



# **Baseball and Rhetorics of Purity: The National Pastime and American Identity During the War on Terror (Albma Rhetoric Cult & Soc Crit)**

*Michael L. Butterworth*

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Baseball has long been considered America's "national pastime," touted variously as a healthy diversion, a symbol of national unity, and a model of democratic inclusion. But, according to Michael Butterworth, such favorable rhetoric belies baseball's complicity in the rhetorical construction of a world defined by good and evil.

*Baseball and Rhetorics of Purity* is an investigation into the culture and mythology of baseball, a study of its limits and failures, and an invitation to remake the game in a more democratic way. It pays special attention to baseball's role in the reconstruction of American identity after September 11, 2001. This study is framed by a discussion that links the development of baseball to the discourses of innocence and purity in 19th-century America. From there, it examines ritual performances at baseball games; a traveling museum exhibit sponsored by the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum; the recent debate about the use of performance-enhancing drugs; the return of Major League Baseball to Washington, D.C., in 2005; and the advent of the World Baseball Classic in 2006.

Butterworth argues that by promoting myths of citizenship and purity, post-9/11 discourse concerning baseball ironically threatens the health of the democratic system and that baseball cannot be viewed as an innocent diversion or escape. Instead, Butterworth highlights how the game on the field reflects a more complex and diverse worldview, and makes a plea for the game's recovery, both as a national pastime and as a site for celebrating the best of who we are and who we can be.

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