarities..... 19

Figure 2-3 Fernando Valenzuela's Power to Draw a Crowd.....27

Figure 2-4 Pensive Teddy Higuera 31

Figure 2-5 Teddy Higuera Home Life 37

List of Tables

Table 1-1 Mexican-born Players in the MLB by Decade 4

Chapter 1

Introducing a Latino Place in Baseball

Latino influence on American baseball dates back to 1868 with the arrival of Cuban-native, Esteban Bellán, to the Rose Hill College varsity baseball club in New York (Burgos, Jr. 17). Baseball soon found its way onto Mexican soil in the early 1880s, a result of increasing American influence on Mexico's elite class during the Porfirio Díaz regime. The year 1903 marked the rise of Mexico's first national baseball star – a pitcher named Valenzuela (first name not given) – who, as the Mexican newspaper *El Imparcial* reported, was carried off on his teammates' shoulders after a 12-11 comeback victory (Beezley 3). Since that time, Latinos have left a lasting legacy in baseball. Indeed, as the *2014 Racial and Gender Report Card: Major League Baseball* reveals, at the start of the 2014 Major League Baseball (MLB) season, 28.4% of all MLB players were Latino (Lapchick 3).

Mel Almada's 1933 debut marked the first time a native Mexican played in the American major leagues. While 114 native Mexicans followed in Almada's footsteps and subsequently entered Major League Baseball over the course of more than one hundred years to today, Mexico's number of major league players is small when compared to other Latin American nations, such as: Cuba (174), the Dominican Republic (591), and Venezuela (301). Several reasons account for this disparity: segregation and the "color line," the Mexican League raids during the late 1930s and 1940s, and a subsequent 1955 written agreement (still in force today) between both Mexican and American baseball leagues regarding interleague player flow. This agreement limited Mexican ballplayers from joining Major League Baseball by making it difficult for them to leave their Mexican League teams due to contractual terms and an increased asking price for players that interested MLB teams. Thus, the lack of Mexican players in the United States (U.S.) was

not a problem of player talent, but rather a history of economic negotiations that choked the flow of such players. During the early 20th century, “[a]ll players from the Spanish-speaking Americas [also] underwent a process. . . [where] their skin color and other physical features were viewed through a U.S. racial gaze and filtered by an ethnic lens” (Burgos, Jr. 98). Mexicans who did not pass the “Castilian bloodline test” (which consisted of whether a player had fair skin, European features, and a Spanish lineage devoid of native blood) would not have the opportunity to play Major League Baseball.

At a time when U.S. professional baseball organizations adhered to rules of segregation, spurned players made their way to other professional leagues that offered the disenfranchised an opportunity to play, regardless of race. These leagues included the Negro Leagues, the Caribbean Leagues, and the Mexican League, headed by the shrewd Mexican oil tycoon, Jorge Pasquel.^{1, 2} During the 1940s the Mexican League presented a direct threat to U.S. professional baseball due to the deep pockets of Pasquel and player dissatisfaction with the racial conditions in the United States. Pasquel’s seemingly limitless bankroll allowed him to first target Negro League players in 1937 by offering significantly higher pay and the allure of life away from Jim Crow in a more racially tolerant Mexico. After taking one-fifth of the Negro League’s players in 1940, Pasquel began siphoning players from Cuba. As such, word spread about the substantial salaries Pasquel offered, and U.S. major leaguers, tired of owners treating them like chattel, began considering a move to Mexico.³ Thus, while Major League Baseball owners worried little about the Negro and Cuban Leagues, fear indubitably arose when Mexican owners turned their sights toward Major League Baseball players. Within this context, many U.S. ballplayers decided to make the jump. Indeed, as records state, “of the 180 men who played in Mexico in 1946, over half were foreigners. Twenty were white U.S. citizens...twenty-seven were African Americans and forty-nine were

Cubans” (Ruck 127). The racially-accepting climate of Mexico proved luring enough for many U.S. ballplayers, particularly African Americans who found themselves in a Mexican culture that respected and valued them as human beings. It also did not hurt that Pasquel took care of his foreign talent by making sure their needs were met both on and off the field, by providing them with food, shelter, and even women. However, the culture shock, being unaccustomed to life in a foreign land, proved to be too much for some players. Nevertheless, Pasquel still successfully attracted players to Mexico.

Along with the loss of players, the Mexican League presented U.S. baseball with the issue of player unionization on the home front. Concessions were made as a result of the Mexican League’s pressure on the MLB. Ultimately, however, fortune favored the United States. In 1948, the Mexican League folded due to economic instability, which, in turn, triggered poor league organization and caused the blacklisting of U.S. baseball of players who ventured south. Bleeding money and with mounting pressure from the United States, Pasquel hammered the final nail in the coffin of the Mexican League with his shift in focus from baseball to *Novedades*, his newest newspaper venture (Ruck 140).⁴

Arguably, the largest obstacle that hindered Mexican ballplayers from entering Major League Baseball was a 1955 written agreement between the Mexican League and the MLB. While written and established in the mid-20th century, it still governs to this day to ensure no future repeats of the Pasquelian acquisition of large numbers of U.S. ballplayers. As Wise and Meyer (1997) noted, the agreement “recogniz[ed]...the MexL’s financial ability to lure players out of the U.S. system” (p. 932). It also made the Mexican League a part of the U.S. baseball minor league system, albeit one with significant liberties not held by the other 17 affiliated minor league systems. Under the agreement, the Mexican League joined the National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues

(“NAPBL”). Yet, it maintained freedom to control its own rules of play, while still allowing for a working relationship between the two leagues, as well as individual teams.⁵ In return, Mexican League teams needed to limit the number of foreign players on their playing rosters. Moreover, MLB teams were required to compensate Mexican League teams in return for services of any players under contract, giving Mexican League teams greater control of player rights. As a result, big league scouts tended to shy away from Mexico due to high player salaries. Instead, they steered their searches to the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Venezuela, and other Latin nations where players could be signed for \$5,000 instead of \$100,000.

Table 1-1 Mexican-born Players in the MLB by Decade

Decade	Number of Mexican-born Players in MLB
1930s	2
1940s	2
1950s	8
1960s	7
1970s	18
1980s	12
1990s	32
2000s	33

After the MLB's desegregation post-1947, came the growing acceptance of Latinos in Major League Baseball. During the 1950s and 1960s, the number of Latinos, as well as Mexican-born, players rose. Latino stars, such as Orlando Cepeda, Orestes "Minnie" Miñoso, Alfonso Carrasquel, and Roberto Clemente all made names for themselves professionally, with Miñoso and Carrasquel becoming Major League Baseball's first Latinos selected as All-Stars in 1951. Although the racial struggles these players faced are well-documented, players continued to solidify their place on major league rosters and paved the way for future Latino ballplayers.⁶

The growing trend of Latinos in baseball continued through the 1970s, but not until 1981 did the floodgates open. Almost 80 years after the time Valenzuela became a Mexican national hero in 1903, another Mexican pitcher (coincidentally named Valenzuela) would make his own mark in baseball, this time within the United States. "Fernandomania" swept Mexico and the United States when both nations' political relationship was tense. As David G. Gutiérrez (2013) wrote, "In Mexico, the nation that historically has sent the largest numbers of migrants to the U.S., the deepening debt crisis, periodic devaluations of the peso, and natural disasters like the great earthquake of 1985 helped to stimulate even more intense waves of out-migration by both males and females" (Economic Factors, para. 6). The influx of undocumented immigrants crossing from Mexico into the United States raised questions regarding the place of these migrants in American society. Naturally, these issues intersected with the national pastime and led to conversations regarding sport and race.

While extensive research can be found on American baseball history, recent discussion has blossomed on the topic of Latino and Mexican baseball players within the game. Several key historical texts have emerged throughout the years to shift the conversation toward the relationship between Latinos and baseball. For one, Peter C.

Bjarkman's 1994 text, *Baseball with a Latin Beat: A History of the Latin American Game*, granted substantial exposure to an oft neglected baseball history. Divided in two sections, along with lengthy appendices, Bjarkman presented a history of lesser-celebrated Latin American stars, such as Dolf Luque and Juan Marichal, along with a look at the "blackball era" of the Caribbean Leagues and their influence on Major League Baseball.

Samuel Regalado's, *Viva Baseball!* (1998), documented the tumultuous journey hundreds of Latino athletes underwent when leaving their home countries in the hopes of making *las Grandes Ligas*. From Esteban Bellán (1868) to Sammy Sosa (1998), Regalado, with the support of archival research and a multitude of player interviews, detailed the issues Latinos faced, such as language barriers, culture shocks, assimilation difficulties, racial prejudice, and stereotyping. Adrian Burgos, Jr., in his 2007 monograph, *Playing America's Game Baseball, Latinos, and the Color Line*, similarly explored the ambiguous position Latinos held, and continue to hold, in American baseball. Taking a historical approach, he examined Latinos in relation to the "color line" that marked exclusion, or inclusion, to American professional baseball.

2011 marked the arrival of two extensive texts on Latinos with the publication of Jorge Iber's, *Latinos in U.S. Sport: A History of Isolation, Cultural Identity, and Acceptance*, and Rob Ruck's, *Raceball: How the Major Leagues Colonized the Black and Latin Game*. *Raceball* examined MLB's imperialistic approach to maintain its hegemonic position in relation to other leagues in the Americas. Indeed, Ruck argued that MLB colonized Black and Latino baseball, focusing mainly on the attainment of cheap prospects and talent from other international baseball leagues, while still maintaining its position as the kingpin in the baseball world. In opening its doors after integration, Major League Baseball crippled the Negro and Latin Leagues as players and fans switched

their allegiances to the major leagues and let their own minority-run leagues collapse under MLB's hegemonic pressure.

Most recently, Krystal Beamon and Chris M. Messer's co-authored text, *The Enduring Color Line in U.S. Athletics (Framing 21st Century Social Issues)* (2014), touched upon issues, such as Native American mascots, Black athletes in collegiate athletics, and significant to this discussion, Hispanics and their disproportionate representation in baseball due to socialization. Regarding the latter, the authors remarked on the fear some white baseball fans in the United States held, and may still hold, regarding the possible loss of a traditionally white national pastime to foreigners, and that radio and news media discussions centered around the question, "is baseball too Hispanic?" Beamon and Messer also opened up discussions surrounding the end of athlete careers, specifically those of black players—that is, their lives after leaving a sport and entering retirement. Interestingly, however, no information is provided of what happens to Latinos after their Major League Baseball careers have ended.

Shifting from the historical to the literary, baseball fiction and its emergence in journals, such as *Nine* and *Aethlon*, illustrate the need for further inquiry in the field of sport studies and sport literature. As Michael Oriard argued in, *Dreaming of Heroes* (1982), "Sport solves a persistent problem for the American author by providing a center in this vast and heterogeneous country,... [t]he game itself establishes a focal point around which the characters [in baseball fiction] cluster and in relation to which they reveal their personalities and opinions" (p. 7). David McGimpsey's work, *Imagining Baseball: America's Pastime and Popular Culture* (2001), offered then-updated commentary on baseball fiction's place in literary studies and its popularly utilized tropes, such as "Good Game/Bad Game," "Pastoral Game/City Game," "Our Game/My Game," and "Kid's Game/Man's Game." He also touched upon canonical works, such as *The*

Natural (1952), *Bang the Drum Slowly* (1956), *The Universal Baseball Association* (1968), *Shoeless Joe* (1982), *The Celebrant* (1983), and questioned what makes them classics.

Within this context, several works of baseball fiction including Latino characterizations have been published over the past several decades. Such texts include short stories, such as “The Hector Quesadilla Story” (1985) and “Batting against Castro” (1996), and novels, like *The Rio Loja Ringmaster* (1977), *New York Yanquis* (1995), and *Veracruz Blues* (1996). T.C. Boyle’s, *Greasy Lake and Other Stories* (1985), contains, “The Hector Quesadilla Story,” a novella which chronicles an aging Mexican MLB veteran, who, along with overeating issues (alluding to Roy Hobbs in *The Natural*), struggles with the idea of quitting the sport he plays. Lamar Herrin’s highly-entertaining and vulgar novel, *The Rio Loja Ringmaster* (1977), similarly revolves around American ballplayer Richard “Dick” Dixon, who refuses to give up the game, going so far as to play down south in Mexico—under dangerous circumstances—while leading a life full of romantic conflict and identity issues. In Bill Granger’s, *New York Yanquis* (1995), the team owner guts the Yankees’ roster and replaces over-priced players with a group of Cuban ballplayers. Mark Winegardner’s tale, *Veracruz Blues* (1996), blends the historical with the fictional in a novel set during Pasquel’s Mexican League raids. Most recently, Robert Paul Moreira has assembled an anthology of Latino baseball fiction via an exciting compilation of Latino/a-authored short stories. Entitled, *¡Arriba Baseball!: A Collection of Latino/a Baseball Fiction*, it was published in 2013. It is from the pages of these novellas that the Latino/a baseball experience is given a voice in a genre largely dominated by white, male authors.

In the 1980s, the U.S. population, with a history of nativism and anti-immigrant sentiment, reacted to a new wave of Mexican migration with questions of both inclusion

and exclusion. As Beamon and Messer wrote, “Illegal immigration is seen as a threat to American nationalism, and undocumented immigrants are used as scapegoats for unemployment, crime, and other social ills (p. 50). Predictably, topics on immigration, language, and assimilation were discussed in the political sphere. However, they also made their way into the sports realm, baseball, in this case, since the sport witnessed an influx of Latinos entering the game at the same time as the nation underwent demographic changes. It is in the media discourse surrounding baseball and its new player arrivals where this study situates itself.

A few questions guide this study: 1. How are media images of these players constructed, and how do popular stereotypes impact the media? 2. In what ways does the media and U.S. baseball cater to a growing Mexican and Latino population that follows Major League Baseball? 3. Why do a large number of U.S. Hispanics and Mexican nationals engage with U.S. Major League Baseball, the quintessential American sport, instead of, say, Mexican League or any other Latin American league baseball? 4. How does contemporary baseball literature portray Latino baseball players, and how does this differ from portrayals formed by the growing number of Latino baseball literature authors?

The first chapter of this project examines media representations of two Mexican-born baseball players—Fernando Valenzuela and Teodoro “Teddy” Higuera. Both were pitchers who not only debuted in the major leagues in the 1980s, but also garnered significant attention due to their unique combination of stellar play and ethnic backgrounds. My interest in this research lies in the U.S. media narratives of these Mexican baseball players and their focus on these foreign athletes’ bodies when presenting them to the American public. I argue that 1980s U.S. news media focused its attention on each pitcher’s body, but constructed differing media narratives when doing

so—that is, Valenzuela’s body was discussed in terms of culture and Higuera’s body was discussed in terms of on-field performance. The narratives uniquely differ despite both pitchers sharing nearly identical builds, ethnic backgrounds, and rags-to-riches stories. While Valenzuela has received his fair share of media attention, in this chapter I detail the lesser-known Higuera, whose career and narrative, although relatively unknown, still warrants discussion. In order to examine the media representations of these two premier pitchers, 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*. There are also several articles included from various other newspaper publications that offer insight into the careers of these players.

Chapter two of this study shifts to a literary analysis of three short stories from Robert Paul Moreira’s 2013 anthology, *¡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 unflattering. Hence, Moreira’s two year-old anthology marked the arrival of a Latino counter-narrative that brought together a collection of short stories and several poems, penned in both English and Spanish, and gave 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 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, in turn, give voice to characters previously lacking agency, all the while constructing positive Latino characters that were, in the past, few and far between.

Chapter 2

The Media's Love of Mexican Pitching and Its Hate for Mexican Bodies

Two days after 4 July 1979, a 20-year old pitcher moved to United States, a \$120,000 export from the sleepy little town of Etchohuaquila in Sonora, Mexico.⁷ After a year in the minor leagues, seeing stints in California and Texas, he soon found himself on the mound in Los Angeles (L.A.) as the 1981 L.A. Dodgers' opening day starting pitcher. Due to Jerry Reuss' strained calf-muscle and Burt Hooton's ingrown toenail, Fernando Valenzuela was the only healthy pitcher available for the team. An unexpected opening day victory turned into a string of eight consecutive wins (W's), and soon the young Mexican player became the international phenomenon known as, "Fernandomania."

While much research has focused on Valenzuela, there was another pitcher named, Teodoro Higuera, "Teo" or "Teddy," who crossed the Mexico-U.S. border in 1983 and was signed by the Milwaukee Brewers. They signed him to a \$65,000 contract.⁸ Many other MLB teams placed higher bids for Higuera's contract, but the Brewers had the fortune of previously forging a relationship with Higuera's Mexican League team, the Juarez Indios. Although Valenzuela had the marked advantage of landing in Los Angeles and into the embracing arms of its heavy Latino population, Higuera found himself in Milwaukee—home of bratwursts, beer, and a miniscule 3% Latino population (1980 Wisconsin Latino Population Census).

Higuera and Valenzuela, along with the ten other native-born Mexicans making their MLB debuts during the 1980s, entered a tense U.S. racial landscape due to significant increases in the country's Latino (particularly Mexican) population. This increased population was a result of several factors: Mexico's 1982 economic collapse, the 1985 Mexico City earthquake, and the Reagan Administration's response to the influx of Latin American migrants, in general, via the Immigration Reform and Control Act of

1986 (IRCA).^{9 10} U.S. media coverage of increased Latin American migration often resulted in negative stereotypes of Latinos as criminals, welfare dependents, and non-assimilationists. Positive stereotypes of Latinos, then, as hard-working, family-oriented peoples, desiring a better life in the United States, were lacking.

Latinos found increasing success in Major League Baseball during the 1970s and '80s, thanks to the trailblazing efforts of past heroes, such as Dolf Luque, Orlando Cepeda, Minnie Miñoso, Juan Marichal, and Roberto Clemente, each of whom endured racial prejudice and culture shock in moving to the United States and partaking in professional U.S. baseball. While the growing number of Latino Hall of Famers, Most Valuable Players, Cy Young Award winners, and Gold Glove Award winners all illustrated Latino strength on the baseball diamond, the increasing number of Latinos entering the game, in general, raised fears among a traditionally white male-dominated baseball community regarding the future of the sport.

Prior to the 1980s (perhaps as far back as 1882, when the first Mexican-American, Vincent "Sandy" Nava, made his MLB debut), foreign players were subject to negative media representations penned by often-ruthless American baseball writers. To this day, Roberto Clemente remains a prime example of such aforementioned media ruthlessness. Indeed, as Dave Maraniss detailed in his biography, *Clemente: The Passion and Grace of Baseball's Last Hero* (2007), Clemente often engaged in verbal wars with writers who characterized him as an unintelligent, lazy, hypochondriac.¹¹ Along with racial stereotyping and derisive name calling, U.S. media frequently used phonetic spellings (e.g., "peetch" for "pitch", "heet" for "hit") when quoting players, like Clemente, who attempted to speak English, but did so with heavy accents.⁵ Even as early as the mid-1930s, when, "the first recognizable 'wave' of Latinos entered the major and Negro leagues," baseball writers racialized Latinos, leading many to deny their Latino ancestry

in order to avoid trouble. One such case is that of All-American baseball hero, Ted Williams, “the son of a white U.S.-born father and a mother of Mexican descent, [who] never stressed the Mexican side of his roots during his big-league career,” in order to avoid prejudices associated with his ancestry (Burgos, Jr. 149). To be sure, however, Williams was not the only Mexican-American baseball player in his family; his uncle, Saul Venzer, was also a semi-pro player and taught a young Williams how to play the sport. As Williams briefly noted in his 1970 autobiography, *My Turn at Bat: The Story of My Life*, “My mother’s maiden name was Venzer, she was part Mexican and part French, and that’s fate for you; if I had my mother’s name, there is no doubt I would have run into problems in those days, the prejudices people had in Southern California” (28).

1980s baseball writers found themselves with the task of covering and interacting with players who spoke little-to-no English, all the while attempting to create relatable baseball narratives for a U.S. audience. Central to this chapter are the 1980s narratives provided by the U.S. media for Fernando Valenzuela and Teodoro Higuera, arguably the two most dominant Mexican pitchers of the ‘80s. Their contrasting media narratives reveal differences in how each Mexican pitcher was discussed and offer grounds to host questions about the relationship between Mexican baseball players and U.S. news media. The importance of understanding how these media narratives were constructed lies in their connection to baseball literature. The narratives authored by the media became baseball’s written history, the material that sport literature’s baseball fiction authors drew, and continue to draw, upon when creating their own works. The recent emergence of Latino baseball fiction authorship gives importance to researching histories relevant to Latino players in the same way as was, and is, traditionally done for white ballplayers and white-dominated baseball literature. Aside from this, the tales of players like Valenzuela and Higuera also provide a framework for future media narratives of Latin

American players. A recent example of this is the 2013 rise of “Puigmania,” the media firestorm that surrounded Dodgers’ rookie Cuban outfielder, Yasiel Puig. The electric, polarizing ballplayer and his ensuing media attention drew its influence from “Fernandomania.” Indeed, the media drew parallels with the name “Puigmania.” What is more, Los Angeles’s latest Latino media sensation was attracting the attention of both English and Spanish-language media alike who questioned the player’s boisterous, aggressive style of play and the murky details surrounding his arrival from Cuba to the United States.

In this chapter, I argue that both local and national U.S. newspaper coverage of Mexican pitchers, Fernando Valenzuela and Teddy Higuera, discussed both athletes in terms of their bodies, yet constructed differing narratives by discussing Valenzuela’s body in terms of culture and Higuera’s body in terms of on-field performance. Valenzuela’s Horatio Algeresque, rags-to-riches story instantly sparked a U.S. media love affair with the “pudgy” Mexican pitcher. Baseball writers capitalized on “Fernandomania” by discussing his body in opposition to traditional notions of a professional ballplayer’s image and background (which accentuated slim, muscular bodies), opening up avenues for discussions about body, language, and culture. While nearly identical to Valenzuela in build and also coming from humble beginnings, Higuera was discussed by the U.S. media in terms of on-field performance with little focus on culture and his own rags-to-riches story. Without this vital cultural strand, Higuera’s narrative never attracted the attention afforded to Valenzuela’s narrative—that is, despite his statistical success, which illustrates the importance of culture to the media constructions of foreign athletes.

Fernandomedia

The manner in which media narratives are constructed when centering on the body, the most visible aspect of an athlete's image, reveals larger issues related to sport and society. Over the years players in many sports, from Charles Barkley ("the Round Mound of Rebound") to Brazilian striker Ronaldo ("El Gordo") to former Yankees pitcher, David Wells, have faced scrutiny for their body size. Most recently, Texas Rangers, Prince Fielder's, heavy-set body was the topic of discussion after the first baseman posed nude in *ESPN Magazine's* 2014, "Body Issue."

The narrative set forth by the media for Fernando Valenzuela linked issues of culture to the pudgy pitcher's frame and placed them in opposition to baseball's typical notion of "the Natural." The U.S. media used Valenzuela's body as a focal point, sparking discussions about the Mexican pitcher's image, as well as larger issues concerning Latinos in both baseball and the nation. This discussion was largely a contradictory one, where the negative focused on Latinos via physique and place in society, while the positive focused on the mythical rags-to-riches story. With such an intriguing and engaging background story (impoverished beginnings, large family, school drop-out), coupled with his amazing baseball start, the media took Valenzuela's Mexican fairytale and transformed the pitcher's narrative into a truly American rags-to-riches story.

Prior to his opening day debut, Valenzuela first made *LA Times* headlines during his push for the 5th spot in the Dodgers' pitching rotation, the topic of a two-page spread introducing the, "youthful Mexican," to Los Angeles that used the body as a means of discussing background and performance. As Mark Heisler stated, for example, "a little on the round side," Valenzuela "loves beer and Mexican food." This made the pitcher's weight and eating habits a central topic of discussion. In continuation, he lauded Valenzuela's minor league success and noted that, armed with, "three basic

itches...Valenzuela has accomplished all this with a pudgy body.” Heisler also included then-Dodgers’ Vice President Al Campanis’s description of Valenzuela as, “a big eater [with] a weight problem,” and his wishes that Valenzuela would “get into salads, as befits a Californian” (Heisler, March 4/81).¹² Valenzuela, upon hearing the remarks, noted that Campanis was “just joking” and that, although he, “miss[es] Mexican food, Nobe (Kawano, the equipment manager) is making some tomorrow” (Heisler, 4/81).

Over a month later, on April 24th, another *LA Times* article, “From Mexico with Mystery,” reintroduced Valenzuela after his sensational opening day debut, once more touching on issues of weight and drinking habits, but this time giving Valenzuela a space to voice his own perspective about such media depictions. With regard to his beer drinking, the article quoted Fernando, “It bothers me in a way...I have never said that I drink that much. People all think that I like to get drunk. What I do is eat a lot – steaks, salads, avocados, Mexican food, carne asada, beans, rice. I do like to eat” (*LA Times* 4/24). Still, the image of Valenzuela as over-consumptive persisted, and even children’s books on Valenzuela noted that the man enjoyed his beer and food.¹³ The *LA Times* article also showed the difficulties of assimilation rather than simply asking questions as to why the southpaw had not grown accustomed to U.S. culture. Labeling Valenzuela a “recluse,” the article recounted his time in San Antonio as a minor leaguer, and the gratefulness he held for beginning his career in a city with many Spanish-speaking people.

Valenzuela Making a Pitch to Start
 MARK HEISLER
Los Angeles Times (1923-Current File); Mar 4, 1981;
 pg. F1



Valenzuela

Youthful Last Season

By MARK HEISLER
 YERO BEACH, Calif. — Fernando Valenzuela's career won't last long. The average (300) strikeout pitcher, who is 5'11", 190 pounds and a "one" says the baseball writers.

The man on the mound in Mexico, 1 drive last September for learning to throw. He took Bobby worked his way to the Dodgers system. In 1980, he pitched for the Dod allowed no earned runs. He is now listed as a candidate for a starting rotation.

From Mexico With Mystery
 ROBERT MONTEMAYOR
Los Angeles Times (1923-Current File); Apr 24, 1981;
 pg. D1



Figure 2-1 Early *LA Times* articles featured half-page (left) and third-page (right) images of Fernando's body in pitching and post-release motions (03/04/1981 and 04/24/1981).

Further coverage showed the U.S. media fascination with a body that contested the nation's traditional notions of the quintessential professional athlete. One *LA Times* headline aptly entitled, "The Great Weight Debate," included in-depth analyses on the merits of fat vs. thin pitchers. *Sporting News* utilized adjectives, such as "pudgy," "chubby," and an apparent favorite, "portly," in portraying Valenzuela. Interestingly, a *Sports Illustrated* feature article on Valenzuela, dated May 4th, barely mentioned his physique, but did remark that, "at 5'11" 190 pounds, he'll never be mistaken for an Olympic sprinter" (Kaplan 5/4/1981). The fascination with Valenzuela's weight appeared only in articles within the first two years of his debut, at a time when his weight fluctuated between 180 and 220 pounds. However, even at his lowest, *Sporting News* noted, "at 180-plus pounds, it'll take some zephyr to move the portly Valenzuela" (May 9, 1981).

Harkening back to a “Ruthian image,” Babe Ruth was another ballplayer who dominated baseball on an excessive diet of hotdogs and beer. Hence, Valenzuela’s weight was never truly an issue of negativity, so much as a public fascination with how one possessing his physique could be a dominant baseball player. Fans often weighed in on Valenzuela and offered their opinions on the pitcher. For example, one fan from Stretor, Illinois, wrote in to the *Sports Illustrated* section, “19th Hole: The Readers Take Over,” and was quoted as saying:

No wonder rookie Dodger Pitcher Fernando Valenzuela has caused such an outbreak of "Fernando Fever" with his red-hot start ("Epidemic of Fernando Fever", May 4). Take another good look at the photographs accompanying Jim Kaplan's article. Notice the wide nose, the merry brown eyes and the Beer League profile. What else would you expect from a man who appears to be the double of Babe Ruth? Maybe the Dodgers should play Fernando in right field when he's not needed on the mound (Flood 5/18/1981).

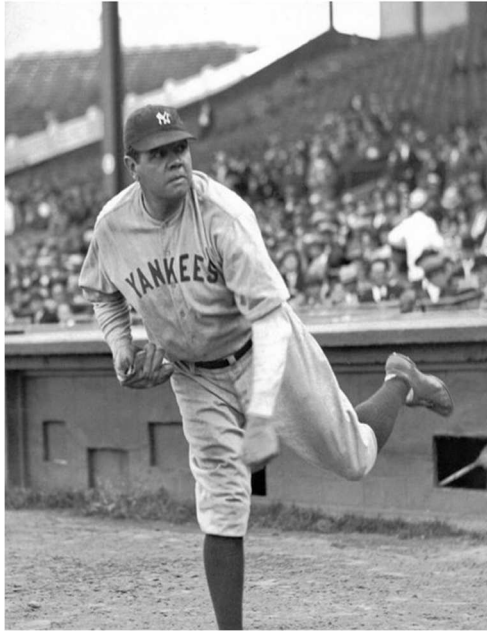


Figure 2-2 Babe Ruth (Bostonbaseballhistory.com, n.d.) and Fernando Valenzuela (Accordino, Jim. "Fernando Warming Up," 1981).

Unlike most professional athletes who pay the utmost attention to their physical fitness, Valenzuela's mentality toward his own physique was one that the media presented as uncivilized, seemingly primal in his carelessness towards keeping in tip-top shape. Such a portrayal was summed up by *Sporting News'* article, "Fernando Idol of the Idlers." Indeed, the exposé described Valenzuela's, "philosophy on physical exertion," as one he did not, "believe in...proving it is possible for a person to emerge from the outback of Navajoa, drop from school and develop into one of immense sagacity" (8/16/1982). The article continued, "[he] is blissfully detached from sciences of the mind and especially of the body, forming an interesting contrast, say, to Steve Carlton (a peculiar left-handed pitcher for the Phillies)" (8/16/1982).¹⁴

The bodily focus reaffirmed Valenzuela's "natural" ability to play ball in spite of his size and worked to suggest a nonchalant approach that borders upon lazy. Yet, it was

this same lackadaisical characterization that worked in Valenzuela's favor, because it harkened back to the days of old, when ballplayers simply showed up and played without a care in the world for physical preparation. In an age where physical fitness grew increasingly paramount to professional athletes, Valenzuela reminded baseball fans of past players—that is, players like Babe Ruth, who pounded hot dogs, drank beer, and consumed tobacco, all the while dominating the opposition on the diamond.

Aside from paying attention to his “Ruthian” body, and not so “Ruthian” physical characteristics, such as his brown skin and indigenous features, early *LA Times* coverage of Valenzuela heavily emphasized his humble beginnings and his inability to speak English to create mystery and intrigue. Both *LA Times* and *Sporting News* continuously reminded readers that Fernando “speaks no English,” often exemplifying his inability to respond to interview questions. However, this is shown in an endearing light early in his career, with Valenzuela's carefree and innocent demeanor portrayed through his simplistic responses.¹⁵ The *LA Times* article, “Fan Views of Fernando,” and the *Sports Illustrated* piece, “19th Hole: The Readers Take Over,” both contain sections for fan commentary on Valenzuela's English-speaking abilities. Together, they exemplify the various positions the U.S. audience held concerning language and assimilation. One *LA Times* reader revealed her disdain for Valenzuela's failure to learn English, stating, “My husband and I wonder why Fernando did not take a blitz course in English during the strike. This interpreter bit is beginning to pall. Before our vacation in Mexico I studied Spanish” (11/7/1981).

Along with *LA Times* readers, one *Sports Illustrated* subscriber from Chicago wrote:

I take exception to Ray Gonzales's comment that Hispanic-Americans consider Valenzuela a role model for not learning English and having "succeeded while not selling out." This points out the problem America faces as many try to convert us to a bilingual society. When Hispanic-Americans assimilate into the mainstream by speaking and using

English, they are far from "selling out" but are "buying in" to the values and system that make their success possible (07/22/1985).

In the same *Sports Illustrated* issue, an individual from Florida penned:

I don't care if Fernando speaks Spanish, English or Sanskrit. On the field he has a unique body language that features peeks upward while pitching, taking major league cuts when at bat, and exuding fun while shagging balls in batting practice or playing leftfield in an extra-inning game. As Tony Castro's article clearly points out, Fernando communicates by winning or losing with class, poise and skill, ingredients that — when present — are apparent in any language (07/22/1985).

These responses not only concerned Valenzuela's English-speaking abilities, but they also raised questions about the use of interpreters, the level of English acquisition expected of foreigners, and whether on-field performance spoke loudly enough to deflect such issues of language. As a large portion of Spanish-speaking Mexicans entered the U.S. during the 1980s, the issue of language and assimilation reared itself both nationally and within the baseball community. In baseball, the responsibility almost always falls upon foreign players to integrate smoothly, and in a sport where writers can make or break a player's image, the expectation is not on the journalist, but the player, to learn English and communicate with the press. As Burgos, Jr. argued:

The player who adroitly handles the media and his public image positions himself well for endorsement deals. Those who do not are often ridiculed by the sporting press for their inability to communicate and, over time, are often portrayed as unwilling to assimilate to the mainstream in the United States (p. 246).

Fortunately, the Dodgers were an organization well-equipped to handle Valenzuela's assimilation issues by providing him with a strong network that aided his transition. This network of support came from interpreters, such as, Jaime Jarrín, as well as Spanish-speaking manager, Tommy Lasorda, and catcher, Mike Scioscia. *Sporting News* noted Valenzuela's, "fear of English dates back to his first spring training session in 1980," where upon using a wrong word, found the entire class laughing. Valenzuela never

returned (Gurnick 7/11/1983). Valenzuela's fear of butchering English is not unique, however. Indeed, many foreign players have dreaded possible negative media portrayals that might have stemmed from their mispronouncing a word or saying the wrong thing. Hence, the Dodgers have worked to promote cultural respect and helped foreign players transition to U.S. baseball and U.S. culture. Accordingly, along with their strong ties to the Latino community, the organization has diligently worked to foster a strong relationship with Japanese baseball and its clubs, as evidenced by its signings of the likes of Hideo Nomo (2nd Japanese player to play in MLB in 1995), Kazuhisa Ishii (2002), Norihiro Nakamura (2005), and Takashi Saito (2006).

To explore Valenzuela's cultural background, U.S. news media created a mythical backdrop around the pitcher that echoed the ideals of American baseball's pastoral foundations, though the discussion still took place in terms of the nuanced differences between these beginnings. Indeed, by connecting Valenzuela's countryside history with America's frontier history, the cultural differences slightly paralleled the notion of "the Natural," which a U.S. audience could understand. However, Valenzuela's past differed from the game's long-accepted "pastoral" history; there was no strapping, hay-baling farm boy firing off baseballs in the American farm fields in the vein of "the Natural." Indeed, as Steve Wulf wrote in *Sports Illustrated*, "The Natural is supposed to be a blue-eyed boy who teethed on a 36-ounce Louisville Slugger. He should run like the wind and throw boysenberries through brick. He should come from California" (3/23/1981). Instead, there was a portly, Mexican farm boy, the youngest of twelve children, born to a farmer in the Mexican countryside, who instead of baling hay, played stickball in the dirt. A U.S. audience, then, unacquainted with Valenzuela might not understand how he situated into baseball's conventional narrative as a foreign phenomenon, especially when media constructions played upon the stereotypical image of the Latino family when introducing

Valenzuela's lineage—simple and hardworking. For example, one *Sporting News* article revealed a quiet father who simply told Valenzuela to “behave yourself” upon his bus's departure for the U.S. and a worried mother who, “[l]ooking at a photograph from an American newspaper showing Fernando's girth in contrast to his trim Dodgers teammates, said, ‘My, he's gotten so thin’” (Ostler 5/23/1981).

The formative stages of “Fernandomania” and the honeymoon affair leading to articles emphasizing his humbleness and care-free disposition disappeared once Valenzuela wished to be paid more than his reported \$42,500 base salary during his rookie year (*Sporting News* 11/7/1981). At this point, the media began connecting Valenzuela's demands for a higher salary with his large body, discussing the pitcher in terms of greed and gluttony. However, Valenzuela's demands should come as no surprise. One of the earlier *Sports Illustrated* articles covering his magical season remarked that the pitcher's agent spoke, “expansively of his client ‘crystallizing the American Dream and making a lot of money’” (Kaplan 5/18/1981). Valenzuela was no longer a Mexican mystery and his 1982 contract negotiations with the Dodgers elicited strong responses from not only much of the white baseball community—labeling him as greedy, unappreciative, and unworthy of a huge contract due to his limited appearances in relation to his monetary demands—but also his Spanish-speaking compatriots. This surprising lack of Mexican support revealed the Los Angeles Mexican community's past concerns about their main media representative's supposed greed and gluttony as reflective of the community as a whole. At a time when Los Angeles was couched in fears of Mexican mass migration into the U.S., Mexicans/Mexican-Americans in the city wished to avoid negative portrayals associated with their community. With negative stereotypes casting Latinos as lazy, promiscuous, raiders, and gang members, among other

prejudicial and stereotypical epithets, the community naturally wished not to provide ammunition to those who would add “greedy” and “unappreciative” to the list.

Time magazine dubbed the 1980s, “the decade of the Hispanic.” Within this context, Valenzuela was one of the few visible Latino role models in the U.S. media. As the decade continued, however, his position was cast into doubt. David Reyes’s *LA Times* article, “Latin Heroes: The Few and Far Between,” discussed the importance of Valenzuela’s media image to the Latino community, citing UC Irvine administrator and former California State University, Fullerton, history lecturer, Manuel Gomez, who stated, “[Valenzuela] is a Mexican, who most middle-class whites think of as a lowly form bent over in a farm field. Yet, this Mexican, this lowly bastard, came to the United States and conquered the gringo in the quintessential American sport” (08/05/1983). Whether conquering or merely attempting to get his fair share of the revenue pie, Valenzuela placed his trust in agent, Antonio De Marco’s, plans at the risk of alienating a community so vital to his success.

Fernando’s body remained central to this portrayal as a greedy, gluttonous Mexican in part because he appeared well-fed, his “portly” body representative of over-consumption a la “The Hector Quesadilla Story.” National coverage constructing a negative image centered on his monetary demands and the idea that Valenzuela had not “earned” the right to such demands as a young player in a game where one must pay one’s dues before achieving stardom. *Sporting News and Sports Illustrated* articles suggested greediness on Valenzuela’s part. One *Sporting News* journalist curtly explained:

Fernando Valenzuela apparently wants to be paid by the pound. ‘Fats’ has one good season and he figures he’s worth \$1 million a year. Don Bessent looked like a future star for a season. He won eight games for the Dodgers of Brooklyn in 1965, and never won more than four again. Karl Spooner looked like two million for two games, then his arm ran out on him. (Furman Bisher 3/6/1982).

Writers also weighed in on the opinions of teammates as well as opposing players and coaches in order to offer perspective on how the Mexican's negotiations were perceived by the baseball community. While several white managers and ballplayers suggested Fernando's demands were ridiculous and unworthy, others suggested Fernando was simply "doing what he has to do," although the overriding idea remained that he should be in camp and not quibbling over money.¹⁶ As baseball historian, Samuel O. Regalado, wrote in, *Viva Baseball!*, "criticism of Valenzuela reached a crescendo on both sides of the border as he negotiated with the Dodgers," mainly due to his association with agent, Antonio "Tony" De Marco, and a perceived ungratefulness for the opportunity the Dodgers (and in turn, the U.S.) gave him (184). In *Sports Illustrated's* article entitled, "Keeping Close Watch on Fernando," it was said that, "most of the anger has been directed toward De Marco, a former entertainer and disc jockey with a considerable sense of his own importance, who isn't a popular figure among L.A.'s Latinos" (Wulf 04/05/1982). The article continued to describe Valenzuela as, "[r]eading from a prepared statement, [saying], 'We have been treated like children. I am only 21, but I am a man to be considered with dignity.' Observers at the press conference said that Valenzuela stumbled over the words, the implication being that he was reading them for the first time" (Wulf 4/5/1982). Regalado cited vicious articles, such as *LA Times* writer Jim Murray's, "Is Fernando a Bandito," that suggested, "[Fernando] should get on his knees and thank Our Lady of Guadalupe he's got a job," in order to show the insensitivity of U.S. baseball writers when it came to Valenzuela's situation (n.d.). While the press's insensitivity towards Valenzuela should not be ignored, it must be noted that not all *LA Times* writers turned their backs on the young man, but, rather, attempted to reason with their audience by urging understanding for the Mexican superstar.

A few *LA Times* columnists provided defense for Valenzuela and his lengthy holdout. However, these writers were among the minority and are included to show that, despite all the negativity surrounding the situation, Valenzuela did have a little media support. In, "His Fans Turn Faster than his Screwball," Scott Ostler reminded readers, "Joe DiMaggio held out. Babe Ruth held out. Sandy Koufax, the First Gentleman of Baseball, held out...but now Fernando holds out and you want to pair him up with Benedict Arnold on a commemorative postage stamp" (3/3/1982). Another article by, Frank del Olmo, lamented the situation for its potential negative impact on a Mexican hero for the 3 million Mexican-Americans that resided in Los Angeles. Olmo directly challenged media members, including fellow columnist, Jim Murray, for the negative representations of Valenzuela and his supposedly lacking support among the Mexican/Mexican-American community (3/11/1982). Mark Heisler noted in his article, "Why Not Try the Koufax Compromise?," that:

There is one point to consider, and that is the damage the holdout has done to Valenzuela's innocent image. There are people who didn't think he was like this, but that has more to do with their innocence than his. Who is there who wouldn't be like this? What's wrong with being like this? He drew the people, he's got a moral claim to a percentage of the extra profit. It's as simple as that. (2/28/1982).¹⁷

Fernando Packs 'Em In

Following are the Los Angeles Dodgers' average 1981 attendance figures with and without Fernando Valenzuela on the mound

Dodgers at:	Dates	Without Fernando	Dates	With Fernando
Atlanta	4	8,518	1	26,597
Chicago	5	16,165	1	30,556
Cincinnati	4	29,288	2	37,509
Houston	4	27,808	2	32,756
Los Angeles	45	40,882	12	48,323
Montreal	3	24,175	1	46,405
New York	2	14,439	1	39,848
Philadelphia	3	27,450		Did not pitch
Pittsburgh	3	13,407		Did not pitch
St. Louis	4	22,249	2	39,001
San Diego	4	13,706	1	19,776
San Francisco	4	16,814	2	25,918
Totals	85	30,800	25	39,460

Figure 2-3 *Sporting News* chart illustrating Valenzuela's incredible drawing power on the road (12/09/1981).

Spanish-Language Fernandomedia

La Opinión, the go-to newspaper for Spanish-language media coverage in Los Angeles, found itself in a paradoxical position when attempting to present Valenzuela in a positive light to the Los Angeles Spanish-speaking community during his contract negotiations with the Dodgers. As a paper designed to both, “paint a...positive image of Mexicanos,” living in the U.S. and, “to serve as the voice of the Mexican exile community and to defend and represent the views of the Mexican elite,” Valenzuela enjoyed extensive coverage from *La Opinión*, despite his poor background. The paper lauded the pitcher's successes, but also maintained a sense of his identity by continuing to conduct his interviews in Spanish (*Mex Reader* 155). As historian, Adrian Burgos, Jr., wrote, “the prominence of his brownness and indigenusness made him a cultural hero to Mexicans and many Latinos,” unlike those pre-integration players who denied their cultural ties or claimed Spanish/Castilian roots in order to avoid trouble (235). Unwilling to take a stance on Valenzuela's contract situation for fear of losing readership, the paper simply stated that they were, “not against Fernando, but he's asking for too much money” (*Mex Reader*

156). This “paternal” move, as Regalado stated, to not directly attack Valenzuela regarding his demands, allowed *La Opinión* to retain its position as the go-to outlet for Spanish-language baseball coverage without losing both audience and sports star (*Mex Reader* 156).

The perceived lack of support for Valenzuela from the Latino community appears a direct result of Valenzuela’s association with his agent, Antonio De Marco. In, “Fernando and Agent Apparently Stand Alone,” Heisler noted that, “*La Opinión*...ran a lead editorial early in the week criticizing Valenzuela and his agent,” while “the sports editor of *La Voz Libre*, a Spanish-language weekly, estimated Friday that 90% of the Latino community was pro-Dodgers and hostile personally to De Marco” (2/27/1982). Yet, with all the commotion about the lack of Latino support for Valenzuela, *LA Times* writer Scott Ostler noted that while reports were suggesting, “the Mexican-American community of L.A. has soured on Fernando because of his greed...[there was] press conference Tuesday where several Mexican-American community leaders, backed by 23 Latino organizations, angrily insisted they support Fernando” (3/3/1982). Still, Ostler suggested that most of the negativity stemmed from De Marco, who, “went before the public and press and pleaded for our support on behalf of his client,” claiming that, “[i]t seemed kind of like Tony was sort of using us. Most agents are a lot more subtle” (3/3/1982). De Marco, however, proclaimed that, “[i]t hurts me that my brothers sell out Fernando, but it just gives me more strength. I’m going against tradition. I’m going against the rules. I’m going against a bigger organization with powerful friends” (2/27/1982). Never scared to ruffle feathers, De Marco thus took on the role of David against the Goliath ownership of the Los Angeles Dodgers.

Whether agent-speak or truly heart-felt, De Marco’s acceptance of the role of the “hated agent” and his strong connections with Valenzuela made him pivotal to the

pitcher's media image. Wishing to paint a clean portrait of the southpaw, De Marco ensured, "his client will sign contracts with only reputable concerns; he will not endorse junk food, alcohol, tobacco, or other harmful products including ones that project stereotypical Mexican images" (LaFrance 17). Furthermore, De Marco attempted to cater to the U.S. audience by "Americanizing" the image of Fernando via advising him to buy American when it came to purchasing a car, setting up lunches with President Reagan, and introducing him to the Los Angeles scene.

The "Americanization" of Valenzuela's narrative thus occurred in large part to the influence of De Marco and the monetary gains reaped by embracing American culture. Despite the discord between Los Angeles's Latino community and De Marco, who embraced the role as villain, De Marco's vision for Valenzuela's success utilized the community while simultaneously creating a temporary schism between Valenzuela and his Latino supporters. While risky in terms of isolating Valenzuela and creating controversy surrounding the star pitcher, this move ultimately succeeded. Indeed, De Marco was liberated from the criticism he received in 1982 upon winning the 1983 arbitration decision that saw his client become the first \$1 million dollar arbitration winner.¹⁸

Where's Higuera?

During the mid-1980s, another Mexican pitcher dominated the diamond and drew many comparisons to Valenzuela, yet remains largely anonymous today due to a media narrative that lacked a cultural focus and a playing location that lacked a strong Latino population. Around Milwaukee, the name Teodoro "Teddy" Higuera stirs recollections of one of the best pitchers in Brewers' history, yet not many know his name outside of Brewer country. Even in Mexico he is still largely overshadowed by Valenzuela. Baseball historian Peter Bjarkman argued, "Higuera may have been even better than Fernando, of

course, if one considers raw talent alone or takes into account the difference between the Dodgers lineups that backed Valenzuela and the Milwaukee Brewers clubs that normally supported Higuera” (*Diamonds Around Globe* 290). *Sporting News* even claimed, “Higuera ...may someday challenge the Dodgers’ Fernando Valenzuela as a national hero in Mexico” (Isle 5/16/1988). Higuera’s first season with the Brewers was one that statistically rivaled Valenzuela’s, but because the Brewers were a small-market team that lacked decent hitting, it never garnered the same fervor of Valenzuela’s eventual World Series run.¹⁹ Higuera was named *Sporting News*’ Rookie of the Year in 1985 and finished second place in the National League Cy Young voting to Roger Clemens in 1986, the same year both he and Valenzuela became the first Mexican 20-game winners, with Higuera accomplishing the feat just a few days before Valenzuela. In one of the few *Sports Illustrated* articles mentioning Higuera, a piece on the intense 1986 batting race, batting title contenders, Don Mattingly and Wade Boggs, “both agreed that the toughest left hander they faced...[was] Teddy Higuera of the Brewers” (Gammons 10/13/1986).

Unlike Valenzuela, *Milwaukee Journal* writers did not introduce the young Higuera as a cultural figure representative of Milwaukee’s seemingly intangible Latino community, but simply as an athlete with superb on-field ability despite Higuera’s own rags-to-riches tale. Early articles lauded Higuera’s dominant pitching and the calm control he possessed on the mound, hoping to endear the Milwaukee community to the Mexican pitcher by emphasizing his baseball prowess as opposed to playing up his foreignness—leaving his narrative devoid of the cultural thread so vital to that of his counterpart. Higuera also grew up in a tiny Mexican village that lacked basic necessities, such as electricity and running water. His baseball days began at the age of 17, only after his father, who said baseball was a sport for “hoodlums,” passed away. Yet, such

background information appears only briefly in media reports and never garners the same attention as Valenzuela's own impoverished beginnings.

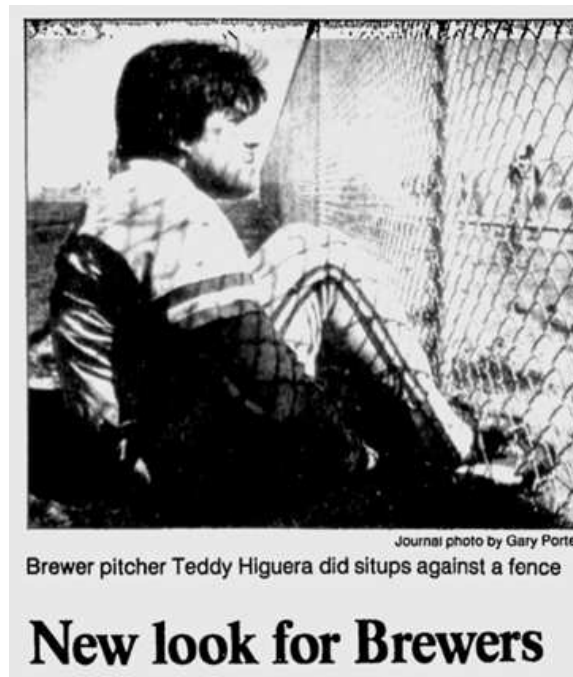


Figure 2-4 A pensive Teddy takes a break between sit-ups to look beyond the fence
(*Journal* 02/25/1986).

For example, in an April 6, 1985 article, “Happy Days for Higuera,” Tom Flaherty provided commentary on Higuera’s assortment of pitches and his quick rise through the Brewers farm system, noting that, “Higuera has tentatively been picked as the Brewers’ fifth starter” (4/6/1985). Flaherty played an important role in creating the media image of Higuera as a main contributor of Brewer’s coverage for the national publication, *Sporting News*, and its section dedicated to news specific to each MLB team. Only brief one-liners are offered by Flaherty about the pitcher’s past—passing mentions of his hometown of Sinaloa, Mexico and his path of four years in the Mexican League before one year of minor league ball in Texas and Vancouver—instead focusing on Higuera’s eye-catching pitching potential.

In another article by Michael Bauman, "Higuera Wins in any Tongue," Higuera's cultural performance once again takes a backseat to his performance on the mound, with Bauman defending the Spanish-speaking player from, "some [local] members of the media [who] seem to take offense that Higuera does not discuss change-ups, fastballs, location and velocity in their native tongue," by noting that, "Higuera is speaking the universal language, as in, you're history, batter" (08/11/1986). Higuera's play is discussed in militaristic terms; he has a "military manner," on the mound, is a "great competitor," "a battler," and as pitching coach, Herm Starrette, claimed, "If I went to war, I'd like to have him with me" (08/11/1986). By emphasizing Higuera's competitiveness and pitching, issues of culture are dismissed in favor of a construction of Higuera as a pitcher who was, "tough to hit, in any language" (08/11/1986).

Entering Higuera's second season, Flaherty's pre-season article, "No Problem: Higuera Strikes Down the Language Barrier," continued the comparison between spoken language and performance as physical language. Flaherty noted that, "while he was conquering American League hitters, he was also conquering a communications gap. He wasn't just studying hitters. He was studying English, too" (3/24/1986). Yet, the first half's discussion of language quickly shifted to the hopes for Higuera to win 20 games (which he later did) and the hard work he put into getting better on the diamond. In an article that touted Higuera's English, Flaherty still pointed out that the pitcher sometimes needed to rush to the nearest locker room interpreter if a question was not understood.

Sporting News articles took similar approaches in equating language with on-field performance instead of focusing on Higuera's cultural background, because Flaherty also provided both the regional, as well as national, coverage of the pitcher. Flaherty's decision to dismiss culture and de-racialize Higuera's narrative as opposed to playing up this aspect may sound positive, but it served to hinder Higuera's appeal to a national

Latino fan base. In his 22 April 1985 article, “Higuera Gets Shot at 5th Starter Job,” Flaherty introduced Higuera to a national audience by comparing him to Valenzuela as, “born in Los Mochis...about 100 miles south of Fernando Valenzuela’s hometown of Navajoa, Sonora...like Valenzuela, Higuera is lefthanded. In fact he looks a bit like the Los Angeles Dodgers’ pitcher...And now, just like Valenzuela, Higuera is a major league pitcher.” Flaherty did this before moving to an analysis of Higuera as a four-pitch pitcher who had the stuff to solidify a starting rotation spot (26). In October of the same year, another article entitled, “Language Barrier Can’t Stop Higuera,” pulled a similar move by focusing on Higuera’s talent and equating verbal language to the language of baseball. This allowed readers to oversee cultural issues and appreciate Higuera for his performances on the mound.

The *Milwaukee Journal’s* baseball columnists, unlike those from the *LA Times*, did not have prominent Latino sport writers, a la Frank del Olmo, to shape Latino media images or provide a Latino perspective on Latino-specific issues. More broadly, Milwaukee lacked a unifying Spanish-language paper, such as Los Angeles’, *La Opinión*, to cover issues and voice concerns dear to the Mexican community. Prior to the 1980s, several Spanish-language and bilingual newspapers catered to the Milwaukee Latino community—*La Guardia* (which focused on community news, reporting, and poetry) and *La Mutualista* (which focused on social and civil rights issues). Both papers, however, did not possess the unifying power for Milwaukee’s Latino community as did Los Angeles’s, *La Opinión* (Rodriguez 81). In 1979, however, the *Spanish Journal* began publication as the newest Latino newspaper in Milwaukee, but even this publication was founded, and thus owned, by non-Latino, Victor Lee Welch, Sr. and was, moreover, a bilingual/semi-Spanish language newspaper.

The *Milwaukee Journal* dedicated its own Latino section dubbed, “The Latin Corner,” at a time in the early 1970s when Mexicans/Mexican-Americans overtook the Polish community as the largest minority group in Milwaukee, with its 1975 inception offering a space for a Latino voice to occupy within a larger Anglo-dominated newspaper discourse. Growing over the years, the section took on different writers while tackling issues deemed relevant to the Latino community. Due to reader suggestions to changing the section’s name, as “Corner” implied only a miniscule portion of the paper was giving treatment to Latino issues, the column took on a different name, “The Latino Focus.” This aided the growth from once a week with no headline to twice a week with an engaged readership. Issues tackled ranged from education, medical care, and legal issues to community affairs, such as *quinceañeras* and cultural festivals. Higuera made a brief appearance in the section’s article, “Talk It Up,” which celebrated the one-year anniversary of, “Yolanda Ayubi Presents,” “a Spanish-speaking, call-in talk show on a relatively low power UHF channel” (Anthony 04/27/1987). Both Higuera and teammate Juan Nieves were interviewed on the show, with a, “focus more on the players themselves and less on their statistics,” in order to, as Ayubi put it, “concentrate on the aspects of them as Hispanics, their family lives, their aspirations, and how they became so skillful at what they are doing” (04/27/1987). However, this brief focus on culture is given to Higuera not by white writers, but by the Latino community.

In 1986 *Milwaukee Journal* writers gave Melita Garza the task of interviewing Higuera and offering the predominantly-white Milwaukee community a cultural narrative of its pitching sensation. The task was not given to the *Journal*’s sport writers, but to Latina staff writer, Melita Garza, due to her ability to converse with the player in Spanish.²⁰ Garza’s article, “Smooth Transitions,” gave insight into the cultural transition Higuera faced two years after moving from Mexico to the United States and elicited

different responses than what one might find in a baseball columnists' article. Garza gave Higuera an opportunity to conduct an English media interview in Spanish, a rarity when one considers the problem with baseball's lack of both interpreters and bilingual reporters. In a 1998 interview, Jaime Jarrín claimed that, "fewer than ten baseball writers are fluent in Spanish, and perhaps fewer than five are conversant enough in Spanish that they can interview foreign-born Latinos in their native language" (Burgos, Jr. 248).

Higuera's family life and interests were discussed—that is, his marriage to Myrna Higuera (a kindergarten teacher born in El Paso, Texas), their two children (Cynthia Elizabeth and Teo, Jr.), his love of cartoons, and his heroes (Mexican "Babe Ruth" Hector Espino, Pete Rose, and Mickey Mouse). An image of Higuera helping his two-year old daughter, Cynthia Higuera, to swing a bat at the Brewers' annual Father-Son-Daughter Game was also presented, allowing the audience an opportunity to see the player's softer side. Such humanizing characteristics offered depth to Higuera's image as simply a big league pitcher. When asked to discuss Mexico and the United States, Higuera replied:

All I see is the richness of this country. Everybody lives so well compared to most people in Mexico. I like the United States. Life is tranquil and peaceful. In Mexico, there's a certain tension that's missing here. A lot of it has to do with the economic uncertainties and the poverty...People here are more isolated from each other. In Mexico, people live a lot more out on the streets and tend to know their neighbors (Garza 07/10/1986).

Despite the tranquility of the United States, Higuera stated that he would remain a Mexican citizen and expressed his wish to return to his homeland of Mexico once his baseball career ended (Garza 7/10/1986). These remarks encompass Higuera's attempt to acculturate rather than assimilate, a move that kept him from embracing the English language and enabled him to market himself successfully to an American audience. Without an agent, such as Fernando Valenzuela's Tony De Marco, to create publicity and

build a strong media image on which to capitalize, Higuera remained a regional figure and never garnered the national publicity that Valenzuela achieved.

Two years later, Cathy Fitzpatrick (also not a sports writer, like the aforementioned Garza), took a different approach toward illustrating Higuera's humble start and his view of life in America with her *Milwaukee Journal* article, "Higuera has Moved Up from Simple Beginnings." This article is important, for it adds a new dimension to Higuera's narrative as a successful immigrant story, but one that still falls short, because it is found in the *Milwaukee Journal*, "Home Life," section, which most sports fans would have bypassed. Moreover, this article is still not about Higuera's cultural identity, but rather his then-newfound material success just as any other ballplayer might have gained. Fitzpatrick championed baseball's socioeconomic power by focusing on Higuera's standard of living after playing in the United States and offered a superficial view of Higuera's success by highlighting his vast accumulation of wealth. "Simple Beginnings" served up a dichotomy of Higuera's past and present living conditions:

Teddy Higuera grew up in a two-room house on a dusty road outside the tiny village of Vallejo in northwestern Mexico. The house had no electricity, no hot water, no indoor plumbing. Its roof was a thin sheet of aluminum. Today Higuera owns three beautiful homes – including one in Juarez, Mexico, with a swimming pool, sauna and trophy room where he entertains representatives of the press (06/02/1989).

Hence, Fitzpatrick portrayed Mexico as representative of poverty while the U.S. a representative of wealth and opportunity. She interviewed Higuera through an interpreter and offered information about his impoverished past, as well as a grocery list of possessions and decorations in the pitcher's Milwaukee household purchased, "when the game of baseball started bringing good things to Higuera" (Fitzpatrick 06/02/1989). In doing so, Higuera is represented as enjoying the fruits of baseball's labor, with detailed descriptions of, "soaring cathedral ceiling[s]...brass-etched glass lamps...a stunning gold and silver plated sculpture..." thanks to, "Mrs. Higuera [who] selected all the furnishings

herself in a whirlwind month of shopping at a number of Milwaukee-area shops and department stores” (06/02/1989). Without U.S. baseball (and his wife), the lavish home and decorations would be a mere dream.



Figure 2-5 Higuera’s Home Life from “Humble Beginnings” article (photographer Ronald M. Overdahl)

While articles like those of Garza and Fitzpatrick offer up versions of Higuera’s own rags-to-riches journey, they only provided this view to a Milwaukee audience, and even then, are not found in the newspaper’s sport section. Thus, Higuera’s narrative was limited nationally, lacking the extensive coverage afforded to Valenzuela’s hometown, family, and background as found in *Sports Illustrated* and *Sporting News*. Higuera also never aimed to “Americanize” his image like Valenzuela, so it is no wonder that his narrative reads as performance-based and lacks the intriguing culturally-driven strand that so popularized Valenzuela’s media image.

“Bad Teddy”

As Fernando’s honeymoon with the Dodgers and Los Angeles ended abruptly in 1981, Higuera too found himself in a tricky position during his intense 1987 contract negotiations with the Brewers due to a new rule change raising a player’s eligibility for arbitration from his second year to his third. As one *Journal* article put it, Teddy appears a “victim of circumstances,” as “he could have theoretically taken his 20-victory season, gone to arbitration and felt confident that his numbers would support a salary at least as large as that of, say, Orel Hershiser” (02/20/1987). Instead, Higuera maintained leverage in the form of a holdout, a forced move that Higuera resorted to and that media members were quick to cover and question.

Local baseball writers, such as Haudricourt and Flaherty, discussed Higuera’s holdout in terms of what the Mexican stood to lose by doing so—that is, from his status as Opening Day pitcher to his work visa allowing him to play in the United States. Pressure was placed upon the Mexican pitcher to continue performing his duty as an athlete in spite of the money, from teammates discussing his leadership and their desire for his presence to coaches voicing their unhappiness with each missed training session. General Manager Harry Dalton himself stated, “[w]e want him to come back and have another good year, and obviously to do that, he has to have a certain amount of training” (Flaherty 02/24/1987).

Unlike Valenzuela’s agent, Tony De Marco, who took a controlling role in both contract negotiations and media narrative, Higuera’s agent, Brian David, did not play a large part in Higuera’s media image outside of Milwaukee. David is mentioned in a few *Sporting News* articles pushing for the Brewers to pay Higuera fairly and according to market value. Both parties were more than \$200,000 dollars apart, with Higuera asking for \$500,000. Brian David justified the salary request to the media by stating:

Teddy Higuera has more wins in the last two years than Roger Clemens (31), Ron Darling (31), Orel Hershiser (33) or Bret Saberhagen (27). Dwight Gooden (41) is the only pitcher in baseball to win more games in his first two seasons than Higuera. That includes his countryman and hero, Fernando Valenzuela (Flaherty *Sporting News* 3/2/1987). However, without a Latino community to fall back on as Valenzuela, Higuera resigned the \$300,000 contract offer with the Brewers prior to the 1987 season. Despite his disappointment, he stated, “[t]oday’s the last time you’ll hear about it. I’m here to play baseball” (*Sporting News* 3/16/1987).

As one *Sporting News* reader echoed in the paper’s, “Voice of the Fan,” section:

Teddy Higuera, the finest lefthanded pitcher in the American League, is far outdistanced in salary by a middle-of-the-road junkball pitcher like Ed Lynch. One would think that in this era of free agency and statistical comparison such inequities wouldn’t exist, but apparently...you get whatever your club is willing to pay (Stroff 5/18/1987).

Despite statistical dominance and a résumé of work that surpassed even the best pitchers at the time, Higuera was powerless against the Milwaukee Brewers’ ownership and ultimately found himself back on the mound with a salary many in the media considered a bargain for the team.

Higuera’s contract negotiations and the responses it received differed from those of Valenzuela’s due to their difference in narratives and how their bodies were portrayed. Higuera lacked agency regarding his situation. He was simply another athlete at the mercy of Major League Baseball’s rules, its owners, and its writers, because he was merely a ball player and not a cultural icon. He lacked the cultural sway that Valenzuela and his agent relied so heavily on in their contract negotiations with the Dodgers. Valenzuela’s position as representative of Los Angeles’s Mexican community and undeniable marketability gave him leverage in spite of the negativity surrounding his demands. Higuera, discussed as athlete, merely had statistics to back up his contract demands and could not rely on the small Latino population of Milwaukee.

The 1986-87 season marked a turning point in Higuera’s favorable media representations as an “aggressive,” “energetic,” and “competitive” pitcher, when a period

of emotional outbursts and on-field tantrums led to news media portrayals of Higuera as the stereotypical “Latin hot head” or the “hot-blooded Latin.” This negative stereotype has been utilized by the U.S. media in past portrayals of numerous Latino stars—from the likes of Dolf Luque and Orlando Cepeda to Minnie Miñoso and Vic Power (the latter two being black Latinos)—often unfairly and in response to isolated incidents. Juan Marichal, subject to such criticism during his playing career (1960-1975), “told baseball commentator Rob Ruck in the 1980’s, when Latinos were still being stereotyped as ‘too emotional,’ that ‘there are a lot of American players that do the same. It’s part of the game. It’s excitement that makes you act like that’” (Cockcroft *Latinos in Béisbol* 137). As Cockcroft pointed out, “[w]hat if all white baseball players were negatively stereotyped as a bunch of cheats and frauds, as shown by the gambling and even criminal behavior of players during the Black Sox scandal or Pete Rose’s fall from grace?” (137).

Higuera’s on-field antics during the 1987 season were not well-received by Milwaukee and national baseball writers deemed his outbursts detrimental to the team. After beginning the season 4-0, Higuera entered the month of May and went on to drop five straight (with minimal run support), leading both regional and national papers to raise the, “new quiz question in Milwaukee these days: What’s wrong with Teddy Higuera?” (*Sporting News* 06/15/1987). At the end of July, “the growing-more-famous by the outing Teddy Higuera temper reared its ugly head again,” as Higuera yelled at umpire Rick Reed over balls and strikes, resulting in an early shower for the pitcher (Burke 7/27/1987). Higuera was not the only player who voiced his displeasure with umpire Reed, as Reggie Jackson was also ejected for, “tossing his bat and helmet back in the direction of home plate,” after a questionable strike-three call (Burke 7/27/1987). The *Journal’s* “,Teddy the Bear,” article also dedicates itself to the numerous accounts of when the, “Brewers’ talented left-hander strikes out against his temper,” from ejections

arguing balls and strikes, yelling at teammates, and even one comical account of the lefty becoming, “upset by a squirrel that wandered onto the County Stadium field. [Higuera] chased it and threw his glove at it” (Burke 08/02/1987). The article poetically asks, “What makes Teddy fume? Big things? Little things? Definitely something...a portrait in peacefulness on the mound for most of his first two seasons, [he] has become something of an angry young man” (08/02/1987).

The fire that drove many writers to describe Higuera as competitive and a warrior on the mound began to depict fuel portrayals of Higuera as a hot-head. Tom Haudricourt’s similarly titled pair of articles, “Higuera Controls A’s, Loses Temper,” and, “Higuera Wins Game, Loses Temper,” cover instances where Higuera’s temper overshadowed his dominant pitching performances. The former article recounted the pitcher yelling at umpire Hirschbeck over balls and strikes before the situation escalated and skipper, Tom Trebelhorn, pulled him prior to an imminent ejection. The latter article, then, which was positioned as the sport section’s headline article, described Higuera yelling at his catcher B.J. Surhoff over miscommunication that resulted in a fielding error and two runs scoring. This was, “a Higuera tantrum, vintage 1986-1987,” and, once again, although the team won, Higuera’s emotions overran his superb performance.

Sporting News enjoyed sharing numerous accounts of Higuera “outbursts” with its audience, coloring Higuera’s narrative in much the same way as the *Milwaukee Journal*. Higuera’s antics against the A’s and the disciplinary actions taken by manager Trebelhorn were mentioned in the Brewers’ news section (“Brewers” 8/10/1987). His August 1988 yelling match against catcher, B.J. Surhoff, was as well (8/1/1988). Two months later, an October article described Higuera recording his 15th victory, but also how, “Trebelhorn gave him a quick hook in the seventh inning when Higuera lost his temper and screamed at umpire John Hirschbeck.” Trebelhorn pointed out that Higuera’s

competitiveness, yet says, "I don't want robots, and I don't think you want people who don't become emotional. But I think there's a perspective that has to be checked" (10/10/1988). Thus, the media shifted Higuera's narrative from the body as performative of sport to one that focuses on the body as demonstrating anger and frustration in a sport where decorum and restraint were, and still are, the norm.

Higuera's portrayal as a "hot-head" came at a time when lingering injuries and the pressure of winning weighed on Higuera, leading to the negative impact on his media image and narrative. In Higuera's defense the Brewers as a whole struggled mightily during the early part of the season, having dropped 18 of 24 games in May, which was one of the worst months in Brewers' history (*Sporting News* 9/21/1987). Even Higuera admitted, "I have the responsibility to the team because I'm the No. 1 pitcher. I'm putting a lot of pressure on myself when I pitch" (*Sporting News* 06//15/1987). Despite such circumstances, many audience members held, "the ethnically insulting 'That's the way those hot-blooded Latin American players are' theory" (Burke 08/02/1987). The use of this stereotype to describe Latino athletes was not the first, nor would be the last, but in Higuera's case it negatively colored his media narrative.

The Twilight Years

Toward the tail end of their careers, injuries and bloated contracts led to another shift in the U.S. new media images of Valenzuela and Higuera. No longer pitching giants of old, Higuera and Valenzuela were deemed contract burdens, shells of their former selves, with the media language constructing an image of their bodies as failing and aging in terms of physical play. After amassing 113 complete games during his lengthy career, Valenzuela's production began to falter with the Dodgers and eventually the team made a business decision to cut their beloved pitcher in 1990. The 113 complete games amassed during his career seemed to take a toll on his arm, compounded with the wear

and tear of the screwball. For Higuera, 1989 marked the beginning of the end as several ankle injuries and a spinal disc surgery slowed down his play. After a decent 1990 campaign, finishing 11-10 with a 3.76 ERA and 129 strikeouts, the Brewers gave Higuera a risky 4-year, \$13-million dollar contract due to dire team pitching needs and the pressure of a 3-year contract offer on the table from the San Diego Padres. This contract was characterized by *Journal* writers as the worst in Brewers history, though Higuera might consider it payback for being underpaid during his earlier years.

Unfortunately, 1991 brought on a torn rotator cuff, leading to multiple surgeries causing Higuera to miss the 1992 season. After sporadic play in the 1993, 1994 was the fateful year. Ever the fighter, Higuera refused to go down to the minors in June of '94, seemingly sensing the inevitable. The predictions of *Journal* writers that forecasted the end of Higuera's playing days (as early as 1991) came to fruition, with an August 16th article by Tom Haudricourt noting Higuera's release would be a "mere formality." On the situation, Higuera bitter-sweetly stated:

I appreciate the fans – I want to say thanks to everybody there...I like the 'cheeseheads.' Right now, the people are frustrated because the team is not playing good. I played with some great players – Paul Molitor, Robin Yount, Cecil Cooper. It has changed. We have many rookies with no experience. We have a bad season and I don't know why everybody looks happy. The players go their own way now. This is not a team. Before, everybody was together, win or lose. It's not like that now. I don't want to come back to the Brewers. I'll say 'Thank you very much.' But it's better for me to go to another team. I can still pitch.

After signing a last-ditch minor league deal with the San Diego Padres the following year, Higuera failed to make the squad. Without further opportunities to play the game to which he dedicated his life, Higuera eventually returned to Mexico. Decades after their careers ended, today's media images of Fernando Valenzuela and Teddy Higuera and their roles in Major League Baseball have shifted once again. In 2003, Valenzuela re-joined the ranks of the Dodgers, this

time as a Spanish-language color commentator, affirming his place in U.S. baseball and American culture as both a Mexican/Latino community icon and an example that U.S. baseball touts as a Mexican “making it” in America’s game. With the support of the Mexican community in Los Angeles, Fernando resides in Los Angeles and achieved his agent De Marco’s wish of having him become the example of the American dream. He is even the subject of ESPN’s “30 for 30,” series documentary, “Fernando Nation” (2010). Higuera, like Valenzuela, maintains a relationship with his former ball club. The ex-Brewer had taken on the task of mentoring the Brewers’ newest Mexican pitching sensation, Yovani Gallardo, a strong pitcher with a promising career who was traded to the Texas Rangers prior to the start of the 2015-16 MLB season. Yet, without a Latino community to fall back on as Valenzuela did in Los Angeles, Higuera fulfilled his claim of returning back to Mexico after the end of his career and remains in the shadows of his Mexican counterpart—that is, outside of the U.S. media’s focus.

Both Valenzuela and Higuera, as products of the Mexican League, continue to work to grow the game of baseball in Mexico. Interestingly, the two do not maintain a focus on Mexican League baseball, but instead are part of an MLB program, Big Leaguer Charity, that focuses on helping Mexican youth players to achieve the program’s primary goal of helping young Mexican players make it to *las Grandes Ligas*.

Ultimately Fernando Valenzuela enjoyed a narrative where the U.S. media discussed his body in terms of culture, while Higuera received media coverage centering on his body in relation to his on-field performance. Such narrative constructions raise questions about the need for a culturally-driven image in creating a lasting media narrative. To what extent is culture beneficial to

the narratives of a player with an ethnic background? The cultural undercurrent, though often divisive and controversial, allows both the media and audience to engage with a player and influence their narrative through a media discussion. In the case of Valenzuela, a phenomenal rookie season and a large Los Angeles Latino community catapulted “Fernandomania” onto the national stage and spurred a media narrative centering on his “Ruthian” body as performative of culture. Valenzuela’s body is representative of a Latino community that lost support for the Mexican pitcher due to his association with agent, Tony De Marco, but relied on him as a visible Latino hero within the U.S media. De Marco’s influence on Valenzuela’s image also helped Valenzuela to shape his media narrative into a distinctly American story.

The small Milwaukee Latino community and lack of Latino *Milwaukee Journal* writers lead Higuera’s media narrative to center on the body as performative of sport. Baseball writers discussed Higuera’s body as athlete while cultural issues, such as language and background, are secondary to his ability to speak the, “universal language,” of baseball. With no focus on his own rags-to-riches story, the minimal cultural discussion that appears in his narrative comes in the form of the negative stereotype of the “Latin hot-head.” Without the cultural sway that powered Valenzuela’s story into baseball lore, Higuera narrative played second-string to the narrative known as, “Fernandomania”.

Chapter 3

“No más el equipo visitante” – Voice, Agency, and Positive Constructions of Latinos in Baseball Short Story Fiction

Certainly ‘literary ball’ is not as diverse as the game it celebrates. While there’s considerable reason to dismiss many current baseball texts as flourishings of politically correct rectitude, baseball fictions that highlight issues of integration and assimilation can’t be quickly labeled. Or for that matter, even the most clichéd distillations of baseball’s approach to America’s inequalities should not be dismissed, as these texts can sharply dramatize the conflicts inherent in the more sophisticated fictions. - David McGimpsey (*Imagining Baseball* 92).

It should come as no surprise that, until recently, the inclusion of Latino characters or Latino-specific experiences in baseball fiction anthologies has been relatively limited. As Cordelia Candelaria pointed out, “[m]irroring the pervasive ethnocentrism and male chauvinism of American society, baseball fiction is, with few notable exceptions, largely about white men participating in a close activity of the dominant – that is, white, male, Christian, and capitalist – culture,” (*Seeking the Perfect Game* 3). A baseball fiction anthology like George Bowering’s, *Taking the Field: The Best of Baseball Fiction* (1990), only features, “The Hector Quesadilla Story,” while Peter Bjarkman’s, *Baseball & The Game of Life* (1990), and Jeff Silverman’s, *Classic Baseball Stories* (2003), contain no Latino representations within its collections. John McNally’s, *Bottom of the Ninth: Great Contemporary Baseball Short Stories* (2003), does, however, include short stories featuring Latino main characters in, “The Bigs,” and, “After the Game,” but the listed anthologies along with ones like Jerome Holtzman’s, *Fielder’s Choice* (1979), and Trey Strecker’s, *Dead Balls and Double Curves: An Anthology of Early Baseball Fiction* (2004), are fully void of a Latino voice.

The few past portrayals of Latinos in baseball literature’s canon remain brief, auxiliary, and often stand in unflattering light. As Timothy Morris stated in, *Making the Team: The Cultural Work of Baseball Fiction* (1997), “[b]aseball fiction is frequently

convinced that Spanish does not really exist, that its speakers are subhuman, incapable of rational language” (5). *The Natural* (1952) includes the superstitious Mexican outfielder, Juan Flores, although this is a rarity among the canonical works such as, *Shoeless Joe* (1982), *The Celebrant* (1983), and *Universal Baseball Association* (1968), that lack a Latino presence altogether. Lamar Herrin’s, *The Rio Loja Ringmaster* (1977), used Mexico and its people as a chaotic backdrop for the text’s focal point, white protagonist, Richard Dixon. T.C. Boyle’s short story, “The Hector Quesadilla Story (1985),” painted a grotesque portrait of Hector Hernan Jesus y Maria Quesadilla, the washed-up Mexican ballplayer with, “shin splits too, and corns and ingrown toenails and hemorrhoids...and the once-proud knot of his frijole-fed belly had fallen like an avalanche.” This representation utilized the trope of the never-ending ballgame coupled with an aging athlete’s refusal to hang up the cleats. David Jauss’s aforementioned, “The Bigs” (1985), offered a first-person narrative by, Manny Sanchez, a home-sick and distraught Dominican ballplayer torn between his family (a wife and daughter having returned back to the island, because Manny refuses to give up baseball) and the pursuit of his Big League dreams. Andre Dubus’s, “After the Game (1988),” told of a clubhouse mental collapse by, Joaquin Quintana, a black Latino unable to communicate with his teammates and coaches during his madness, because they do not speak Spanish and the team has just traded Quintana’s Spanish-speaking compatriot, Manuel Fernandez (“Why the fuck did we trade Manuel?,” says one player).

At present, over 28% of MLB’s ballplayers are Latino, with the number steadily increasing, as MLB teams continue to attract and sign Latin American talent (Lapchick 3). The MLB also continues to expand its efforts to attract a Latino fan base by marketing its rising Latino stars and honoring the game’s historical Latino figures through its, “Hispanic Heritage Month.” The 2014 Home Run Derby included a live-broadcast, ESPN Spanish-

language interview with baseball's newest (and controversial) face, Cuban, Yasiel Puig, along with the sounds of boisterous Spanish banter between Latino participants, "mic-ed up," during the 2014 All-Star game. Along with established stars, such as Venezuelan pitcher, "King" Felix Hernandez, and, Venezuelan triple-crown winning first-baseman, Miguel "Miggy" Cabrera, rising new stars, like Cuban outfielder, Yasiel Puig, and the currently highest-paid player (13 years - \$325 million), power hitting-outfielder Giancarlo Stanton (whose great-grandmother was Puerto Rican) are the Latino faces the MLB is hoping to market to its burgeoning Latino fan base. Other specific efforts include the Spanish-only, "LasMayores.com," website for Spanish-language MLB access along with the recent, "Latinized," rebranding of the Florida Marlins to the Miami Marlins that saw the team construct its new stadium in the middle of Little Havana with vibrant colors (lime green, yellow, red, orange) and the Taste of Miami food court featuring Cuban and other Latin American food alongside the traditional peanuts, hotdogs, and Cracker Jack.

The relation between the MLB's increased efforts to market its product to a Latino fan base and the largely unfavorable, often absent, representations of Latinos in baseball literature is a conflicted one. While the MLB realizes the money-making potential of this burgeoning group and aims to provide positive representations of its star Latino players as well as the national sport's latest news *en español* on its Spanish-language website, LasMayores.com, baseball literature as a genre is not as quick to incorporate such representations, let alone publish texts written in anything other than English. Yet, the fact remains that the national game is now international, and the insular view of baseball as a distinctly American, white, and male-driven affair cannot hold sway.

Regardless of its image as a white, male-dominated genre, the seemingly steadfast door keeping outside voices from entering this literary circle is slowly opening. As McGimpsey noted, "in baseball fictions the subject of racial, ethnic, and gender

tensions are continually drawn out, not as a declaration that the game has been a sterling bulwark of American equality, but because its real history as an all-white, all-male bastion makes it a dramatically imposing institution to challenge” (94). However daunting the task of challenging this institution may seem, the recent publication of Robert Paul Moreira’s anthology, *¡Arriba Baseball!: A Collection of Latino/a Baseball Fiction* (2013), provided a fruitful attempt at such a counter-narrative, combating negative representations of Latinos through stories that offer both validation and voice to a group long-considered new arrivals in baseball, and in turn, the United States. Moreira brought together an array of short stories and poems, penned in both English and Spanish, with the goal of, “do[ing] away with any and all notions of gendered and white privilege in baseball literature, as well as to counter the idea that Latino/a authors have little or nothing to contribute to the genre” (xii). In order to do so, Moreira made a widespread call for short stories and poems to be submitted and approved for publication. Ultimately, fifteen selections made their way into a collection from a list of Latino/a contributors that included award-winning author, Dagoberto Gilb, academics, such as Norma Elia Cantu (University of Missouri-Kansas City) and Juan Antonio Gonzalez (UT-Brownsville), along with an introduction by baseball historian, Peter Bjarkman, and works from several up-and-coming Latino/a authors. According to Moreira, “the fifteen stories in this anthology are not the products of the traditional pastoral nostalgia for the game that helped conjure Lardner’s ‘Alibi Ike,’ for instance, or Malamud’s Roy Hobbs, Herrin’s Dick Dixon, or Kinsella’s enchanted cornfield in Iowa. Instead, all of the stories in this collection succeed in (re)defining the game of baseball and all its nuances through the prisms of Latino/a experience, craft, and imagination.” Indeed, the aforementioned short stories all embraced and highlighted baseball’s Spanish-speaking counterparts, who were so often cast in a negative light.

The literary works in Moreira's collection used the short story form to interrogate and intervene in the historically negative representations of Latinos in baseball through, "baseball moments," that validate and provide voice to a Latino presence (be it male, female, homosexual, or heterosexual). While innovative, Moreira's anthology followed in the longer traditions of baseball fiction where, as Richard Peterson claimed in, *Extra Innings: Writing on Baseball* (2001), the aim of, "baseball fiction, including the short story, [is to] mix fantasy with fact, the improbable with the probable, and to serve up this extraordinary blend as the ordinary and routine" (73). Peterson used Jim Shepard's, "Batting against Castro," as one example of how a story, "takes full advantage of the tendency of baseball fiction to serve up fantastic plots with exaggerated character...[yet] subvert this tendency by making fun of the narratives of baseball fiction while at the same time claiming narrative authority from the oddities of baseball history itself" (75). The fantastical exaggerations found in, "Batting against Castro," thus worked both with and against traditional baseball fiction narratives. It did this by utilizing the typical outrageousness traditionally found in baseball storytelling, while at the same time keeping the story from flying into the realm of absurdity and grounding it in history and statistics.

Shepard used the historical in order to suit the story's needs, drawing inspiration from Hoak and Myron Cope's, "The Day I Batted Against Castro." An essay with a disclaimer, "[i]ncredible but true," Hoak recalled how, during the fifth inning of a Cuban League game, 300 students descended from the ballpark stands in Havana for a revolutionary demonstration on the field when, "Castro (just out of law school) marched straight out to the mound and seized a glove and ball from the Marianao pitcher, a tall Cuban whose name I can't recall...Castro then toed the rubber, and as he did so his appearance on the mound was so ridiculous that I cannot forget a single detail of it"

(Cope 161-162). Thus, Shepard used this event as the backdrop for his fictional American narrator, who, despite his disinterest in politics, finds himself playing ball in pre-revolutionary Cuba in a championship game against, none other than, Fidel Castro, himself. Shepard noted that it was Hoak's essay where he, "found various details for [his] story: the names of the contending clubs...the fact that Batista himself witnessed the demonstration at the games, and finally Castro's dress shirt and slacks" (74). It is in the story's final, outrageous scene where the narrator describes Castro's ridiculous outfit along with the story's culmination in one dramatic baseball moment:

I rounded third like Man o' War, Charley not far behind me, the fans spilling out onto the field and coming at us like a wave we were beating to shore...[a]nd there was Castro blocking the plate, dress shoes wide apart, Valentino pants crouched and ready, his face scared and full of hate like I was the entire North American continent bearing down on him.

The baseball diamond becomes a revolutionary playing field, with an American ballplayer/narrator (unwillingly and unknowingly thrown first-hand into a political conflict) rounding third base like one of the greatest American racehorses of all time, bearing down on Cuba's revolutionary leader-turned baseball catcher, a figure known to both world and baseball history.²¹ It is at this moment when, "the narrative has completely blurred the line between history and anecdote and between baseball facts and baseball fiction...play[ing] into a paradoxical narrative tradition of seeing baseball, despite its statistical dominion, as a metaphor for life and its players as larger than life" (76). Statistics also play their role in the narrative by, "validat[ing] its hapless-hitting baseball characters with statistics from *The Baseball Encyclopedia*," although quite comically because of their dubious nature. For example, "[t]he anemic .143 batting average of Shepard's narrator corresponds exactly with the record of Jimmy Bloodworth, an aging utility infielder whose batting and slugging average was .143 with the 1951 Phillies" (75). That same team also, "finished twenty-three-and-a-half games behind the pennant-

winning New York Giants,” in 1951, drawing comparisons to the fictional Phillies team that finished twenty-three games out of first place in the story (75). Shepard’s narrative and characters thus join a tradition of baseball fiction that, while “undermin[ing] the sacred in baseball history and literature, also illustrate the way baseball stories convert the most mundane realities of baseball into fables and transform the occasional heroic or tragic act into romance” (78). It is untold whether the narrator, despite his shortcomings in the Majors, bowls over Castro and scores the game’s winning run, but this should come as no surprise; just as the Cuban political situation remained (and still remains!) up in the air, so too is the ending for a narrator standing for North America, “bearing down,” on the Cuban island and its own hopes.

In the end, “Batting against Castro,” used history as an anchor to tie down the fiction. In doing so, the story blended fact and fiction to transform a seemingly outrageous tale into one that grounds itself in a history important to the United States and baseball. Moreira’s anthology, *¡Arriba Baseball!*, similarly followed this tradition by offering readers stories that used history as a foundation for its fictional characters to interact with the historical. In doing so, previously ignored Latino baseball histories were exposed to readers who engaged with them through short story fictions that work in this method of mixing history and fiction.

In this chapter I select three short stories from *¡Arriba Baseball!*, “Uncle Rock,” “Chasing Chato,” and, “Juan Bobo,” that offered positive constructions of Latino characters through coming-of-age tales that culminate in dramatic baseball moments and give voice to a group previously lacking agency in baseball fiction. These three stories find similarities in their blending of fact and fiction and use of statistics to further validate its characters. Whether catching a home run ball barehanded in grandstands, getting an elusive hit off of a boyhood baseball idol, or coming together as a team to make baseball

history, all three short stories used Latino baseball history to blur the line between fact and fiction and follow protagonists whose journeys culminated in transformative moments of individuality. In doing so, these characters, previously lacking agency, gain validation and give voice to themselves, and, in turn, a Latino baseball experience.

“Uncle Rock”

Dagoberto Gilb’s great role as a Chicano activist and celebrated Mexican-American writer is largely responsible for bringing into the mainstream a Mexican-American literature and experience that previously remained silent. Born in Los Angeles, Gilb was raised by his Mexican mother, who crossed the border and settled in California before divorcing the writer’s German father, early during the writer’s childhood. His writing résumé includes a list of award-winning titles. such as *The Magic of Blood* (1993), “The Last Known Residence of Mickey Acuña” (1994), *Gritos* (2003), *Hecho en Tejas* (2006), and *Before the Beginning, after the Beginning* (2011). Each detailed the lives of Mexicans/Mexican-Americans and their struggles in the American Southwest.²² Outspoken and blunt about the silencing of a Latino voice within American society, Gilb continued his fight against such racism through his literary presence as both writer and educator, having worked as a professor at Texas State University before taking his current position as Writer in Residence and Executive Director of Centro Victoria: Center for Mexican American Literature and Culture at the University of Houston–Victoria.

In March of 2000, Gilb penned a five-page personal history in, “I Knew She was Beautiful,” an article in *The New Yorker* that detailed the writer’s tumultuous relationship with his mother and revealed a multitude of similarities to his recently published short story, “Uncle Rock,” making the fiction found in, *¡Arriba Baseball!* part-autobiographical. A model-turned-dental assistant, Gilb’s mother, “*mi mommy*,” as he said, tended to grab the

attention of men. Gilb recalled when he and his mother would frequent the horse-racing tracks:

A man would offer to buy us drinks, and I'd get a Roy Rogers – grenadine and Coke. She gave me the green olives on toothpicks from her drink to eat. The man who bought the drinks might say something at a distance first, and then approach. Usually, she just told a waiter, or the man himself, thank you so much, polite, generously happy about the drinks, but that would be it, and there we'd be, her and me at the races. I was her date. I was her man. Those men, in their suits and their blazers, snugged or loosened ties, stinking in their colognes, snapping bills off silver money clips, they were obvious, stupid, easy even for me to figure out (43).

While, as a young boy, he was, “her man,” things would soon change for Gilb as his mother began dating men who provided financial security. Among the men who vied for his mother’s attention was one, “that she’d been seeing for some time, even before she and [Gilb’s] father divorced, which was soon after [he] was born” (43). This man with whom she had an affair, a fireman, took the young Gilb and his mother to baseball games. Gilb did not like this man, who many years later would end up marrying his mother. Prior to this marriage, Gilb’s mother “,was going out on more dates, too, so she was always busy...[and] when she went out, which was a lot, she left me some money and I’d ride a bike down to the Thrifty and buy a half-gallon square of chocolate ice cream” (44). She worked as a model, but when the modeling jobs ended, she began working, “for a dentist who was a Mormon, and she was dating him, too” (44). Feeling the need to fit in and do whatever it took to become financially secure, “[s]he wanted to become a Mormon, she didn’t care how” (44). After some time, the dentist and his family invited Gilb and his mother over for Thanksgiving dinner. Gilb noted how both he and his mother felt out of place--“I didn’t like these people from the start. My mom and I spoke to each other and they looked at us as if we were being secretive, as if we were talking in Spanish, not in English” –and after aspirations of marriage to this rich dentist, the night ended abruptly and Gilb, “[did]n’t remember ever hearing her talk about him again” (45).

Unable to fit in with his wealthy life style, the hope Gilb's mother had for her relationship came to a halt.

Dagoberto Gilb drew upon these prior experiences in his short story, "Uncle Rock," offering a twist on the typical father-son convention used in baseball fiction by presenting the audience with a child protagonist, Erick, who, like Gilb, lacks a father figure and is the son of a mother who is constantly under the gaze of wealthy men who seek her company. Erick's relationship with his mother is strained due to the men she dates that leave him feeling as though his intimate mother-son relationship is under threat. Erick and his mother's strained relationship is eased through their interactions with the title character, Uncle Roque, a Mexican man who truly loves Erick's mother and treats her well. Roque (meaning rock in Spanish) remains a secondary suitor to her during the story, but through him Gilb opens up critiques on father-son relationships, Mexican-American identities, and masculinity through the lens of baseball.

Gilb's protagonist, eleven year-old Erick, deals with communication issues and takes a vow of silence as his mother goes through a revolving door of failed relationships with men who ultimately leave her. Erick's silence is a strain on his mother and her dating rendezvous. Indeed, "[h]e never said anything when the men were around, and not because of his English, even if that was what his mother implied to explain his silence" (3). Erick's decision not to speak is his only act of power against his mother's choice of men and an excuse his mother uses for her constant failed relationships. For example, upon a wealthy engineer's invitation to a family dinner (a moment seemingly drawing upon the memory of Gilb's Thanksgiving dinner with the dentist), Erick's mother, "leaned into [Erick's] ear and said that she wanted [the engineer's family] to know that he spoke English" (4). However, Erick continues his silence, "chewing quietly, taking the smallest bites, because he didn't want them to think he liked their food" (5). Ultimately, the

relationship and potential marriage opportunity his mother desires with the engineer crumbles, and after instances like this, “she told Erick that she wished they could just go back home,” home being back to a land that Erick knows little about—Mexico. However, the dates continue and Erick (just as Gilb recalled doing in his *New Yorker* article), “upon his mother leaving home for another one of her dates, “raced to the grocery store and bought half a gallon of chocolate ice cream” (Gilb 3).

Erick’s mother remaining nameless throughout the fiction suggests her lack of identity in the eyes of the men who only view her for *what* she is, a beautiful woman to be won over, instead of *who* she is, a mother in search of a husband and father figure for her child. It does not matter her name; giving her one would mean having an identity and agency in her situation. Instead, Gilb chooses to simply refer to her as, “mom,” the maternal role that Erick views her. In doing so, Erick’s mother, while having an identity in the eyes of her son, is powerless and objectified by the men who see her as an object to be won instead of a woman with which a fruitful relationship can be had.

Situating the story in 1980’s Los Angeles allows Gilb to explore the Mexican/American dichotomy that plays itself out within the story, an experience he himself has lived. As a child growing up in the Los Angeles suburb of Silverlake (an area with a historically majority Latino population) who roots for *Los Dodgers* (boasting their own large Latino fan base), the text reveals a confusion about how Erick, himself a Mexican-American, reacts to things that are also American, as he associates that which is American to the men that give his mother attention and who he feels belittle him. For instance, at the beginning of the story, Erick loves his, “favorite American food, sausage and eggs and hash-brown *papitas*,” yet violently “drove a fork into a goopy American egg yolk and bled it into his American potatoes,” when a white man comes by the table. “Squat[ting] low, so that he was at sitting level, as though he were so polite,” he tells

Erick's mother "how pretty she was," and then asks if he was eight or nine, even though, "Erick wasn't even small for an eleven-year-old" (3). Erick is constantly seen as an accessory to his mother and lacks nascent manhood as he is powerless in their situation. He also has no knowledge of his mother's homeland, seeing, "Mexico as if it were the backdrop of a movie on afternoon TV, where children walked around barefoot...and small men wore wide-brimmed straw hats"(5). The bit he does know about Mexico is tied to the heroic baseball figure of Fernando Valenzuela and, of course, the potential father figure of Roque.

Roque, or "Uncle Rock," is a Mexican man who adores Erick's mother and is willing to do anything for her, yet remains secondary in the eyes of Erick's mother because he is not rich ("she almost always gave the man her number if he was wearing a suit") (3). Roque is not flashy, does not have much money, but throughout the story remains the metaphorical rock that remains true to Erick's mother—"he was always too willing and nice, too considerate, too generous...[h]e didn't have a buzzcut like the men who didn't like kids...[h]e only ever said yes to Erick's mom...there when she asked, gone when she asked, back whenever, grateful" (7). Roque identifies with his Mexican heritage and enjoys the hyper-masculine sport of boxing instead of embracing the American sport of baseball.

Did Roque like baseball? It was doubtful that he cared even a little bit – he didn't listen to games on the radio or TV and he never looked at a newspaper. He loved boxing though. He knew the names of all the Mexican fighters as if they lived here, as if they were Dodgers players like Steve Yeager, Dusty Baker, Kenny Landreaux or Mike Marshall, Pedro Guerrero. Roque did know Fernando Valenzuela, everyone did, even his mom, which is why she agreed to let Roque take them to a game. What Mexican didn't love Fernando? (8).

Despite his disinterest, baseball acts as the medium that Uncle Rock uses as a mode of communication with Erick after he realizes that he cannot do so in English (despite his attempts), and it is through Erick's first ballpark experience that the boy ultimately gains

his voice. Knowing Erick's love of baseball, Roque procures tickets to the Dodgers' game against the Philadelphia Phillies for what will be Erick's first real trip to the ballpark. Erick figures his mother agreed to a game on, "Saturday afternoon, since Saturday night, Erick thought, she might want to go somewhere else, even with somebody else" (8).

Arriving at the game in the fifth inning, Erick is the active participant in a dramatic baseball moment that metaphorically transforms him from a silent boy to an adolescent gaining his voice:

Erick saw the ball. He had to stand and move and stretch his arms and want that ball until it hit his bare hands and stayed there. Everybody saw him catch it with no bobble. He felt all the eyes and voices around him as if they were every set of eyes and every voice in the stadium. His mom was saying something, Roque, too, and then, finally it was just him and that ball and his stinging hands. He wasn't even sure if it had been hit by Pedro Guerrero (9).

Catching a home run ball is a baseball dream for many boys in attendance, and more importantly a true moment of individuality because it makes one special within a stadium filled with strangers. Erick's improbable bare-handed catch becomes the defining moment in the story because it marks the moment when he breaks free from his mother and becomes his own person, gaining attention from those around him for what he does and not whose son he is. By snagging the ball bare-handed, Erick metaphorically, "catches his ball(s) all on his own despite his small physique and supposed lack of agency. He realizes this after he slowly drowns out the voices in the stadium, his mother's and Roque's, until finally it is "just him and that ball and his stinging hands" (9). After the game, Erick's newfound nascent manhood is put to the test when he sees the Phillies' team bus swarmed by, "boys mostly, but also men and some women and girls," who wanted autographs from players like Joe Morgan, Garry Maddox, and Pete Rose. At this moment a disembodied voice from the bus calls out to him, telling the boy to toss the ball inside for some autographs. After a few worrisome moments ("so long that his mom came

up to him, worried that he'd lost it") the ball is thrown back to the boy, with, "all kinds of signatures on it, though none that [Erick] could really recognize except for Joe Morgan and Pete Rose" (10). However, thrown along with the ball is a note that the voice says is, "[f]or your mom, okay? *Comprendes?*" (10).

Then he stopped. He opened the note himself. No one had said he couldn't read it. It said, I'd like to get to know you. You are muy linda. Very beautiful and sexy. I don't speak Spanish very good, may be you speak English better, pero No Importa. Would you come by tonite and let me buy you a drink? There was a phone number and a hotel room number. A name, too. A name that came at him the way that home run had (10).

At this point, the newly-empowered Erick, no longer an accessory to his mother but an individual with voice, is put in a position of validation. Seeing his mother with Roque and how, "Roque was the proudest man, full of joy because he was with her," Erick, despite the voice in the bus yelling at him to give the note to his mother, refuses these commands by dropping the note and speaking the narrative's final words to his mother and Roque: "Look, he said in a full voice. They all signed my ball" (10-11). Although the unnamed voice specifically calls out to Erick among the swarm of boys that surround the bus due to ulterior motives (similar to all the American men portrayed in the story, who only talk to Erick in order to get to know his mother), Erick, aware of the voice's intentions, exercises his newfound agency. In quite a beautiful paradox, it is in this silence that Erick gains his voice—going from the silent observer of his mother's failed relationships to an active, empowered individual and son.

Along with Gilb's personal history (found in *The New Yorker* article) shaping the story, the writer blended the historical with the fictional and used baseball history to represent the American-Mexican dichotomy within the story. The choice of the Los Angeles Dodgers and the Philadelphia Phillies is no coincidence. The Dodgers are a team with strong Latino ties, both regarding its ball players as well as its fan base, of

which Erick is a constituent. On the other hand, the opposing Phillies are one of the oldest professional teams in American history, dating back to 1883 when they were known as The Quakers, before changing to The Philadelphias (eventually shortened to its current form). The Phillies player's voice from the bus symbolizes all the other American men in the story who compliment Erick's mother's beauty and offer to buy her things, and for Erick, an antagonist that is overcome through his decision to refuse the note's request.

Peterson noted that baseball short stories, "have taken readers through fiction's looking glass but have seldom allowed a reflective and realistic look at the looking glass's nicely polished surface" (87). However, in the case of, "Uncle Rock," Erick represents the complex issue in the United States of Latino miscommunication due to a language barrier. Gilb did not give the audience the typical story portraying a Latino struggling to speak English. Instead, he provided a character that has the capacity to speak English but chooses not to do so. Typical language issues are seen in other stories, such as Jauss's, "The Bigs," where, Pilar, a Dominican ballplayer trying to make it to the pros, narrates his jumbled thoughts during a mental breakdown in the middle of a game:

Then Gene come out to the mound again and Coach too this time and Coach he say What's the problem Manny your arm getting sore again. I shake my head no. Then what gives, he say. What the fuck is going on. I almost can not talk the words are so far down inside of me but somehow I say Nothing but I say it in Spanish – Nada. I never talk on the team in Spanish because in The Bigs they want that you always talk American. But I say Nada (86).

The connection between language and nation is apparent in the above quote—that is, Americans speak English and foreigners speak Spanish, the latter and its speakers are un-American and therefore not preferred. Jauss's tale used a first-person narrative to highlight the struggles foreign players face aside from the language barrier—the families left behind, the politics involved in making it in the game, distrustful teammates, etc. At

the end of Pilar's mental collapse the pitcher is in solitude, the last lines reading, "[b]ut then Coach take the ball away from me and give it to Parisi. He take the ball away, he take everything away, and I am standing there waiting and alone and there is no sign" (87). Taking the ball from Pilar is akin to taking his livelihood as well as his masculinity, and without the game he is left alone without the game to offer him a platform to express himself.

Where Gilb differed in his representation of Latinos is that he offered a positive construction that empowers its Latino characters instead of, as in Jauss's story, leaving them isolated. Along with Erick, there is Roque, who represents a positive image of a Latino father-figure and reinforces the idea of baseball as a way of building father-son bonds, no matter the nationality or ethnicity. In fact, the negative portrayal of Anglo men throughout the story suggests that their financial success and abundance of material goods turns them into, "users," who do not provide emotionally for Erick and his mother in the way that Roque, the stable and humble father-figure, can. Roque takes a genuine interest in Erick, viewing him as a potential son, unlike the wealthier men who simply see the boy as an accessory to his beautiful mother.

Ultimately, Roque assumes the role of the working-class man who, although not as wealthy as the engineer or the men in suits, provides financial security as a stable father figure to Erick and husband figure his mother. Roque, "signed checks and gave [Erick's mother] cash. He knocked on their door carrying cans and fruit and meat. He took her out to restaurants on Sunset, to the movies in Hollywood, or on drives to the beach in rich Santa Monica" (Gilb 7). It is with Roque when the family is complete; it is no coincidence that Erick gains his voice with Roque by his side. And while it may take Erick's mother longer to realize this, Erick, as shown through his action with the note, knows that Roque is indeed the rock both he and his mother have been seeking.

“Chasing Chato”

Wayne Rapp is a Latino author who was, “born and raised in the border town of Bisbee, Arizona, and traces his Mexican roots to the Figueroa and Valenzuela families of Sonora” (195). In his short story, “Chasing Chato,” Rapp uses the historical figure of Mexican League baseball player, Gustavo “Chato” Bello, as a guiding light for the fictional protagonist in this coming of age tale that gives attention to alternative baseball histories and further provides positive Latino representations. Bello is not some anonymous player—in 1946, he became the Mexican League’s first pitcher to throw a perfect game—and it is through his achievement that Bello’s place in baseball comes to life in the text.²³ While Mexican achievements in baseball, such as Bello’s, are questioned at the story’s beginning, the intertwining of the historical and fictional within it create narrative moments of interjection that interrogate the representation of Latinos in baseball literature and give voice to protagonists whose maturation process result in a moment of validation.

Beginning in 1948, during Mexican billionaire Jorge Pasquel’s reign over the Mexican League, fictional, teenage narrator, Alberto Reyna, watches his idol, Chato Bello, pitch in person, just two years removed from his perfect game. Reyna is accompanied by his heavily inebriated father and his uncle Pelon, both of whom claim Bello’s perfect game was fixed by Mexican League officials, with Reyna’s father saying, “You believe that shit? It’s just like the fights. It was his turn. They let him do it. Tell him, Pelon” (22). He also goes on to suggest bullfighting to be a cleaner sport (at least by a gambler’s standards), claiming, “[y]ou never want to bet on those baseball games. They got ‘em all fixed any time...that’s why I go to the bullfights. No way to get a bull to take a dive” (23). Intuitively, Reyna asks his father, “how come nobody ever had a turn before him or after him?,” his father replying, “When the money’s right, they will’...and that was the end of that” (23).

Reyna, as narrator, gives readers a brief historical overview of the baseball landscape in Mexico and the United States:

It became harder to become a professional baseball player in Mexico. Players from the Negro League in los Estados Unidos and also players from Cuba were coming into la Liga Mexicana de Beisbol in great numbers. Some of the Mexican players were leaving and going north to los Estados Unidos for more opportunity to make a team (23).

At this time, Reyna, “was becoming a pretty good baseball player [him]self...[and] hooked up finally with a team that was barnstorming through northern Mexico,” in order to chase both his dream of playing baseball and to meet his idol, Chato Bello. In the hopes of clearing up this cloudy history regarding the perfect game, Reyna still refuses to believe his father and uncle and goes to great lengths to validate Chato’s feat of perfection. Chato Bello was indeed one such Mexican player going to the United States for playing opportunities due to the influx of foreign talent entering the Mexican League, a byproduct of Jorge Pasquel’s hefty paychecks during the time period known as, the “Mexican League Raids.” Pasquel’s attempt to attract baseball talent with his checkbook in order to create a baseball league that rivaled Major League Baseball’s meant fewer roster spots for Mexican talent on Mexican League teams.

In search of his idol, Reyna decides to take up an offer to play in Arizona for the Copper Kings after the, “gringo,” scout, Mr. Cohen, tells him he, “[has] to come play...because that’s where Chato Bello plays” (27). Cohen is none other than the real-life, Syd Cohen, who gave up the 708th home run to Babe Ruth and is known in the story as, “a manager from los Estados Unidos...[h]e was a pitcher in the Big Leagues, and he struck out Babe Ruth” (25).²⁴ Cohen’s own baseball history is important to the story, because, unlike Chato’s, the validity of Cohen’s pitching achievements are never under suspicion. Both Cohen and Chato are pitchers who have their own claims to fame, but the American Cohen’s achievement (representing the traditional narrative) is never

questioned, while the achievements of Mexican pitcher Chato Bello remain murky. In the story, Cohen is fluent in Spanish and gains the trust of his prospects by speaking their language fluently. Reyna notes that the scout “was definitely gringo, but there was nothing wrong with his Spanish” (25). Unfortunately for the Mexican ballplayer, Cohen does not tell the entire truth as Bello has since left the Kings and is playing in El Paso. Rapp has done his research as Bello indeed spent the early 1950s playing baseball in the mountainous Texas city, with newspaper articles from the, *El Paso Herald-Post*, detailing his time with the Copper Kings before coming to Texas as a pitcher for Texans.²⁵ As fate would have it, Reyna learns of the team’s upcoming road trip to Texas which will involve a meeting with the Copper Kings, and four years into his journey the chase nears its end as a meeting with Chato appears imminent.

The first encounter between the fictional Reyna and the historical Chato does not go as planned, the game, becoming a reality check for this coming-of-age narrator as the idol, is aggressive towards the idolizer. Before the game, Reyna divulges to teammate, Blackie Morales (another historical Mexican baseball player of the era), his wish to discuss Bello’s perfect game and confirm his belief that the feat was not fixed, as the narrator’s father believes.²⁶ Unfortunately, the young Reyna makes the mistake of trusting the veteran ballplayer, for Blackie shares this information with his friend, Chato, who intentionally hits the narrator during his first at-bat and angrily, “holler[s] at [Reyna] on the way, ‘Tell your old man he don’t know what he’s talking about’” (35). Striking him out in his second at bat and insulting his father, Chato makes Reyna look like a fool against his experienced hero in his last at bat of the game. The culmination of actions, from Chato’s angry outburst, insulting Reyna’s father, and finally striking out the young ballplayer, adds up to a demystified image of an idol who is crude, fiery, and truly the competitor who Reyna has believed him to be since that car ride with his father and

uncle. Chato is no longer an idol shrouded in mystery, but a real-life ballplayer whose aggression and anger at any claims questioning his achievements supporting the notion that his perfect game was indeed valid.

Fortunately, Reyna's own journey of self-validation comes to a close when, as fate would have it, the El Paso Texans come to town. In this culminating moment, Reyna cashes in on a second chance to face his idol and in the process not only validates himself but Chato's perfect game, a history that has been under question since the beginning. It is during this game that Reyna, "hit[s] the ball where it was pitched, and it went sailing into right field, just where Mr. Cohen would want [him] to hit it" (37). Just as Erick does in, "Uncle Rock," the young Reyna gains validation through his own baseball moment—that is, getting the elusive hit off Chato. Although moments later the veteran Chato picks Reyna off on the bases, Reyna's lasting memory remains the hit off of his hero, which marks his journey into manhood. Like Mr. Cohen's claim to fame in striking out the American legend, Babe Ruth, Reyna now has a similar tale that can be told to, "his children—and hopefully grandchildren," about his own Latino hero—the day, "that [he] got a hit off of Chato Bello, the first player in the history of Mexican baseball to pitch a perfect game" (38). In turn, Chato transforms from an image of perfection cast in a light of doubt to one demystified and solidified as a living, breathing pitcher with a history just as valid as any other. Reyna experiences this demystification on the ball field where both he and Chato ultimately gain their voice—Reyna through his hit and Chato through the validation of his pitching achievement. Thus, from the opening question ("Have you ever heard of Chato Bello?") to the final sentence, Rapp contributes an impressive Mexican baseball history that, while not as established or known, is given the authority and opportunity to stand alongside the traditional baseball narrative. Chato's achievement

stands as a symbol for a Latino baseball history often buried or considered questionable, but, as Rapp shows through this journey, is just as real, authoritative, and memorable.

“Juan Bobo”

Like the first two short stories, “Juan Bobo,” blends history and fiction to create a redemptive story of a hapless manager and his unconventional ballplayers who gain validation despite their personal and financial shortcomings. Nelson Denis, a former New York State Assemblyman and award-winning writer, not only wrote a story filled with seedy characters, outrageous antics, and a seemingly-endless Puerto Rican Winter League baseball game, he critiqued the U.S. pharmaceutical companies whose capitalist control of the island asserts itself on both the island and baseball. “Juan Bobo,” then, is set in the Puerto Rican city of Barceloneta, home of numerous pharmaceutical factories owned by companies, such as Pfizer, Merck, and Bristol-Myers, among others.²⁷ In, *The Drug Company Next Door: Pollution, Jobs, and Community Health in Puerto Rico*, Alexa Dietrich noted that, “the pharmaceutical industry is generally considered the backbone of the island’s economy...[and] [t]hese corporate citizens have brought their human neighbors a degree of economic stability, paid for with longstanding acceptance of significant environmental contamination” (3). Such a debt can be seen in the birth control issues the island faced during the 1950s and ‘60s, as many Puerto Rican women were unknowingly subject to pharmaceutical testing. According to Cesar Alaya and Rafael Bernabe in, *Puerto Rico in the American Century: A History Since 1898*:

The story of birth control in Puerto Rico cannot be detached from the initiatives of Clarence J. Gamble’s American Birth Control League or its links with U.S. pharmaceutical corporations. Gamble helped create groups in Puerto Rico, such as the Asociación Puertorriqueña Pro-Bienestar de la Familia in 1954, which lobbied the government to lift legal restrictions on contraception and promoted “family planning.” Through the 1950s, programs sponsored by these associations in collaboration with the U.S. pharmaceuticals distributed newly developed contraceptive gels, foams, pills, and devices such as diaphragms and IUDs and closely monitored results. Many have criticized the use of Puerto Rican

women to test means of contraception, yet many women sought participation in birth control programs as a means of better controlling their lives (208).

Denis's fiction worked with this dark history to demonstrate the power these companies continued to have over the island by using the city of Barceloneta as a setting where this capitalist presence is revealed through descriptions of the Victorian-named streets, like "Calle Buckingham," and, "Calle Windsor," the country clubs separating the island's rich from the poor, and the control Pfizer has over the fictional PRWL team Barones de Barceloneta. As Denis wrote, "[the Barones] were sponsored by Pfizer Pharmaceutical, since all of the Viagra consumed in North America (the U.S., Canada, and Mexico) was produced in one huge factory in Barceloneta. The plant manager, Adam Clayton Powell VII, was also the manager of the baseball team" (Denis 96). The etymology of barones is relevant here: according to the, *Oxford Dictionary*, the word baron comes from the Latin word, "baro," meaning "man." In Old English, the word's cognate is beom, meaning, "warrior or nobleman." Interestingly, the word, "baro," is also a cognate in Spanish for a piece of wood, thus leaving us with, "baro," as both man (and "The Man", as Los Barones are the head team) and wooden stick, alluding to ballplayers and their wooden bats.

Along with the deliberate setting, Denis purposely selected a significant time period in Puerto Rican baseball history in order to critique the hold capitalism had on baseball, as well as offer positive constructions of Latino characters as commercially viable ballplayers. The fictional season that plays out in, "Juan Bobo," appears to stand in for the actual lost 2007-08 Puerto Rican League season, one cancelled at the time due to severe financial failures. Following this lost year, the league was rebranded as the Puerto Rico Baseball League and resumed normal operations.²⁸ Denis used this historic moment as an opportunity to create a fictional history that filled the gap left by the lost season with outrageous characters that, at the end of the day, proved commercially viable ballplayers

despite their eclecticism. The narrative follows the historic, Criollos de Caguas team, under the command of fictional manager, Juan Bobo. The Criollos de Caguas team holds historical relevance in the Puerto Rican Professional Baseball League—"Roberto Clemente had been a Criollo. The team had won fourteen Puerto Rico pennants and three Caribbean World Series, but you'd never know it by this bunch" (92). Other former players of Caguas include Luis Olmo, Roy Campanella, Hank Aaron, Vic Power, Juan Gonzalez, Ivan Rodriguez, Tom Lasorda, Sandy Koufax, Mike Schmidt, Cal Ripken Jr., Don Mattingly, and Roberto Alomar (BaseballReference.com). Though historically dominant, the current fictional, "bunch," is floundering in last place, attempting to maintain face while the Barones march their way into first-place.

The title "Juan Bobo," draws upon the Puerto Rican "cultural," hero Juan Bobo, a folkloric figure and vehicle used in short stories to transmit Puerto Rican cultural knowledge or moralistic message to children. According to Sarai Lastra, author of, "Juan Bobo: A Folkloric System":

Juan Bobo is a trickster and sometimes a fool. These folktales are constructed using a mixture of Christian religion; African, Spanish, and Indian traditions; folkloric politics; and popular beliefs. The main character is a trickster who might appear under the names of Juan Bobo (Dumb John), Juan Animada (Animal John), Juan Simple (Simple John), Juan Cuchilla (Cutting John), and so on...Unlike other Caribbean tricksters such as Anansi, Juan Bobo does not transform himself from human to animal or vice-versa. His transformations are more in the mental realm – e.g., changing from an ill-reared numskull to a 'wantonly cruel' trickster within the same story (541).

Although normally characterized as a child, Denis's, "Juan Bobo," is one who happens to be the Criollos de Caguas team manager, suffering a disastrous season in which he sees his personal finances in ruins, his team in the cellar standings-wise, and his own ballplayers locked in a prison cellar "when seven Criollos de Caguas were arrested on February 9th" (90). Of course, the name Juan Bobo and disaster are synonymous (the word bobo ranging in meaning from naïve to fool), so one should find it unsurprising that

he suffers from an ill-favored situation. The original folkloric tales themselves draw upon the traditions of African folk stories and Spanish *picarescas*, the latter known for their lowly, yet unscrupulous hero who falters through a series of realistic, satirical episodes (Lastra).

Bobo's fictional 2008 team is comprised of an eclectic group of characters whose bad habits and physical ailments create an intriguingly pathetic collection:

Don Q, the starting pitcher, had a 98 mph fastball but was usually half-drunk and utterly unpredictable...Pitros, the catcher, had a huge family to feed and was the hardest working Criollo. He had two concussions and four cracked ribs...Flaco Navaja, the first baseman, was very mean-tempered and known to stab base runners...Bambino was a lay second baseman, but the best hitter on the team...Perico had a cocaine habit and autonomic dysreflexia, which sent him into seizures at shortstop. This was helpful in hit and run situations but otherwise useless...Manolete the left fielder was the laziest player of all, so lazy that he wouldn't even swing the bat. God forbid he should connect... 'cause then he'd have to run. He developed a superb eye at the plate (92-93).

Such characterizations add to the outrageousness of the fiction and give this assembly of drunks, drug-users, hard workers, and lazy players an identity as a group of derelicts. It also sets these ridiculous characters in opposition to the professional, machine-like Barones who march into games and laugh at the outlandish behavior of their counterparts.

These character descriptions appear reminiscent of those found at the beginning of Herrin's, *The Rio Loja Ringmaster* (one even sharing the same name), when fictional narrator, Dick Dixon, describes his own collection of drunken Mexican teammates during his near-perfect game bid:

Gerardo, the catcher. To be trusted if only because his ambition couldn't afford another loss. He wanted back in the Mexican minor leagues. A brickmason, vaguely resentful of everything when not drunk. When drunk reprieved...Left field, Perico, the parrot. Young, father of five children, always in motion, always talking, a Picasso face in planes. When sober drunk, when drunk beyond pale...Center field, Stanley. A painter of esoteric symbology...[g]iven to explosive, harangue-ridden speech. Farts

in public, cultivates the home. An ex- and now non-marijuana user...Right field, Rosendo. A bandy-legged, bantam-weight gravedigger...[w]et moronic lower lip. Generous with tequila...[w]orthless as a fielder (5-6).

Both characterizations played upon commonly seen negative stereotypes of Latinos as drunks, drug-users, criminals, and lazy in order to set a comedic tone that mocked such outrageous and demeaning depictions commonly found in baseball literature and coverage of Latinos by the media. Herrin's depiction worked in much the same way as Denis's, with the exception of Denis's inclusion of the positive stereotype of Pitros, the catcher as, "the hardest working Criollo," with, "a huge family to feed" (92). It must also be noted that there is also a redeeming quality in these broken down and beaten men as lovers of baseball who play it in spite of their miniscule wages and personal shortcomings. While most struggle to support their families, it is not as though their teams can afford to pay them more. For example, the Caguas team's, "field was full of holes, ruts, and countless other hazards. An ant colony wiggled under first base...two panels behind home plate were covered with cardboard...out in right field...a twelve foot wall of barbed wire topped a pile of garbage cans" (86). Despite the squalor playing conditions, the fans do not seem to mind, for:

Half of them were busy selling something to the other half: old women sold barbeque chicken and *alcapurrias* in the bleachers, old men sold *cocos frios* near the bullpen, and kids sold cigarettes, chewing tobacco, Chiclets, and stolen baseball caps to everyone. An eight-year old sold Coronas from a hidden bucket. Down on the infield, a boy in a torn Mickey Mouse T-shirt shuffled through the dugouts selling *negritos*, thimble-sized cups of strong sweetened coffee, to the players themselves (87).

Busying themselves with business normally reserved for concession stand workers, vending hot dogs, peanuts, and cold beers, the selling of *alcapurrias* (fritters with meat filling), cigarettes, Chiclets, and *negritos* gives the stadium and its fans a flair unlike others found in traditional baseball fiction.

The flea market-like atmosphere in Ydelfonso Sola Morales Stadium contradicts the stereotypical grandstands found in such works, such as *The Natural*, and, *The Celebrant*, or any American baseball fiction where fans are more intent on watching the game (or wagering on it), rather than using the stands as a baseball *tianguis*.²⁹ The entrepreneurial portrayal of the Criollos fan base further illustrates the team's (fans included) financial woes (instead of going to enjoy a game, they go to work! Though, they do indeed cheer and jeer their fans) and is placed in opposition to the only fictional team in this narrative—the Barones de Barceloneta. The Criollos represent a Latino-dominated Puerto Rico, while the Barones symbolize the American influence that asserts itself on the island territory. Indeed, as, “Juan Bobo: A Folkloric Information System,” notes:

Although Spanish is the people's dominant language, English has been accepted by the government as one of its official languages. Latin music may reign on Caribbean airwaves, but English radio stations command their place, too. “Who do you feel is your Mother country, Spain or the United States?” is a question asked of some children in local schools. Many question the analogy by replying: ‘Well, if Spain is my mother, is the U.S.A. my father?’ (Lastra 530).

This conflicted Spanish vs. English dichotomy that plays out in the story allows for commentary on the influence of American, capitalist interests not only on baseball but on Puerto Rico itself. After all, Juan Bobo is a character whose tales are meant to teach a lesson – in this case that even despite the odds, a group of odd-balls led by a bobo can gain redemption. Denis's Juan Bobo and his Caguas are, in essence, fighting not only for self-validation, but against the capitalistic Barones who, like the pharmaceutical companies, have the money and power to assert their control on the sport and the island of Puerto Rico.

Unlike the Criollos' collection of misfits, the fictional Barones de Barceloneta, the “richest” team in the Puerto Rican Winter League, are never discussed in terms of individual players, but as a collective group, a corporate machine of sorts, whose head

honcho, Adam Clayton Powell VII, advertises his team by playing, "Viva Viagra!" in the stadium and parading a live mascot, African Bush elephant, around the field prior to the start of games. As previously mentioned, Barceloneta is a city where North American pharmaceutical companies, like Pfizer, set up production factories due to the area's pristine water supply (which, as Lastra suggests, is often contaminated at the expense of the citizens). The capitalist influence of Pfizer on Puerto Rico is seen throughout this fiction in the form of, "the Caguas Real Golf and Country Club...surrounded by streets with ridiculous names like Calle Buckingham, Calle Windsor, Calle Tudor, Calle Edinburgo and Calle Luemburgo...as if to confer some British nobility on their residents, and a Manifest Destiny on their greed" (100). The poor side of town is separated from this English-influenced area by the highway (naturally the side where Juan lives), just as the poor Criollos are separated from the capitalist-influenced Barones by twenty games in the league standings. Playing on these notions of rich vs. the poor, disenfranchised vs. entitled, English vs. Spanish, Denis pulled a similar move, like author Wayne Rapp, by using a historical achievement to legitimize the unconventional Criollos during a home game between the hosts and the visiting Barones at Yldefonso Solá Morales de Caguas Stadium. Each of the story's, "failed," characters are redeemed when the failing Criollos team makes history and is inked into the official baseball record book as participants in baseball history's longest game.

The capitalist interests that dominate baseball are represented before the climactic and soon-to-be historic Caguas-Barceloneta game in order to show the overarching power money and corporate interest have over what is often considered a pure sport played, "for the love of the game." For example, prior to the first pitch, "the mayor of Caguas marched up in a frock coat and silk top hat, to name Adam Clayton Powell VII the 'Citizen of the Year,'" illustrating the power held by the Barones as their

owner is celebrated even at a Criollos home game (97). Yet, the disparity between the two teams soon shrinks as the Criollos hang around in the ballgame despite their unconventional play. Upon, “Play b6ll,” chaos begins as, “the Barones were on first base. Before a pitch was ever thrown,” thanks to a horn from the crowd causing the drunken Criollos pitcher, Don Q, to hesitate and draw a “bok” (97-98). Despite this ominous start, all it takes is a bit of trash-talking by the batter to turn the situation around as, “Don Q got the hint. Three fastballs hit Pitros like a cannon, froze their clean-up man, and the fans showed their appreciation ... [it was then that] a pitcher’s duel developed and Don Q followed the only strategy he knew...fastball, fastball, fastball” (98-99). After eighteen innings and the score tied 2-2, “the umpire waived the managers over to home plate. Adam Clayton Powell VII refused to accept a tie, and stared at Juan the whole time. ‘This isn’t over,’ he said,” the inability for the Barones to put away the Criollos annoying Powell VII (the six generations of Powells before him likely never facing such adversity against such a lowly crowd).

That evening during the game’s hiatus, a frustrated and voiceless Juan rebels against the corporate power that not only pervades the baseball league but his homeland through his own silent method—changing those English, Victorian-influenced street signs to ones whose names point the direction to redemption and validation. Juan, “carried a tool box, a small ladder, and some metal signs that read Calle Hope...over the past two years he’d nailed up Calle Faith, Calle Humility, Calle Equality, and he had a few more Calles to go...[and] aside from helping his mother it was the one thing he was proud of” (101). Despite the odds stacked against him, Juan never quits on his team and, “hung on because mami needed the money, and because baseball is a great game for redemption, since it’s so full of failure. Just like life.” Puerto Rico may physically be under the rule of

capitalist interests, but Juan's symbolically powerful actions show that the island is still up for grabs and he has the fighting spirit to lead the charge to reclaim it.

The redemptive quality of the sport is the fuel that drives many of these ailing, flawed Criollos ballplayers to continue to play the game, and it is the next day's resumption of the endless game when Juan and the Criollos finally gain this long-desired validation. At the beginning of day two, Juan, "sensed something deeper: Adam Clayton Powell VII was trying to steal the stadium, and maybe Juan's job," through his campaign-like efforts of winning over the crowd by marching the African Bush elephant into the Caguas' own stadium with a sign reading:

Barones de Barceloneta Bash

Everyone welcome, drinks courtesy of Viagra

10 pm tonight

Caguas Real Country and Golf Club

700 Alhambra Blvd. (102).

Denis creates a circus-like atmosphere of the stadium that only adds to the comical nature of this story beginning with Juan's decision to send Don Q (also the name of the Puerto Rican rum) to the mound. After twenty-seven innings, "disaster struck in the twenty eighth inning," when a bunt attempt turned into a fiasco; "the Criollos all stood around until the runner was rounding first, then Wilson overthrew the ball into right field, then El Sapo slipped on an elephant turd [courtesy of the mascot], then Papa Cool missed the cutoff man, and the pitcher turned a bunt into an inside-the-park home run" (104). This unfortunate slip-up draws the reaction of the crowd as, "a hail of mangos and blackened bananas hit the field," causing a game-stoppage where "the ground crew cleared the infield, the elephant ate the bananas, and the Barones laughed uncontrollably" at the outrageous scene courtesy of the Criollos (104). With their backs

against the wall, Caguas' fate lies in the hands of Papa Cool, who miraculously delivers an inside-the-park home run thanks to a misfielded fly ball courtesy of some glaring sunlight.

After several more innings, the umpire holds a meeting with the team managers and suggests that after thirty-four innings, a tie be called (105). This suggestion, while accepted by Bobo, leaves Powell VII incensed as he angrily cries, "No!" and argues that his, "company owns this damn league" (105). Unable to accept the fact that his noble Barones could tie with such a team, the red-faced Powell's antics are interrupted when, "a raggedy ball boy came huffing to the plate," with a phone call from the mayor of Caguas for Bobo—one that rings in the historical legitimacy of the seemingly endless game (105). In going past thirty-four innings, these two Puerto Rican teams make history as they pass a truly historic record previously held by the famous, "Longest Game," between the Pawtucket Red Sox and the Rochester Red Wings in 1981.³⁰ This historic game featured the likes of Cal Ripken, Jr. (whose own most consecutive games-played streak seems endless, too), Wade Boggs, and Joe Morgan, who managed the Pawtucket squad and is quoted as saying, "I wanted 40 innings so nobody could tie our beautiful record," while Boggs jokingly recalls that, "a lot of people were saying, 'Yeah, yeah, we tied it! We tied it!' And then they said, 'Oh, no, what did you do? We could have gone home!'" (milb.com). As with Shepard's, "Batting Against Castro," Denis's narrative ends without giving readers an official ending, a statement showing the fight for the island and its people remains up in the air. The Criollos and their manager are representative of *los puertorriqueños*, a people who have lived in poverty while its capitalist neighbors encroach on their island, slowly gaining its control. Now with a voice, validation, and a statement through their play that they can, indeed, stand up to the Barones, the future

struggle and the optimism for its success (as represented in Juan Bobo's own street signs) are left open to the imagination.

Indeed, the record and sentiments, like those of Morgan, play upon the popular trope of the timeless game, as seen in fictions like, "The Hector Quesadilla Story," but the joy of the record's immortality is offset by the league heads who joyously await the financial payoff that comes with media-attention grabbing news such as this. Due to the game's sudden arrival into the history books and the anticipated media attention, Commission Remy Garcia takes the phone from Caguas' mayor and wishes to speak to Juan. Attempting to tidy up the game's image, he says, "Juan, you still there?...Listen we don't care who wins the game. Just give us some good clean baseball...No fighting, no drinking" (107).

Commercial interest in baseball has always been at odds with the idyllic, pure vision of the sport—and as exemplified by, "Juan Bobo," at the end of the day, even while there is redemption and validation for individuals, money is still the driving factor in most baseball decisions. The capitalist machine rears its head when the Commissioner emphasizes the importance of making money (even the Criollos will be getting an elephant next season because the Barones' elephant alone has doubled attendance), and will continue to do so for as long as the national pastime is played. At the end of his phone call with Juan, the Commissioner asks the story's Bobo, "[o]ne more thing: I want all the players at the Viagra party tonight...Ten o'clock at the Caguas Country Club." When Juan cries out, "[w]e're trying to win a ballgame!," the Commissioner bluntly states, "[a]nd we're trying to make some money, for a change" (107-108). Regardless of the circumstances, as participants in such a historic feat the Criollos players, led by Juan, the team and its players are now seen as commercially-viable Latino athletes. Despite their desires to continue to draw out their never-ending game, it is a matter of give-and-take

regarding baseball and capitalist influence, and the players must take solace in knowing the outlook is as hopeful as the names of the street signs Juan replaces each night. It is thanks to this newfound validation and a more (financially) hopeful future that this group of drunken, lazy, hot-headed players has transformed themselves into competitive and profitable ballplayers that realize the power they have to stand toe-to-toe with Puerto Rico's capitalist machine.

A Voice Gained

In this chapter, I have offered a springboard for more inquiry concerning the relationship between fiction and history within baseball literature. Latino baseball fiction is steadily growing and it is important for more research to be done in this field to continue this trend. Moreover, the fact that traditional baseball fiction has largely trivialized the Latino experience by presenting it in an unflattering light means that more work must be done to offer other perspectives and histories that counter these characterizations. By giving voice to the Latino experience through baseball fiction, Moreira's anthology and the stories within it created a foundation for such a reversal. Despite being fictional, these stories also offered a very real dose of Latino baseball history that, without voice, would remain unable to interrogate the traditional narrative that viewed baseball's quickest-growing minority group as outsiders.

Using history to anchor fictions like, "Uncle Rock," "Chasing Chato," and "Juan Bobo," allowed authors, Dagoberto Gilb, Wayne Rapp, and Nelson Denis to present baseball fiction's audience with previously-unknown historical insight into significant time periods (Los Angeles during the 1980s, Mexican League baseball during the Pasquel era, and Puerto Rican baseball) and events that highlighted Latino contributions to the sport. Each coming-of-age journey allows its Latino characters to validate their existence and their history in a sport that for so long has left such players and their stories on the

bench. Gilb's fiction revealed a Mexican-American experience through his boy-protagonist, Erick, that is autobiographically-driven and explored familial relationships/issues of identity that ultimately worked to provide positive constructions of Latinos through the working-class Mexican character of Uncle Roque. Erick sheds his identity as a voiceless boy and an accessory to his mother and comes into his own nascent manhood after a home run catch at a Dodgers game. Meanwhile, Rapp followed the maturation process of protagonist, Reyna, who gains his own voice after chasing his Mexican pitching idol through the minor leagues. Through his own dramatic baseball moment of getting a hit off of a demystified, Chato Bello, Reyna gains a baseball story he can tell for generations while validating Bello's previously-doubted personal achievements in the process. Lastly, Denis used the vehicle of the, "Juan Bobo," tales to critique the capitalist stranglehold pharmaceutical companies, like Pfizer, have on Puerto Rico and its people. This outrageous fictional fill-in for the 2008 Puerto Rican League baseball season lost to financial reasons also provided a voice to its rag-tag players, allowing them to stand up to the capitalist interests that have had such a long, dark history on the island and created a historic moment of their own.

All three stories provided a new Latino voice to baseball, which continued to grow louder since the arrival of Cuban-native, Esteban Bellán, to the Rose Hill College varsity baseball club in 1868. While Latino players have come a long way since Bellán in gaining a voice on the field, Moreira's anthology gave voice to a Latino/a experience in baseball literature. I have only looked at three of the many stories found in, *¡Arriba Baseball!*, but there are so many more brilliant counter-narratives within this anthology waiting to be unpacked. While their entrance into baseball literature provided validation of its own, I hope this will become a growing trend in which authors intertwine race, gender, and

identity with baseball in order to provide positive representations of its Latino characters and push baseball literature into more demographically representational levels.

¹ Negro Leagues were majority black players, with the black community heavily involved in the entrepreneurial and ownership aspect of black baseball. Andrew “Rube” Foster (of the Chicago American Giants) was fundamental to the development and sustainment of black baseball’s legitimacy with his financial support and business prowess. For further readings on the Negro Leagues, refer to Lawrence’s *Shades of Glory* and Robert Peterson’s text, *Only the Ball was White*. The Caribbean Leagues referred to the Cuban, Dominican, and Puerto Rican Leagues where players mainly hailed from their respective nations. Winter league ball was an integral part of the Caribbean Leagues due to its popularity, and many Latinos (and even white players) that played in the big leagues made their way to the Caribbean to play winter league ball (and make some extra money during U.S. baseball’s offseason). The demise of the Negro Leagues was hastened by several factors: 1.) Pasquel’s raiding of Negro League players, 2.) War for the U.S. during the 1940’s meant players were required to enlist and fight, ballplayers included. 3.) Baseball’s integration with Jackie Robinson in 1947, leading to more player losses and teams folding.

² Pasquel is an intriguing figure in baseball history. Vilified by the United States, yet loved in Mexico, the supremely rich entrepreneur and jack of all trades (whose dealings were both legal and illegal in nature) enjoyed his role as a thorn in the side of United States baseball. Pasquel’s family fortune was estimated in the tens of millions in the 1940s. Bjarkman claimed Pasquel, “was also a man driven by nationalistic fervor and perhaps a smoldering hatred of the Yanqui interests, fueled in large part by U.S. Marine bombardments of Veracruz (his home town) during his childhood years” (275). Pasquel’s relationship with both the United States government and baseball’s Commissioner Chandler was tumultuous and well documented. While each party resented the other, the two were willing to deal with each other. In a somewhat comical example, “[w]hen Quincy Troupe and Theolic Smith (ballplayers) were denied draft exemptions by the U.S. government, Pasquel even used his official connections to arrange a ‘loan’ of 80,000 temporary workers from his country to the United States in exchange for securing the duo’s playing services” (Burks 76). For further information on Pasquel, refer to Virtue’s *South of the Color Barrier*, Ruck’s *Raceball*, and Bjarkman’s *Baseball with a Latin Beat*.

³ As Ruck noted, players like Ted Williams (whose mother was of Mexican descent), Joe DiMaggio, Stan Musial, and Hank Greenberg, “were offered stupendous, multiyear deals that would have paid each player over \$100,000 per year in compensation” (122). Most of the offers tendered to foreign player were double the figures that the big leagues offered, with superstars having been offered outrageous money with the hope of legitimizing the Mexican League while weakening the Majors. Even though the aforesaid players declined the substantial offers, they gained a leg up on U.S. baseball owners by hiking up their own market value.

⁴ Players who left for Mexico were dubbed, “Mexican jumping beans,” and blacklisted by then Commissioner Chandler. The 18-player blacklist includes the likes of Luis Olmo, Danny Gardella, and Mickey Owens, among others (Ruck 123).

⁵ Over the decades, Mexican League teams have had working relationships with teams like the Milwaukee Brewers, the Los Angeles Dodgers, the New York Yankees, and the Cincinnati Reds, among others. Such affiliations allow big league teams to have first rights in signing Mexican League team players even if others may be willing to pay more for the services of a Mexican ballplayer. Agreements between teams included scouting work for Mexican teams, player swapping during training, and other employment services. For example, the Brewers were able to sign pitcher, Teddy Higuera, during the 1980's for \$65,000, even though other clubs were offering around \$100,000 to Mexican club, Ciudad Juarez. The Brewers scouting director, Ray Poitevint, "worked out an agreement with the brewery that owned Juarez and two other teams, whereby he and Lee Sigman, another Brewer scout, would act as farm directors, scouting directors and general managers for the three teams" (Crowe – *LA Times*).

⁶ Hardships faced by dark-skinned Latinos included (but were not limited to) separate travel and lodging accommodations for road games, racial slurs and taunting, as well as denigrating media portrayals penned by ignorant white baseball sportswriters. Dark-skinned Latinos often faced 'double-stereotyping' due to being both black and speaking Spanish instead of English. When black Latino ballplayers responded to interview questions in English, sports writers would use phonetic quotes that made Latin players appear less intelligent, brutish, and unable to speak the English language clearly. For example, Roberto Clemente was labeled lazy, a hypochondriac, and subject to phonetic spellings of his interviews (EX: heet instead of hit, peetch instead of pitch). Clemente's rocky relationship with the media is extensively detailed in, David Maraniss's, *Clemente: The Passion and Grace of Baseball's Last Hero*. Clemente, himself, is quoted as saying, "I am between the worlds, so anything I do will reflect on me because I am black and . . . will reflect on me because I am Puerto Rican. To me, I always respect everybody. . . my mother and father never told me to hate anyone, or they never told me to dislike anyone because of racial color...[a]s a matter of fact, I started listening to this talk when I came to the States" (Maraniss 173).

⁷ Northern Mexico (particularly the Sonora region) is known for its wealth of physically-gifted athletes.

⁸ Due to Fernando's success, teams were instantly on the search for the next Fernando. This meant that Mexico became a sudden hot bed for buscones, or scouts, at least until MLB teams found Mexican League players' asking-prices skyrocket. Along with Valenzuela and Higuera, the ten other Mexican-born players to debut during the 1980s included: Angel Moreno, Salome Barojas, Chico Escarrega, Alfonso Pulido, Houston Jimenez, Vicente Palacios, German Jimenez, Tony Perezchica, Jose Cecena, and Rosario Rodriguez.

⁹ Along with Valenzuela and Higuera, the ten other Mexican-born players to debut during the 1980s included: Angel Moreno, Salome Barojas, Chico Escarrega, Alfonso Pulido, Houston Jimenez, Vicente Palacios, German Jimenez, Tony Perezchica, Jose Cecena, and Rosario Rodriguez.

¹⁰ 1986 November 6, President Reagan claimed signing the IRCA into law would help bring those, “hid[ing] in the shadows, without access to many of the benefits of a free society. . . into the sunlight, and ultimately, if they choose, they may become American citizens” (IRCA Statement 11/6/1986). However, today its legacy stands as a dubious one because it was, “unsuccessful at reducing the overall flow of undocumented migration,” and did little to quell the national debate that continues to this day about, “the presence of illegal immigrants and the feared negative impact of immigration on American culture” (Jones-Correa 211).

¹¹ For example, one Clemente headline read, “I GET HEET, I FEEL GOOD,” paired with quotes from Clemente reading, “I jus’ try to sacrifice myself, so I get runner to third if I do, I feel good. But I get heet and Willie scores and I feel better than good. When I come to plane in lass eening, with Mays on second and nobody out, I ask myself, ‘Now, what would Skipper [Murtaugh] want me to do?’” (Maraniss 155).

¹² Al Campanis was no stranger to volatile remarks. Although Valenzuela noted that the VP was joking with him, Campanis’s April 6th, 1987 remarks about blacks in baseball struck a racial chord and sparked great controversy, costing the VP his job. Responding to questions about why blacks did not hold coaching or general manager positions in baseball, Campanis stated that managers must, “pay their dues,” and that, “blacks may not have some of the necessities to be a field manager, or perhaps, a general manager.” He pointed to the lack of black pitchers and quarterbacks, insinuating they were not capable, and stated that blacks were not good swimmers because, “they don’t have the buoyancy.” This moment showed that racism still pervaded the sport, and although he never showed racist tendencies and was even a supportive teammate of Jackie Robinson during integration, the aging Campanis revived the discussion of race and baseball.

¹³ *Sports Star: Fernando Valenzuela* (1982), by S. H. Burchard, and, *Sport Stars: Fernando Valenzuela, The Screwball Artist* (1983), by, Mike Littwin, were published after the spark of, “Fernandomania.” Burchard describes how a young Fernando, upon moving in with legendary Dodgers scout Mike Brito (who worried that Fernando, “spent too much time alone”), “did not give up his passion for television or for drinking beer and eating – particularly New York strip steak, pizza, and tortillas” (46-47). Littwin similarly writes that “Fernando loves to watch TV, especially cartoons. And he loves to eat, mostly Mexican food and pizza.” (26). He also noted that “[t]he Dodger players did not know what to think about Fernando. He weighs more than he should. He does not throw the ball that hard. He does not speak English. And no one could believe he was so young” (Littwin 28).

¹⁴ Carlton, an intriguing left-handed pitcher with unusual training/pre-game routines, was known for his intense physical regimen, including isometrics, martial arts, and strength training. Carlton himself had quite the tumultuous relationship with the U.S. media, going so far as to take a self-imposed vow of silence with the media for the majority of his career.

¹⁵ For example, in one *Sporting News* article penned by *LA Times* writer, Scott Ostler, Fernando was asked, “what he thought of his chances of winning the Cy Young Award. To which Valenzuela, who doesn’t speak English, shrugged, ‘What’s that?’” (May 23,

1981). In another *Sporting News* article headlined, “Artful Dodger: Fernando Valenzuela,” then Dodgers catcher Mike Scioscia jokingly stated, “The only words with which I am able to communicate with him are beer, light beer and tacos. So when he gets into trouble in a game, I call time and walk to the mound for a conference. I say to him, ‘Beer, light beer and tacos’” (5/23/1981).

¹⁶ While some players, like Dodgers’ left fielder, Dusty Baker, and catcher, Mike Scioscia, voiced an understanding for Valenzuela’s situation, others teammates, like outfielders, Rick Monday, and, Jay Johnstone, wished for a quick resolution to the situation. Monday is quoted in the *LA Times* as hoping, “to see both sides satisfied very, very quickly because [he’s] tired of answering all these damn questions,” while Johnstone suggested Fernando lacked the seniority and had not paid his dues in baseball before demanding such a handsome contract (3/27/1982).

¹⁷ The, “Koufax Compromise,” as Heisler put it, “calls for a guaranteed three-year contract, with Valenzuela retaining the right to renegotiate and demand arbitration in his second and third years” (2/28/1982). In the end, Valenzuela settled for a \$350,000 contract in 1982 and filed for arbitration in years 1983 (\$1 million awarded) and 1986 (\$1.6 million awarded, with \$1.85 million for 1987, and \$2.05 million for 1988).

¹⁸ The proceedings hinged upon a 3.5 minute tape-recording revealing glowing endorsements from Al Campanis, who claimed late-Dodger owner, Walter O’Malley, “must be looking down smiling,” that the Dodgers fulfilled his vision of tapping into the L.A. Latino market, and skipper, Tommy Lasorda, who proclaimed Fernando, “a manager’s dream, a player who comes along once in a lifetime” (*Sporting News* 03/07/1983). Naturally, the Dodgers attempted to counter-object for half-an-hour but were unsuccessful.

¹⁹ Higuera’s first season statistics: 15-8 (.652 W-L %), 3.9 ERA, 7 CG, 1.173 WHIP, 2.02 SO/W. Valenzuela’s first season statistics: 13-7 (.650 W-L %), 2.48 ERA, 11 CG, 1.045 WHIP, 2.95 SO/W (Baseball-Reference.com)

²⁰ As noted in Garza’s article’s sub-headline—labeled, “Adios to the interpreter,” the Latina reporter was given the interviewing task because she, “speaks Teddy Higuera’s language. Normally, the Brewers’ left-hander relies on teammate Juan Nieves as his interpreter. But Spanish was spoken here” (7/10/1986).

²¹ Interestingly, his presence in baseball was an intriguing one, the tall, lanky Castro having long been rumored to have tried out for the Yankees and having played the sport in his youth. Such claims about MLB tryouts are entirely untrue according to the recent *Washington Post* article, “Just a reminder that Cuba’s Fidel Castro never tried out for the Yankees or Senators.” Holding true to its name, it debunked those two claims along with the other, “about Castro turning down a \$5000 offer from the New York Giants in 1951 in order to pursue a law degree” (Bonesteel).

²² Two of Gilb’s books were banned by the 2010 Arizona state legislation, which prohibited seven Mexican-American and Chicano books deemed as promoting the

overthrow of the American government. This legislation was repealed in 2013. At the time, an outspoken Gilb wrote, "I had two books on the banned list—*The Magic of Blood* and *Woodcuts of Women*—so I'm very honored. I'm humbled. I have worked all my adult life trying to be an important writer in America and to our community, so I want to thank (Gracias, gracias!) the state of Arizona for its recognition. Although I was a little disappointed—we are ambitious peoples—that my new book didn't get any attention. But in time, they'll hate that, too. Of course this banning is raw, ugly racism. But may I suggest that it's good it's out in the open and publicly displayed? And with this we teach metaphor: our literature has always been put away, carted to storage. What's new is that books got out, to ambitious, bright young people no less, and now has been confiscated. Doesn't that sort of describe the Mexican American experience for the last 200 years? We're not treated as if we're from here, that we have our history here, that our land and history is part of the country's land and history" (www.progressive.org/dagoberto-gilb).

²³ According to the website peninsuladeportiva.com, 1946 November 24th, Gustavo "Chato" Bello overcame three errors and Aviación de Campeche blanked los Plataformeros de Progreso by a score of 5-0 at "Leandro Domínguez" Field. The game lasted an hour and 25 minutes in the Peninsula League. That same day, Julio "Jiquí" Espadas of los Cardenales de Motul, was close to a perfect game and ultimately gave up two hits to blank las Estrellas Yucatecas by a score of 3-0. Espadas faced 28 batters and recorded six strikeouts" (end quote with no beginning quote) (translated from Spanish by me).

²⁴ Syd Cohen is a figure in MLB history as a professional pitcher (famously giving up Babe Ruth's 708th homerun) as well as southwest baseball history for his time managing in the minor leagues for the El Paso Texans (1947, 1949-50), Juarez Indios (1950), and Bisbee-Douglas Copper Kings (1951-53), before returning to manage the Texans once more (1954-55). Cohen Stadium, a ballpark and now multi-purpose event stadium in El Paso, Texas, is named after him and his brother. Cohen died in El Paso, Texas on April 9, 1988 at the age of 81.

²⁵ Chato was not simply a pitcher, but could also hit, if needed. For example, an *Associated Press* article from September 6, 1949 reported, "[y]esterday afternoon the Kings downed the Senators 8-7 with a two-run rally in the last of the ninth. Chato Bello, B-D [Bisbee-Douglas] hurler, came into the game in the last of the eighth as a pinch hitter for starter Willis Dudley. He flied out. In the next inning Bello was on the mound. He gave up one hit, but put out the Senators before any runs were scored. In the Kings' half of the ninth Bello came to bat, with the bases loaded and none out. He singled, the tying and winning runs crossing the plate. The victory was his 14th of the season to nine defeats" (*Prescott Evening Courier* 7).

²⁶ Blackie Morales was a fellow Mexican-born pitcher and teammate of Chato Bello during his time with the Bisbee-Douglas Copper Kings. Mike Anderson's book, *Warren Ballpark*, an extensive text dedicated to the history of America's oldest multisport facility, noted that, "Morales went 24-12 on the mound for the 1951 Copper Kings and finished the season with a 3.30 earned run average. His batting average with the young ladies was reportedly quite high as well" (92).

²⁷ The factories of companies, like Pfizer and Merck, in Barceloneta will be closing by the end of 2017. Pfizer plans on closing its Barceloneta factory due to overproduction, a move that will cost 500 employees their jobs. (*Caribbean Business PR*)

²⁸ In 2012, the league chose to honor its former player, Roberto Clemente, by renaming the league (once again), *La Liga de Beisbol Profesional Roberto Clemente*.

²⁹ Ydelfonso Sola Morales Stadium is the home stadium of the Criollos de Cagua and holds 10,000 people.

³⁰ The game between the Pawtucket Red Sox and Rochester Red Wings took two days to complete. According to the official minor league baseball website dedicated to the game and its history, “[i]t began on a frigid April 18th evening at McCoy Stadium and was halted at 4:09am by order of I.L. President Harold Cooper. On June 23rd, Dave Koza, who entered the game as the best hitter in the contest at 4-for-13, hit a 2-2 curve ball from reliever Cliff Speck into left field to score Marty Barrett and give the Pawtucket Red Sox a 3-2 victory over the Rochester Red Wings. Koza's single came with the bases loaded and none out as the Paw Sox managed to end the contest on their first at-bat in the bottom of the 33rd inning” (milb.com)

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