

# A Monarch for the Millions: Jewish Filmmakers, Social Commentary and the Postwar Cycle of Boxing Films

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• Peter Stanfield

To those, Sir, who prefer *effeminacy* to hardihood – assumed refinement to rough *Nature* – and whom a *shower of rain* can terrify, under the alarm of their *polite* frames, suffering from the unruly elements – or would not mind Pugilism, if BOXING was not so shockingly vulgar – the following work can create no interest whatever; but to those persons who feel that Englishmen are not automatons . . . Boxiana will convey amusement if not information.

Pierce Egan, 1812<sup>1</sup>

Following the critical and box office success of *Body and Soul* (1947) and *Champion* (1949), the major studios and new independents produced a significant number of films that exploited the sport of boxing. These included *Killer McCoy* (1947), *Big Punch* (1948), *Whiplash* (1948), *In This Corner* (1948), *Leather Gloves* (1948), *Fighting Fools* (1949), *Duke of Chicago* (1949), *Ringside* (1949), *The Set-Up* (1949), *Right Cross* (1950), *Golden Gloves Story* (1950), *Iron Man* (1951), *Roaring City* (1951), *Breakdown* (1952), *The Fighter* (1952), *Kid Monk Baroni* (1952), *The Ring* (1952), *Flesh and Fury* (1952), *Champ for a Day* (1953), *Joe Louis Story* (1953), *Tennessee Champ* (1954), *Square Jungle* (1955), *Killer's Kiss* (1955), *Leather Saint* (1956), *Somebody Up There Likes Me* (1956), *The Harder They Fall* (1956), *World In My Corner* (1956), *The Crooked Circle* (1957), and *Monkey On My Back* (1957). The cycle continued sporadically on into the latter part of the decade before ending with *Requiem for a Heavyweight* (1962). Boxing was also prominently featured in a number of crime films and melodramas of the same period: *The Killers* (1946), *Till the End of Time* (1946), *Nobody Lives Forever* (1946), *Brute Force* (1947),

*The Street With No Name* (1948), *Tension* (1950), *Glory Alley* (1952), *Turning Point* (1952), *The Quiet Man* (1952), *From Here to Eternity* (1953), *On the Waterfront* (1954), *Kiss Me Deadly* (1955), and *The Big Combo* (1955).

A significant number of these films had little or no input from Hollywood's left-leaning fraternity. Nevertheless, the boxing story attracted a disproportionately large number of left-wing and, as we shall see, Jewish filmmakers who played significant roles in the development of the cycle's key films. This essay considers how the boxing story enabled some filmmakers to politicise and individualise a popular film cycle. These left-wing Jewish filmmakers understood that the boxing story offered a particularly viable vehicle for broad social commentary, a vehicle that could also be personalised by evoking a nostalgic vision of a ghetto community.

*Champion* opens and closes with a ringside radio commentator setting the scene for Midge Kelly's defence of his championship title: 'Listen to the crowd. Actually, they're cheering more than a man tonight. They're cheering a story; a story that could only have been lived in the fight game: a story of a boy who rose from the depths of poverty to become champion of the world'. After being brutally battered by his opponent, Kelly, played by Kirk Douglas, makes a dramatic comeback in the final round of the bout and holds on to his title. But he has paid too great a price for this moment of glory, and he dies in his dressing room from a brain haemorrhage. The hero's rise from the gutter of ghetto life to the dizzying heights of a penthouse overlooking the city, followed by an equally dramatic fall, was already pure formula by the time Carl Forman



• Robert Ryan in *The Set-Up*.

had turned Ring Lardner's short story into a screenplay. RKO, however, contested the idea of common ownership of this formula when they took Stanley Kramer, *Champion's* producer, and production company Screen Plays II to court on the grounds that it borrowed too freely from its own production *The Set-Up*. Attorneys for Screen Plays II and United Artists, the film's distributor, countered that the two films were sufficiently different and that the Howard Hughes-run corporation were attempting a spoiling action against box-office competition. Their cry of corporate bullying went unheeded and the judge ruled that *Champion* should be shorn of its offending scenes.<sup>2</sup> These scenes were relatively minor moments in a film that shared the same premise not only with *The Set-Up*, but also with *Body and Soul* and *Golden Boy* (1938) – that boxing is controlled by mobsters, and that corruption, inside and outside the ring, is endemic to the sport. Struggle with moral depravation is as much a part of the formula as the struggle with economic deprivation.<sup>3</sup>

*Body and Soul* is the exemplary postwar boxing film: the story of a poor New York Jewish boxer who throws aside friends, family, and lovers in his obsessive drive to succeed. The film has been described as embodying 'the highest achievement of the American Left in cinema before the onset of repression'.<sup>4</sup> And, along with *Force of Evil*, as the first American films to 'implicate the entire system of capitalism in their criticisms.'<sup>5</sup> With his producer Bob Roberts, John Garfield assembled a number of Hollywood's pre-eminent left-wing filmmakers, notably director Robert Rossen and scriptwriter Abraham Polonsky. The factors that led Garfield and Roberts to choose a boxing story for the star's first post-Warner Bros. film are complex and convoluted, but some are relatively clear.<sup>6</sup> Boxing was popular, after baseball it was America's second favourite sport. Mass interest in boxing would have been self-evident to these filmmakers. In *Golden Boy*, Clifford Odets' 1937 boxing drama, the screenwriters had a viable and compelling model on which to base their story. But also like other left-wing Jewish filmmakers that worked on boxing movies, Carl Foreman (*Champion*), Budd Schulberg (*On the Waterfront*, *The Harder They Fall*) Irving Schulman (*The Ring*), Joseph Pevney (*Iron Man*, *Flesh and Fury*), Herbert Kline (*The Fighter*), Gordon Kahn (*Whiplash*), and Bernard Gordon (*Flesh and Fury*), they were also attracted to the history of Jewish involvement in boxing and, for a short while, Jewish domination of the sport both inside and outside the ring.

In the ring, Jews in the late 1920s and early 1930s were the dominant ethnic group: Benny Leonard, Barney Ross, and 'Slapsie' Maxie Rosenbloom were joined by another 27 world champions between 1910 and 1940. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s fully one third of all professional boxers were Jewish. By the late 1930s Italian boxers had superseded the Jewish champions, and by 1950 Jews had almost no presence in the ring at all. Greater social and cultural integration into the mainstream, economic advancement, and high postwar attendance in post-school education meant that boxing was no longer viewed as a lucrative road

out of the ghetto. As social historian of boxing, Jeffrey T. Sammons has written: 'The succession had gone from Irish to Jewish and would pass on to Italians, to blacks, and to Latins, a pattern that reflected the acculturation strategies of those ethnic groups located on the lowest rungs of the socioeconomic ladder. As each group moved up, it pulled its youth out of prizefighting and pushed them into more promising and meaningful pursuits'.<sup>7</sup> Though Jewish presence in the ring declined rapidly, Jews maintained a significant presence outside of the ring through management (Al Weill for Rocky Marciano, Irving Cohen for Rocky Graziano), promotion, match-making, journalism (*New Yorker's* A.J. Liebling), and publishing (Nat Fleisher with *Ring* magazine), training (Mannie Seamon and Charlie Goldman, respectively Joe Louis and Marciano's trainers), and sports wear manufacture (Everlast).<sup>8</sup> As the historian of Jews in boxing Allen Bodner notes, throughout the 1920s and 1930s neighbourhood and championship boxing matches were significant 'social and political events' in the life of east coast Jewish communities.<sup>9</sup> The left-oriented films in the boxing cycle draw covertly or overtly upon this heritage, building a formula that engages with the wider world of the sport in its various incarnations as live spectacle, as radio entertainment, and later as a key component in television's popularity, as well as linking with more romantically inclined ideas of the sport's role within working-class life and culture.

Numerous films featuring boxing had been made in the 1930s, but where they differed significantly from their counterparts in the 1940s and 1950s is that they downplayed or avoided the issue of moral and economic struggle. Little emphasis is given to the boxer's ethnicity, and the films tend to eschew a downbeat ending. 1930s boxing movies such as *The Prizefighter and the Lady* (1933), *The Personality Kid* (1934), *Cain and Mabel* (1936) highlight romantic intrigue, often across class boundaries, and the display of partially naked men provides ample opportunity for the expression of female sexual desire. None of these elements are absent from the postwar cycle. But they are very much

contained within a narrative framework that valued social verisimilitude over romance.

In the same way that left-leaning writers and filmmakers made use of crime stories to offer a critique of contemporary society via a medium that appealed directly to the masses, they also made use of boxing stories. In this context, the boxing story, with its proletarian protagonist, his struggles with organized crime and an unforgiving corporate civic order, proved to be highly conducive to the articulation of a radical voice in American culture. Like a ventriloquist's act, the intellectual works through crime and boxing stories to speak in a common voice to the common man.<sup>10</sup>

Midway through Robert Aldrich's 1955 adaptation of Clifford Odets' *The Big Knife* (1949), friends of Hollywood movie star Charlie Castle (Jack Palance) gather in the early evening to watch one of his old movies, a fight film made eight or nine years previously, when Charlie still 'had a lot of steam'. The end of the picture shows Charlie's character recovering from a near knock out to win the fight. Charlie asks Hank, a scriptwriter who has grown disgusted with Hollywood and has plans to return to New York and write 'the great American novel', what he thinks of the picture. 'I keep wondering what would happen if you lost the big fight', replies Hank. 'Not commercial', responds a cynical Charlie, adding: 'he thinks he is still writing for Mercury or the Group. It would have turned out as Uncle Hoff describes as "disaster."' Hoff (Rod Steiger) is Charlie's domineering producer. Charlie once had dreams of making socially aware movies and great art, a dream he nurtured in the politically progressive theatre of the 1930s (represented by his allusion to the socially committed Mercury and Group theatres). But now that dream has soured and he is owned body and soul by Hoff.

Odets' play looks back to the 1930s, from the perspective of a once radical playwright who, at the height of the McCarthy witch hunts, must try to come to terms with the loss of his youthful ideals.<sup>11</sup> As Eric Mottram concludes in his analysis of the play, Charlie eventually 'chooses right and is defeated by his own character, becoming the

typical hero of the thirties rather than the post war years – the American failure whose defeat exposes his fundamental decency in a bad time'.<sup>12</sup> Charlie is Odets' surrogate.<sup>13</sup> Charlie's estranged wife, Marion (Ida Lupino), challenges him to stand up to Hoff. 'What do you believe in now?' she asks him. 'What do you want?' he answers. 'The wide-eyed kid I was, nursing a cup of coffee in Walgreens, yelling about the sad state [waving his arms] . . . of whatever . . . . And, anyhow, what is all this arty bunk? You know this industry is capable of turning out good pictures, pictures with guts and meaning'. Marion replies: 'Sure, sure, we know some of the men who do it, Stevens, Mankiewicz, Kazan, Huston, Wyler, Wilder, Stanley Kramer, but never Stanley Hoff'. The autobiographical bent of Odets' play is reinforced in the film adaptation by the use of the boxing movie that Charlie starred in, and in the film's opening sequence. The sequence shows Charlie boxing with his trainer, as the voiceover narration informs the viewer that 'Charlie Castle is a man who sold out his dreams, but he can't forget them'.<sup>14</sup>

These images of boxing link back to Odets' earlier play *Golden Boy* (1937), a play formed in the hot-house of New Deal politics.<sup>15</sup> *Golden Boy* was made into a film in 1938, directed by Rouben Mamoulian and starring Barbara Stanwyck and William Holden. It is the story of a young man's tentative and short-lived claim on fame and glory as a boxer. Joe Bonaparte is the son of an Italian immigrant who has grown up in the polyglot world of New York's Lower East Side. His brother's a union organizer and his brother-in-law is a Jewish cab driver. His father's best friend is a Jewish storeowner, to whom he talks about his dream of Joe becoming a concert violinist. There is no money in being a musician, and the modern, fast moving world is no place for the sensitive. Joe rejects his father's dream, and becomes a boxer. 'You could build a city with his ambition', a character says of Joe. Joe wants the high-life: 'bury me in good times and silk shirts', says Joe. Joe is in a hurry to get somewhere, anywhere, but out of the ghetto: 'that's what speed's for, an easy way to live', he

says. To achieve his ambition to become 'the monarch of the masses', Joe, like Charlie in *The Big Knife*, signs a contract with a manager who provides for his every whim, and in return Joe gives himself up body and soul. Boxing provided Odets' with an over-determined masculine story form that enabled him to consider the role of the artist within an exploitative capitalist society. The subject of prizefighting enabled Odets to couch these bourgeois concerns within a drama that he believed had the potential to reach out to the mass audience that was drawn in the hundreds and thousands to live boxing events in the 1930s. *The Big Knife*, on the other hand, was a chronicle of the failure to provide and sustain a socially engaged art for the masses.<sup>16</sup>

The vast majority of the boxing films in the 1940s and 1950s represent an urban, proletarian, ethnic minority culture that portray the boxer's aspirations for success as deeply problematic. The films do not represent the boxer's story as a quick and glory-filled route out of the ghetto, the kind suggested by the climatic victory of Charlie Castle's character in the fight film he made for Hoff. Instead, these particular films are concerned with dramatizing defeat. As such they trail *Golden Boy*, which drama scholar Gabriel Miller has noted 'follows the classic tragic formula of an individual's rise to power and subsequent fall, precipitated by the recognition of irreparable error committed in the use of that power; for this he suffers and dies, having exhausted all the possibilities of his life. Odets moves his hero toward an action that causes great suffering, and then by exposing the consequences of the deed reveals to him the true nature of his ambition'.<sup>17</sup> This description, like Mottram's earlier claim that Charlie Castle's defeat in *The Big Knife* 'exposes his fundamental decency in a bad time', can stand for the two most important films in the cycle, *Body and Soul* and *Champion*. It is also an apt description for a little known King Bros. feature called *The Ring* [1951], with a script by Irving Schulman. Schulman had achieved public recognition following the publication of his novel *The Amboy Dukes*, an early postwar tale of juvenile delinquency that was adapted for film as *City*



• Publicity still for *The Ring*. In their club house, Tommy and his friends get an unwelcome visit from the police.

*Across the River* (1949). He later co-scripted *Rebel without a Cause* (1955).

The racial and ethnic dynamics of the boxing story are particularly explicit in Schulman's telling, *The Ring* replaces *Body and Soul's* New York Jewish ghetto with a Mexican district of Los Angeles; Olvera Street, a little bit of Old Mexico 'forgotten by time' and surrounded by modern Los Angeles. Residents make their living touting for tourist money and in unskilled trades. The young Latinos kill time in their club house, listening to hot jazz. Bullied by the local police force, excluded due to his race from a skating rink, and indignant that his father has been laid off work by his 'Anglo' bosses, Tommy (Lalo Rios) socks two Anglos who insult his girlfriend (Rita Moreno). His potential as a prizefighter is witnessed by a boxing manager, Pete Genusia (Gerald Mohr), who explains that a career in the ring is 'the quickest way to get someplace, be

somebody – better than any Anglo; better than any Anglo you can lick!' Tommy trains hard and wins his first few fights, becoming a hero to his younger brother and the local gang members. His father, however, is disgusted with his chosen profession, but with no other money coming into the home his position of authority is undermined. As his wife explains, boxing is 'dangerous not dishonest, so we will pray for him'.

Like Joe Bonaparte in *Golden Boy*, Tommy wants it all and he wants it fast. Chasing after a bigger bankroll, Tommy forces his manager to get him fights for which he is ill prepared. He loses the bouts and his little star fizzles out. Bruised and battered, but back with his family and friends, Tommy has learnt a cruel but necessary lesson: that struggle to better one's self is important but not if it costs self-respect. Tommy never makes it out of the lower reaches

on the fight card, he never gets star billing, but in defeat, like the more illustrious protagonists in *Golden Boy* and *Body and Soul*, he realizes that his true worth can only be measured by his relationship with the community that first formed his identity.

Outside of his neighbourhood, the boxer is characterised as an exploited labourer, and his eventual recognition of his plight is perceived as the equivalent of a political awakening. When Tommy burns his fight gear at the end of the film he is rejecting the empty promise that Pete had held out to him that boxing would make him somebody, better than any Anglo, and symbolically re-aligning himself with his father. When explaining to his family why he had lost his job, Tommy's father had offered the excuse that when an 'Anglo becomes old he is promoted to a boss, when a Mexican becomes old he is laid off'. Whatever promises boxing makes, Schulman appears to be saying, it cannot level racial inequality. Though even this message failed to make an impact on the reviewer for the *Hollywood Reporter* who panned the film, calling it 'a depressing, rather pointless harangue on American discrimination against its Mexican minority group' and suggested the film would only be of interest to 'East Los Angeles, the Mexican-American population and those who love films depicting minorities as abused in America'.<sup>18</sup>

When Tommy gives up boxing at the end of *The Ring* it is not clear what new career path is open to him, only unskilled labour appears as an option. Other films in the cycle, however, are concerned to show a world that exists outside of the ghetto, in particular a world of culture and education.

Odets' and Garfield's paths crossed repeatedly during the 1930s and 1940s, but they only once worked together on film, on an adaptation of Fannie Hurst's *Humoresque* (1946).<sup>19</sup> In the screenplay, Odets returned to ground previously examined in *Golden Boy*, though this time refined culture prevails over the fistic arts. Garfield plays a musically talented Lower East End kid who, with the patronage of a wealthy woman (Joan Crawford), escapes from the New

York ghetto. Early in the game of social advancement the young violin virtuoso is approached by a woman at a party held by his patron, looking him over she asks, 'Are you a prizefighter? You look just like a prizefighter'. The linking of violinist with the pugilist in *Humoresque* was not only a reflection upon Odets' play *Golden Boy*, and a comment on Garfield's persona, it was also yet another contraction between artist and boxer that was becoming common currency.

In the 1940 film *City for Conquest*, James Cagney plays a trucker who becomes a prizefighter to get enough money to support his brother's ambition to compose and conduct a symphony. The symphony is inspired by the city of New York in 'all its proud passionate beauty and all its sordid ugliness'. In *Champion* the artist is a beautiful female sculptor who takes Midge Kelly on a tour of a museum filled with Greek statues, and then poses, objectifies, and seduces the prizefighter. The clay statuette she makes of Kelly underscoring his manager's description of him as a Golem.<sup>20</sup> In *Body and Soul* Charley's girlfriend goes to art school, quotes William Blake, and lives with a 'surrealist' sculptor that likes to use boxers and longshoremen as models.<sup>21</sup> Charlie's girl's room-mate has some choice chat-up lines, that clearly evoke her sexual desire for strong proletarian men, and a way of running her fingers up, down, and around phallic sculpture. And in *Whiplash* the boxer is a painter. The contrivance that brings artist and fighter together is to the benefit of the artist. Joyce Carol Oates in her rumination on boxing noted, 'That the artist senses some kinship, however oblique and one-sided with the professional boxer'.<sup>22</sup>

Journalist A.J. Liebling takes the idea one step further: 'A boxer, like a writer, must stand alone'.<sup>23</sup> And he finishes his book on the 'sweet science' by noting how one boxing commentator had compared Rocky Kansas's style to Gertrude Stein, *les Six* and to non-representational painting, all of them novelties that irritated him, while his opponent, Benny Leonard, reminded him of the classic verities. When Leonard floored Kansas with an 'entirely orthodox blow to the

conventional point of the jaw,' it confirmed 'the old masters did know something. There is still a kick in style, and tradition carries a nasty wallop'. Boxing as a forum for debates on art and modernism probably did not carry much currency then or now, and Liebling preferred to fall back on the American classic *Moby Dick*, linking Ahab and the white whale to Archie Moore and Rocky Marciano in his account of their bout that beget his ruminations on modernism and the fistic arts.<sup>24</sup>

In his journalism and his fiction, W.C. Heinz constantly made links between art and boxing; the idea that trainers mould their fighters like a master sculptor shapes his clay particularly appealed to him, though he gave too much agency to the boxer to think of him as a Golem. In his classic boxing novel, *The Professional* (1958), Heinz writes:

When the bell rang I watched Doc's kid walk out slowly and then start to circle, his hands low, looking out the tops of his eyes, and there was no question about it. He was Doc's fighter. It is what a painter does in his paintings so that you would know them, even without his signature, and what a writer does in his writings, if he is enough of a writer, so you know that no one in the whole world but he could have been the writer.<sup>25</sup>

Elsewhere Heinz has written that 'boxing divorced from danger is devoid of excitement and the emotion that is, of course, the quintessence of the art'. This is an image that he linked to a quote from Rainer Maria Rilke who wrote: 'Works of art are indeed always products of having-been-in-danger, of having-gone-to-the-very-end in an experience, to where man can go no further'.<sup>26</sup> In cases such as these the imagined link between the artist and the boxer is not particularly oblique.

Screenwriters and playwrights like Odets, Polonsky, and Schulberg may have been responding to boxing as a particular social facet of ethnic minority urban life, but they were also drawing analogies between themselves as artists involved in 'dangerous and adventurous' occupations and the world of the boxer. This analogy helped shore up their sense of self-worth

in terms of class, ethnic, and masculine attributes that their actual position as intellectuals otherwise militated against. In his impressionistic history of Jewish gangsters, *Tough Jews*, Rich Cohen considers how and why his father's generation, who came of age during the Second World War, made folk heroes out of thugs and killers like Meyer Lansky, Louis 'Lepke' Buchalter, Bugsy Goldstein, Abe 'Kid Twist' Reles, Dutch Schultz, and Bugsy Siegel: 'They were always on the look out for someone other than their father, a destiny other than the domestic one they saw at home'.<sup>27</sup> For Odets and his cohort, Jewish boxers offered a more legitimate figure with which to counter the stereotype of the effeminate, scholarly, artistically inclined Jew.

The cycle of boxing films ran parallel with Rocky Marciano's reign as heavyweight champion, and had begun at the end of Joe Louis' extraordinary dominance of the heavyweight class in the immediate pre- and postwar years. It also coincided with Sugar Ray Robinson's supremacy of the postwar welterweight and middleweight classes. Yet apart from black independent productions such as Oscar Micheaux's *Notorious Elinor Lee* (1940), two films starring Joe Louis, *Spirit of Youth* (1938), *The Fight Never Ends* (1948), and the biopic *The Joe Louis Story*, black boxers took a back seat to the travails of their white counterparts. Secondary roles such as those in *Golden Boy*, *Body and Soul*, and *The Set-Up*, or cameo roles for the likes of Joe Louis in *This is the Army* (1943), *Negro Soldier* (1944), *Joe Palooka*, *Champ* (1946) and *Square Jungle* are the sum of the cycle's engagement with African Americans. Apart from replicating the American film industry's general 'disinterest' in representing African Americans, I suspect these acts of omission were also dictated by the filmmakers' concern to represent a relatively unproblematic view of urban, ethnic, class, and gender concerns.

In the bid to address issues of individual potency and social cohesion, race was marginalized by the socially committed filmmaker. Nevertheless, the ability to create analogous relationships between art and boxing

was widened to suggest a link between the sport and society at large. *Golden Boy's* working title was the rather more all-embracing *American Allegory*. Writing about Ring Lardner's experiments with American vernacular, no less an authority on the centrality of sport in American life and letters than Virginia Woolf noted that 'it is no coincidence that the best of Mr Lardner's stories are about games, for one may guess that Mr Lardner's interest in games has solved one of the most difficult problems of the American writer; it has given him a clue, a centre, a meeting place for the diverse activities of people whom a vast continent isolates, whom no tradition controls. Games give him what society gives his English brother'.<sup>28</sup> During the Depression, prizefighting, alongside baseball, was one of the most important sports in forming this social cement. National radio networks NBC

and CBS, which were founded in the late 1920s, in large part consolidated their dominance of the industry by broadcasting sporting events.<sup>29</sup> 'Sports were among the first live events that radio brought into people's homes', writes radio historian Susan Douglas, noting that 'Boxing in the Depression assumed special metaphorical power when, out in the streets, real workers were often fighting with real cops or other agents of management over their livelihoods and "hard times" indeed involved direct physical conflict. Approximately 8,000 professional boxers entered the ring in the 1930s in the hope that this sport would provide their financial deliverance, and nationally broadcast fights helped revitalize the sport'.<sup>30</sup> Whether or not Douglas' claim that fights between boxers were linked in the public's mind to the struggles between labour and capital can be sustained,



• Publicity still for *Champion*. Riding the rails with hobos, Midge Kelly (Kirk Douglas) reveals his prowess as a fighter.

world championship matches, such as that between Joe Louis and Max Schmeling in 1938, did work to link the nation together. And, according to Douglas, Louis 'embodied America's conceits about its national strength, resolve, and ability to come back from defeat. Was America still the world's most vigorous, virile nation, despite the Depression, despite Hitler's conquests?'<sup>31</sup>

Many of the films in the cycle have a shared understanding that the boxing story has its roots in the Great Depression, an idea given visual expression in the opening scenes of *Champion*. While hobbing to California and the promise of a better life, Midge Kelly reveals his prowess as a fighter in railroad boxcars: 'We've got our foot on a ladder. We're not hitchhiking anymore, we're riding. No fat guy in a big car is ever gonna make a monkey out of me'. One review of *Body and Soul* saw the film as a Depression era parable: 'Here are the gin and tinsel, squalor and sables of the depression era, less daring than when first revealed in *Dead End* or *Golden Boy* but more valid and mature because shown without sentiment or blur'.<sup>32</sup> Screenwriter Polonsky sold his story to the film's producers on the idea it was about the 'Depression, Jews, and the fight game'.<sup>33</sup> Though it is not discernable in the film, the shooting script locates, via an automobile's license plate, the film's setting as 1938.<sup>34</sup> Historians of Hollywood's blacklist, Paul Buhle and Dave Wagner argue that even though *Body and Soul* first appeared in 1947, it 'could be described as the last film of the 1930s', the 'culmination of the Depression generation's struggle to emancipate American dramatic art from the film corporation's control'.<sup>35</sup> This is also true of *Champion* made two years later, symbolised both in independent producer Kramer's behind the scenes battle with studio giant RKO and in its initial Depression setting. On its release, however, *Body and Soul's* reviewers did not emphasize the film's links to the 1930s, instead they highlighted its opportune subject matter.

*The Hollywood Reporter* headlined its review: 'Fight Yarn Gets Rugged Treatment,' and followed up with 'Enterprise steps out, with a

walloping fight film, exposing the vicious rackets still being worked behind the scenes of the boxing game by unscrupulous promoters and greedy managers who allow their boys to fight themselves to death. With newspapers splashing these stories all over their pages, the subject is plenty timely and also box office'.<sup>36</sup> *Variety* concurred with the *Reporter* calling the film as 'Timely as today's headlines'.<sup>37</sup> Daily *Variety* filled in some of the detail concerning its timeliness: 'Topical yarn obviously designed to take advantage of the recent New York inquiry into to "sports fixing", with an emphasis on some of the crookedness manifested in professional boxing, *Body and Soul* has a somewhat familiar title and a likewise familiar narrative. It's the telling, however, that's different and that's what will sell the film'.<sup>38</sup> The trade press reviews that linked the film's temporal location to a contemporary concern with corruption in the fight game do not contradict the reviews and later critiques that stressed continuity with the concerns of the 1930s. The subject of boxing allowed for both versions, facilitating an allegorical reception of the film as an individual's and a community's struggle with the vicissitudes of capitalism and more simply as a melodramatic realization of the world of pugilism.

In supercharged symbolic events such as the 1938 Schmeling-Louis match it is easy to see boxing, as Sammons does, as 'a microcosm of the larger society and, as such, can isolate, magnify, and amplify conditions that are easily lost or difficult to discern in the larger society'.<sup>39</sup> On the other hand, boxing, as novelist Joyce Carol Oates argues, 'is not a metaphor for life but a unique, closed, self-referential world'.<sup>40</sup> It is the artist or social historian that gives boxing its larger meaning. The films generally strived for social relevance on a local level, rather than on a national scale. As such it is in terms of their delineation of an urban, proletarian, masculine, and ethnically defined image of the neighbourhood that the more politically inspired films in the cycle find their most meaningful resonance.

Marcus Klein in his book *Foreigners: The Making of American Literature: 1900-1940*

creates a rich account of how America in myth and idea was remade at the turn of the century by eastern European immigrants to the United States, when first and second generation Jewish Americans rewrote American culture in their own image. In Michael Gold's *Jews Without Money* (1930), Henry Roth's *Call It Sleep* (1934), Daniel Fuchs's *Summer in Williamsburg* (1934), Klein traces the theme of conflict 'between the old-country Jewish ideals and the powerful, disinherit America'.<sup>41</sup> He reads these novels alongside James T. Farrell's *Studs Lonigan* trilogy, and other proletarian novels by Albert Halper and Meyer Levin. In each case, as he noted specifically about *Studs Lonigan*, the 'ghetto had served truly to be the basis of a community – that ghetto community was better than the American and the time by which it was in the process of being dispossessed'.<sup>42</sup>

The ghetto – Irish, Italian, black, Jewish, and so on – thus could be presented for consideration as a kind of Home Town. It could be celebrated not only in spite of but also because of all of its deprivations and confusions and strangeness. The urban ghetto – chiefly in New York and Chicago – was not the only place in which the new American folk had been created, but it was in fact the usual place. Moreover, to tell the tale of one's youth in the ghetto was to secure several benefits at once. One could pay one's filial respects and thereby assuage guilt. By mythicizing the ghetto, one could further emigrate from it. In addition, one could make a statement and teach a lesson to all of those official Americans who persisted in thinking that they owned the country. And altogether one could say that here, too, was a genuine and informative typicality of the true America.<sup>43</sup>

The writers Klein discusses 'were engaged in making cultural assertion from utterly dubious cultural materials. In all of their instances the underlying truth of the ghetto was the dissolution of the ghetto – which, because America, too, was a dubious material, was not the same thing as a process of Americanization'.<sup>44</sup> The more socially-conscious films in the cycle of boxing movies also drew upon a nostalgic evocation of the ghetto as a

formative environment and as a superior moral space. The candy stores, diners, grocers, dance halls, tenement buildings, and milling street scenes all attested to a vital life experience, while the homosocial spaces of the barber shop, the pool room, the saloon, and the boxing gym underscored ghetto life as authentically masculine.

In films such as *Body and Soul* and *Golden Boy* the images of the ghetto society of the Lower East Side echo the street life represented in films of the early sound period, notably King Vidor's *Street Scene* (1931) with its rich portrayal of a polyglot New York. In this film, like many of the ghetto-centric boxing movies, the boundaries between public and private space are effaced by the social and romantic commingling that takes place on tenement steps. Where the boxing film differs from its earlier ghetto counterparts is in its masculinisation of street life and emphasis on the homosocial spaces of the gym or pool hall. As such, the boxing movie shares something of the tough-boy vernacular displayed in a film like *Public Enemy* (1931), where the city streets are a school for tomorrow's hoodlums and racketeers. In films such as *The Set-Up* and *The Street with No Name*, films that otherwise have very little to say about the ethnic make-up of America's inner cities, the working or underclass environment and the masculine aspects of street life are nevertheless thoroughly highlighted.

*The Set-Up's* director was Robert Wise, who had learnt his trade in the Val Lewton production unit at RKO. In *The Set-Up* Wise replays one of the unit's most famous tropes, as seen in *Cat People* (1942) and *Leopard Man* (1943), of the lonely, vulnerable, walk of the heroine through the nightmarish nocturnal city. In *The Set-Up* aging boxer Stoker Thompson (Robert Ryan) is preparing for his bout against the newcomer Tiger Nelson. The film cuts backwards and forwards between Stoker and his wife Julie who walks the streets outside of the boxing arena. The film's *mise-en-scene* and ambient soundtrack is extraordinarily effective in underscoring Julie's unhappy, and uncertain, state of mind as she contemplates her husband's choice to carry on boxing; vainly in search of the

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• Turning away from Paradise City, Julie begins her nocturnal stroll.



• Julie's walk takes her past the dance hall, Dreamland.



• Julie attracts unwanted attention.



• Listening to the fights on the cigar store radio.



• Julie walks past the town's hot drink spots.



• Julie walking past the motorcycle gang.



• Julie outside the penny arcade.



• Inside the arcade a young couple play the boxing attraction.



• Julie walks towards the end of the street.



• Julie stares down at the oncoming traffic.

win that will help him get a title shot and enough money to get out of the game. Adjacent to the fight arena, ironically called Paradise City, is the equally ironically named Dreamland, a dancehall located above a Chop Suey house, and the Hotel Cozy, where Stoker and Julie are staying. Cozy paradisiacal dreamlands are a million miles away from this tank town. Unseen except in silhouette, The Dreamland's dance orchestra provide the requisite swing, boogie woogie, and rumba backdrop to the depiction of an excessively defined masculine and proletarian space inside and outside of the arena.

Julie's walk begins outside the arena as she listens to the sound of the crowd screaming for blood. Chilled, she turns away and walks past

the Coral Ball Room. She is immediately accosted by a mash man – silk tie, wide lapels, thin moustache, and a flat line in seduction: 'Lonesome?' 'Like dancing?' 'Want a cigarette?' 'Betcha do a nice rumba'. Though she dismisses him with a 'get lost', his presence is threatening. At a cigar stand she listens to a live broadcast from the arena, thinking it is her husband that is being beaten she becomes weak and sick. 'What's the matter lady', says the cigar man, 'too rough for you?' She moves on down the street accompanied by Hawaiian music pouring out of a cocktail bar, she then walks passed a gang of loitering punk motorcyclists and a tattoo parlour. A girl's scream cuts twice above the sounds of the street. Inside a penny arcade a

girl's dress is blown above her head by a blast of air from an attraction. She is the screamer. Julie's worried look turns into a smile, before reality intrudes once again as a boxing arcade game grabs her attention. Back on the street, hustlers glam suckers for small change and kissing couples pull themselves into the shadows and doorways. The roar of a motorbike engine is heard and then the sounds and the neon light of the arcade, dance hall, and bars give way to traffic noise and the sodium glare of headlights as Julie descends some steps before halting to look over the side of a bridge onto a busy road down below: the cars, buses, and trams howling and churning into the tunnels beneath her feet. At about the time Stoker is finishing his bout, Julie is buying some hamburgers and tins of soup, and the short order chef tries to con her out of a few cents. The sequence finishes with Julie back in her room at the Cozy Hotel, looking through her window onto Paradise City and Dreamland. As she watches, from out of the alley, between the arena and the dance hall, her husband staggers into the street and falls into the gutter. His right hand smashed by the small time racketeers who had paid his manager in the expectation that Stoker would throw the fight, that against the odds he had won.

With its representation of masculine exclusivity, *The Set-Up* revels in its portrayal of low-life losers, suckers and hucksters, dreamers and fools. Similarly, the story of FBI undercover operations in *The Street With No Name* seeks to represent a hyper-masculine image of America's inner-city underclass. To bring the perpetrators of a crime wave that has hit Central City to book, FBI agent Gene Cordell (Mark Stevens) must infiltrate the city's underworld. Assuming a false identity, he travels to Central City by greyhound bus. The bus terminal is the first view of the city, the next view is of Skid Row's doss houses. To make his presence known, Cordell hangs out on the streets, in bars, and in pool rooms, finally making his play to gain the attention of the mob at the boxing gym where all the local faces hang out. The physical contests between boxers, the machismo of the all male habitués of the gym, all jostling for centre stage, create a fitting climax

to the sequence of scenes that began in the bus terminal ten minutes earlier. The film's offering of so much redundant detail in its catalogue of proletarian, homosocial, spaces gives it the feel of a travelogue: a guided tour of the 'other side' that authenticates this otherwise formulaic police procedural.

Boxing, then, whether the film dealt with ethnicity or not, helped to authentic a view of the inner city as essentially masculine. At a point in time when this view of the ghetto was being embellished, rising standards of living, particularly among first and second generation Jews, and the geographic and economic distance of the authors of the films and novels that documented urban life, meant that ghetto representations were imbued with nostalgia. In his classic volume on boxing, Liebling wrote about what he considered would be the last great moment in boxing – the last few years of the 1940s and the first years of the 1950s: the end of Joe Louis' reign and the rise of Rocky Marciano and Sugar Ray Robinson. Nostalgic before the fact, Liebling noted that full employment and the late school-leaving age have militated against the 'development of first rate professional boxers'. But the deleterious effect of good economic conditions was nothing compared to the calamitous effect of television on the sport. Utilized 'in the sale of beer and razor blades', television networks by 'putting on a free boxing show almost every night of the week, have knocked out of business the hundreds of small-city and neighbourhood boxing clubs where youngsters had a chance to learn their trade and journeymen to mature their skills . . . Neither advertising agencies nor brewers, and least of all the networks, give a hoot if they push the Sweet Science back into a period of genre painting. When it is in a coma they will find some other way to peddle their peanuts'.<sup>45</sup> In his biographical portrait of former featherweight champion Willie Pep, sports writer W.C. Heinz, noted how 'In those days . . . boxing and Milton Berle sold TVs. Guys who didn't have sets gathered in bars or in homes of others who had sets to watch the fights'.<sup>46</sup> Sammons concurs with these journalistic accounts: 'When television



• Publicity still for the television drama *Requiem for a Heavyweight*, Jack Palance centre.

merged with sport, America's games were changed forever'.<sup>47</sup>

The first championship match broadcast was between Joe Louis and Billy Conn in 1946, a match watched in the main on television sets located in local bars. The match received over

two thirds of the listening figures for radio which dwarfed the television rating. Despite low viewing figures, the bout acted as an important word of mouth advertisement for the new medium. The 1948 fight between Louis and Jersey Joe Walcott was equally effective in the

promotion of television viewing; the Hotel New Yorker reported that its 150 rooms that were equipped with television sets were sold out to guests wishing to view the fight. One year later, a televised fight in New York City was seen in 16,500 bars and restaurants.<sup>48</sup> 'By 1952 televised prizefights reached an average of 5 million homes; the figure rose to 8.5 million in 1955'. As Sammons notes, the 'new technology transformed prizefighting from a closed attraction to a mass spectator sport'.<sup>49</sup>

The sport became increasingly commercialised and nationalised. By 1950 boxing was effectively under the monopoly control of the International Boxing Club, which in turn was controlled by Frankie Carbo and organized crime.<sup>50</sup> In the late 1950s and the early 1960s *Sports Illustrated* campaigned relentlessly against mob control of the fight game, observing that in less than a generation it had gone from 'an exciting sport to a perverted racket'.<sup>51</sup> When Midge Kelly in *Champion* is wavering over whether to betray his manager and accept the mobster's conditions for a shot at the title, he is told he has a choice to either tear up his old contract or get a 'liquor license and a television set'. Boxing, organized crime, booze, and television were made for one another.

The popularity of boxing on television inevitably led to drama programmes devoted to the sport. In March 1955 *Requiem for a Heavyweight* was broadcast – the first 90 minute original television drama.<sup>52</sup> A critical and popular success, the Emmy award winning show was written by Rob Serling and starred Jack Palance, a role that links back to his parts in *The Big Knife* and as an ex-boxer in *Halls of Montezuma* (1951). *Requiem for a Heavyweight* was re-made in 1962 as a feature film starring Anthony Quinn. In recognition of the film's precursor it begins with a slow tracking shot along the bar in a saloon, one close up of a pug ugly follows after another, as they gawk up at an off-screen television set broadcasting a live boxing match. At the end of the tracking shot the scene abruptly cuts to the point of view of a fighter being pounded by the fists of Cassius Clay. Like the neighbourhood boxing gyms and arenas in



• *Requiem for a Heavyweight*, the conclusion of the opening scene's tracking shot.

films like the *The Set-Up* and *The Street With No Name*, this form of mediated, televisual, communal consumption of boxing was close to becoming a thing of the past by 1962, another mourned-for homosocial space. Moreover, boxing itself had been superseded in the television ratings game by the rival sports of basketball and football.<sup>53</sup>

Cassius Clay represented the new media savvy boxer, a fighter who personified the youthful vigour of the Kennedy years, and though he, more than any fighter before or after, was linked to a wider set of social concerns, boxing as a social force was spent.<sup>54</sup> Quinn plays an aging boxer who has fought too many fights. After the bout his face looks like fresh chopped meat. A doctor revokes his boxing license and the old pugilist is forced to look for a new career. In the postwar cycle of boxing movies, Quinn's fighter represented the last go around for the defeated yet noble prizefighter – the dispossessed son of the 1930s. *Requiem for a Heavyweight* was a final evocation of the nostalgic vision that the cycle of boxing movies had told over and over again: communal, ethnic, masculine values eroded by the strictures of a domesticated, feminised, private sphere of consumption. A monarch for the masses was not to be found, and he was missed.

## Notes

- 1 Quoted in A. J. Liebling, *The Sweet Science* (London, Sportsman's Book Club, 1958), p. 7.
- 2 R. Keenan, 'The Set-Up/Champion Controversy: Fight Films Go To Court', *American Screen Classics*, 2:6 (July, 1978), 40–2.

- 3 See, L. Grindon, 'Body and Soul: The Structure of Meaning in the Boxing Film Genre', *Cinema Journal*, 35:4 (Summer 1996), 54–69.
- 4 P. Buhle and D. Wagner, *A Very Dangerous Citizen: Abraham Lincoln Polonsky and the Hollywood Left* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2001), pp. 108–17.
- 5 T. Andersen, 'Red Hollywood', in Suzanne Ferguson and Barbara Groseclose (eds) *Literature and the Visual Arts in Contemporary Society* (Columbus, Ohio State University Press, 1985), pp. 141–196.
- 6 Garfield and his producer Roberts had originally planned *Body and Soul* to be an account of the life of Barney Ross, ex-marine, and world lightweight champion in 1933 and 1935. What drew Garfield and Roberts to Ross's story was the self-evident fit with Garfield's screen persona, street tough, New York prizefighter and ex-soldier (Garfield was 4F, but had played military personnel in a number of wartime films, notably in *The Pride of the Marines*, 1945). Ross's biography would eventually be filmed in 1957 as *Monkey On My Back*. The film however shows little interest in Ross's boxing or military story, preferring to exploit the drug angle (Ross had become a drug addict following his time in the army) in a bid to capitalize on the recent notoriety of *The Man with the Golden Arm* (1956). Coincidentally, John Garfield and his producer Bob Roberts had originally optioned the screenrights for Nelson Algren's novel. Furthermore, Cameron Mitchell's performance in *Monkey on My Back* overtly recalls Garfield in both style and physical presence. The actor Dane Clark also drew upon Garfield for inspiration in the derivative boxing movie *Whiplash*, confirming Warner Bros. intention to use him as a replacement for their departed star.
- 7 J. T. Sammons, *Beyond the Ring: The Role of Boxing in American Society* (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1988), p. 92.
- 8 A. Bodner, *When Boxing Was a Jewish Sport* (Westport, Praeger, 1997).
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 57.
- 10 See, for example, S. McCann, *Gumshoe America: Hard-Boiled Crime Fiction and the Rise and Fall of New Deal Liberalism* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2000).
- 11 Odets appeared before HUAC in executive session in April 1952, and gave public testimony in May, 1952.
- 12 E. Mottram, 'Introduction' to Clifford Odets, *Golden Boy, Awake and Sing!, The Big Knife* (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1963), p. 19.
- 13 This claim is obviously open to debate, Robert Nott argues the play was John Garfield's most autobiographical role. *He Ran All The Way: The Life of John Garfield* (New York, Limelight Editions, 2003), p. 240.
- 14 The film stays remarkably close to the play, but the boxing elements are unique to the adaptation.
- 15 Other critics have also made the link between the two plays, see for instance G. Weales, *Odets: The Playwright* (London, Methuen, 1985), p. 162, and G. Miller, *Clifford Odets* (New York, Continuum, 1989), pp. 62–93.
- 16 The pre-eminent left-wing dramatist of the age, Bertolt Brecht had also shown some interest in boxing. In 1926 he begun production on what was to be an unfinished work called *The Human Fighting-Machine*, a collaboration with the then German middleweight champion Paul Samon-Korner. Brecht's aesthetic interest in boxing was for its formal properties: the ring as a theatrical space, the 'hard seats and bright lights,' and an audience 'smoking and observing', rather than, as with Odets, for its potential thematic interest. See, John Willett, *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht* (London, Methuen, 1977), pp. 71, 146–48.
- 17 Miller, *Clifford Odets*, pp. 65–66.
- 18 *The Hollywood Reporter*, (20 August, 1952), p. 3.
- 19 When Odets' play *The Big Knife* opened in New Haven in January 1949, its star was John Garfield. In 1952 Garfield would star in the revival of *Golden Boy*, he had been Odets' first choice for the role when the play debuted in 1937, though Luther Adler got the part. Garfield was also Columbia's first choice for the lead in its film adaptation of *Golden Boy*, but Warner Bros., who had Garfield under exclusive contract, refused Columbia's advances. See Nott, *He Ran All The Way*, p. 119. Eighteen months before the New Haven debut of *The Big Knife*, *Body and Soul* opened in New York, the film re-confirmed Garfield as a star of the first order. Garfield had earlier portrayed a boxer in *They Made Me a Criminal* (1939), in which his character is framed for murder and he goes on the lam, ending up on a ranch in Arizona with the Dead End Kids. It was one performance among many that helped establish Garfield's onscreen proletarian persona. The critic for the *New Yorker* took note of his performance: 'There is nothing noisy, stagy, or showy about him. One can find hundreds such along Sixth Avenue, spelling out the signs in front of the employment agencies.' Cited in R. Sklar, *City Boys: Cagney, Bogart, Garfield* (New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 90.
- 20 The idea of Midge Kelly, an Irish American as a Golem, a Jewish monster, complicates the question of ethnicity, suggesting an easy slippage across ethnicities in the boxing films of this period.
- 21 Her sculptures are described as 'surrealist' in the published screenplay. A. Polonsky, *Body and Soul: The Critical Edition* (Northridge, California State University, Northridge, 2002), p. 38.
- 22 J. C. Oates, *On Boxing* (London: Bloomsbury, 1987), p. 26.
- 23 Liebling, *Sweet Science*, p. 9.

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- 24 *Ibid.*, pp. 241–43.
- 25 W.C. Heinz, *The Professional* (New York, DaCapo, 2001), p. 87.
- 26 W.C. Heinz, *Once They Heard Cheers* (New York, Doubleday, 1979), pp. 257–58.
- 27 R. Cohen, *Tough Jews* (New York, Simon & Schuster, 1998), p. 156.
- 28 Quoted in G. Burn, 'The Games Writers Play,' the *Guardian Review* (9 October, 2004), 5.
- 29 S. J. Douglas, *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. 63.
- 30 *Ibid.*, pp. 199–200.
- 31 *Ibid.*, p. 208.
- 32 Review collected in the *Body and Soul* clipping file, Margaret Herrick Library, AMPAS.
- 33 Nott, *He Ran All The Way*, p. 198.
- 34 Polonsky, *Body and Soul*, p. 18.
- 35 Buhle and Wagner, *A Very Dangerous Citizen*, pp. 113, 109.
- 36 *The Hollywood Reporter*, 13 August 1947.
- 37 *Variety*, 13 August 1947.
- 38 *Variety*, 13 August 1947.
- 39 Sammons, *Beyond the Ring*, p. XV.
- 40 Oates, *On Boxing*, p. 13.
- 41 M. Klein, *Foreigners: The Making of American Literature, 1900–1940* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 201.
- 42 *Ibid.*, p. 215.
- 43 *Ibid.*, p. 184.
- 44 *Ibid.*, p. 226.
- 45 Liebling, *Sweet Science*, pp. 8–9.
- 46 Heinz, *Once They Heard Cheers*, p. 248.
- 47 Sammons, *Beyond the Ring*, p. 131. Wednesday night fights were sponsored by Pabst Blue Ribbon beer, Friday night fights by Gillette razor blades. 'By 1952 experts reported that the ranks of professional boxers had been depleted by 50% and "town fight nights" had been wiped out.' *Ibid.*, p. 149.
- 48 *Ibid.*, p. 134.
- 49 *Ibid.*, p. 133.
- 50 *Ibid.*, pp. 140–48.
- 51 Cited in R. Sullivan, *Rocky Marciano: The Rock of His Times* (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 2002), p. 208.
- 52 Nott, in *He Ran All the Way*, pp.318, notes that Odets wrote a television boxing drama 'Leather Dollar' starring Robert Blake for the *Richard Boone Show* (1963–4). However, I cannot find this episode listed elsewhere. Nevertheless, progressive sentiments are ably expressed in the television boxing drama 'Viva Paco!', an episode in the *Johnny Staccato* series (1959–60) which generally had a strong Popular Front accent. Paco is a Puerto Rican contender for the championship, a symbol for his people. Staccato tells it this way: 'Compared to Chinatown, the Lower East Side, Greenwich Village, Spanish Harlem was brand new. The 100s and 1000s of people there added a new rhythm to the city; it's American alright, but with an Afro-Cuban beat. And to these people, Paco was a great hero – a symbol of success in the new country'. A fictionalised incident in Benny Leonard's career is used in 'Fight for the Title', a 1957 episode from *Telephone Time* (1956–58). The boxing film *Roaring City* (1951) was designed to be cut into two after the completion of its theatrical run and be sold as two episodes of *Danger Zone*. There are, I have no doubt, many more examples of television boxing dramas.
- 53 See Sullivan, *Rocky Marciano*, pp. 203–04.
- 54 Marciano's biographer makes the argument that Rocky was the last of the great heavyweights at a time when boxing meant something to the American public. Ali, on the other hand, 'was a political and social force that transcended his sport (and all sports for that matter). His individual brilliance and charisma did not restore the kingdom of heavyweight championship boxing but merely obscured the fact that it had crumbled years before.' Sullivan, *Rocky Marciano*, p. 210.