



## Formation of the Ambiguous Heroic Archetype: Three Jewish-American Film Actors and the United States' Film System, 1929-1948

John Thomas McGuire, Siena College, [jmcguire@siena.edu](mailto:jmcguire@siena.edu)

Volume 9.1 (2021) | ISSN 2158-8724 (online) | DOI 10.5195/cinej.2021.322 | <http://cinej.pitt.edu>

### Abstract

As Carl Jung and Joseph Campbell note, archetypes, or general ideas of human types, strongly influence societies, particularly the heroic archetype. Since the 1890s mainstream cinema has facilitated the heroic archetype for worldwide audiences. This article argues that Paul Muni (1895-1967), Edward G. Robinson (1893-1973), and John Garfield (1913-1952) became the first important Jewish-American film actors to help develop the ambiguous heroic archetype in the United States' studio system from 1929 through 1948 in two ways: Muni's and Robinson's critical performances in the 1930s and 1940s, particularly in gangster and film noir films, and Garfield's films from 1946 through 1948.

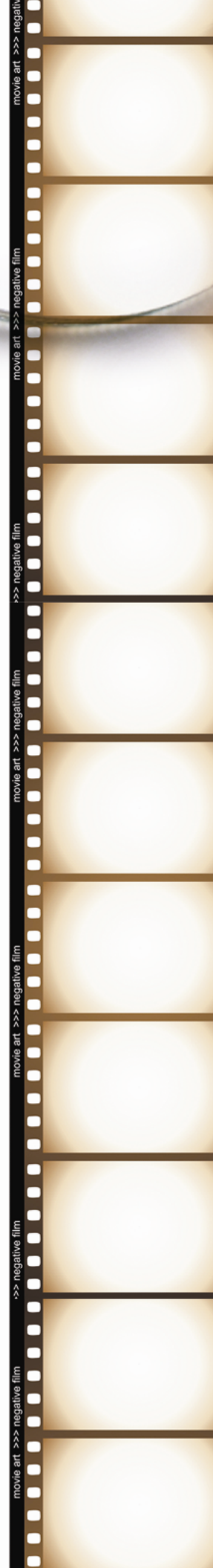
**Keywords:** Film archetypes; twentieth-century United States; Jewish-American film history; Jewish-American dramatic film actors; Paul Muni, Edward G. Robinson; John Garfield



New articles in this journal are licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 United States License.



This journal is published by the [University Library System](#) of the [University of Pittsburgh](#) as part of its [D-Scribe Digital Publishing Program](#) and is cosponsored by the [University of Pittsburgh Press](#)



Formation of the Ambiguous Heroic Archetype:  
Three Jewish-American Film Actors and the United States'  
Film System, 1929-1948  
John Thomas McGuire

## Introduction

Before the era of televised extravaganzas, the annual Academy Award ceremonies existed as relatively small banquets held in theaters and hotels around Los Angeles. In the spring of 1937, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS) held its ninth annual gathering in the Los Angeles Biltmore Hotel. The consensus about the possible winner of that night's Best Actor Academy Award centered on four-time nominee Paul Muni, considered for his depiction of the famed French biologist Louis Pasteur (Osborne, 1989, pp. 40, 44-47). This conclusion proved correct when the nearly forty-year-old actor received the honor. While the AMPAS prohibited the filming of the awards ceremony at that time, newsreel recreations later that night show a gleam of deep satisfaction on Muni's face ("Academy Awards 1936 Outtakes"). Not emphasized at that time, however, was that the actor was the first Jewish-American man to win the Best Actor Oscar for a film drama, an achievement unequaled until Dustin Hoffman's win in 1980 (Sarno, 1980, p. 8). Perhaps the contemporary failure to discuss the true cultural significance of Muni's victory signified the overall ambiguity that Jewish-American film dramatic actors faced in the early twentieth century.<sup>1</sup>



Figure 1: Paul Muni in his Academy-Award winning performance from *The Story of Louis Pasteur* (1936).

As expressed by their contrasting masks of grief and laughter, the arts of drama and comedy mirror the serious and humorous nature of human existence. Since the 1890s mainstream cinema has been a key formulator of dramatic action, in which individuals struggle with, and sometimes resolve, internal or external conflicts, often in an atmosphere of heightened emotion (Konigsberg, p. 92). A term that captures the essence of cinematic dramatic acting, and the one used throughout this article, is *archetype*, originated by the famed Swiss psychoanalyst Carl Jung, who concluded that our collective unconsciousness encompasses universal forms interwoven in both internal and external realities. As Jung explained in his key work on archetypes, these forms can possess an “almost infinite variety of aspects” (Jung, 2003 [1972], pp. 3, 16 (quotation). The mythological

scholar Joseph Campbell further extrapolated on Jung's concept by defining the heroic archetype as a process in which a person, in searching for his or her identity, the acquisition of knowledge, or a permanent home, attains access to the "generally valid, normally human [universal] forms" (Jung Campbell took special interest in the heroic protagonist's journey, who "ventures forth from the [common-day] world," eventually gains a "decisive victory," and returns home to "bestow boons with his fellow man." As several scholars have noted, moreover, cinema represents a natural medium for the expression of heroic archetypes for two reasons: the use of archetypes (or tropes, as they are known in the entertainment business) easily identifies central characters for the intended mainstream audiences, and the reinforcement of such societal norms through mass cinema's function as a source of mass entertainment, thus helping to form "the individual and collective psyche of a culture." (Campbell, 1968 [1949], pp. 17-18, 19-20 (first quotation), 30 (second quotation). See also Briggs, 2012, p. 28). Thus films readily reflect their respective societies' unconscious needs to present archetypes as ways of illustrating of worthy societal norms (Solomonik-Pankrashova and Lobinate, 2016, p. 133; Wessbecher, 2008, 136; Wyman and Dionisopoulos, 1999, 36).

An essential part of cinema in the early to mid-twentieth century, this article argues, centers on the development of what will be called the white Anglo-Saxon dramatic film actor archetype (hereinafter "archetype"). The entrepreneurs who controlled the Hollywood studio system from

approximately 1915 onwards selected actors who could exemplify the rugged individualism and virility seen as archetypal by their predominately white Anglo-Saxon Protestant audience. Exceptions occurred because they satisfied a certain niche among film audiences in the United States—the “exotic,” in Rudolph Valentino’s case--or because they embodied certain ethnic niches (or clichés), such as the Jewish-American ex-cantor in Al Jolson’s *The Jazz Singer* (1927). After World War I, however, this archetype underwent redefinition because of the increasing ethnic diversification of film audiences, which grew from an estimated 20 million people to 50 million a week in the United States by 1929. Film studios therefore not only included more ethnically diverse characters in their dramatic films, but started hiring non-Anglo Saxon leading actors as the contemporaneous introduction of sound required stage actors with natural enunciation. Therefore, while white Anglo-Saxon actors such as Gary Cooper and Clark Gable continued the archetype, ethnic actors now possessed better opportunities of enacting the dramatic film model Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson, 1985, p. 14; de Cordova, 1990, p. 98; Anderson, 2011, p. 16; Lawrence, 2010, pp. 87-107; Erens, 1984, pp. 42-56; Introduction, Mintz Roberts, 2010, pp. 15-16; Cohen, 2008), pp. 125-128; Sontag, 1966, p. 200; “The Dawn of Sound: How the Movies Learned to Talk.” 2007).

Using a mixture of primary and secondary sources, this article examines how Paul Muni (1895-1967), Edward G. Robinson (1893-1973), and John Garfield (1913-1952) helped to develop the ambiguousness of the dramatic archetype, extending the form to include more than one-dimensional, noble characters. (This term shall be interchangeably referred to as the “ambiguous dramatic archetype” or the “ambiguous heroic archetype”). In films such as *Scarface* (1932) and *I Am A Fugitive from A Chain Gang* (1932), Muni enacted Tony Camonte, a psychopathic Chicago gangster modeled on Al Capone and James Allen, a former World War I veteran innocently ensnared in the “chain gang” penal system. Such figures, moreover, did not emerge victorious: “Scarface” Camonte ends up riddled with police bullets in a street gutter, while Allen escapes from prison, but subsequently becomes a homeless fugitive stealing for his sustenance. Robinson found his acting career forestalled throughout the 1930s because of his distinctive persona established in *Little Caesar*, but he eventually established himself as a formidable *film noir* protagonist in director Fritz Lang’s films. From 1946 through 1948, Garfield fully established his ambiguous archetypal persona through three important *film noir* pictures: the murdering drifter in *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, the complex prizefighter in *Body and Soul* and the conflicted attorney in *Force of Evil*.

These opportunities arose with these three Jewish-American actors because they exhibited both strong acting credentials and, most importantly, readily fit within the physical

model already established for dramatic archetypes, unlike their darker-colored Latino or Italian-American counterparts. Muni established his presence in both Yiddish and Broadway theater before making his first film; Robinson acquired extensive experience from his training at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts and ten years of appearing on the Broadway stage; and Garfield, while not as experienced as his two previous compatriots, worked with the landmark Group Theater. Thus Muni, Robinson, and by extension Garfield did not just exist as “accidental film stars” who broke out of the “character actor ghetto” Muni received his first Academy Award nomination for Best Actor for his enacting an ambiguous archetypal character in the 1929 film *The Valiant*, while Garfield received his initial nod from the Academy for enacting a similar figure in *Four Daughters* (1938) (Fishel and Ortmann, 2009, p. 136).



*Figure 2: Edward G. Robinson arguing with Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. in his breakthrough performance in *Little Caesar* (1930).*

It is important to state, however, that the three actors considered did not make their contributions to the ambiguous dramatic archetypes without encountering some corresponding



cultural ambiguities. As scholar Patricia Erens notes, Muni's and Robinson's successes occurred in part because film audiences in the United States did not realize their Judaic origins (the same could be said, by extension, of Garfield). In addition, the first two actors did attain initial stardom because of their enacting gangsters. Moreover, while Muni eventually left such parts behind with noted biographical films such as *The Story of Louis Pasteur* (1936) and *The Life of Emile Zola* (1937), Robinson could only do the same by garnering lead roles in the growing *film noir oeuvre* of the 1940s, a factor that Garfield took advantage of from 1946 through 1948, the years of his career considered here (Ehrens, 1984, p. 136).



*Figure 3:* John Garfield in 1938, when he appeared in Warner Brothers' *Four Daughters*, receiving his first Academy Award nomination.

Finally, this article also contributes to the necessary repairing of an oversight in film historiography. While a well-developed body of work exists about the inclusion of Jewish-Americans into the comedic cinema of the United States, no one has studied in similar detail how any men of the same ethnicity became leading film dramatic actors in the early 1900s, particularly



the period from roughly 1930 through 1950, the apex of the United States' film studio apex of arguably critical and definitely commercial power. Henry Bial's work on Jewish-American contributions on stage and screen productions, for example, only considers the period after 1947, when the television industry began its eventually pre-eminent rise (Epstein, 2001; Greene, 1999; Jenkins, 1992; and Musser, 1991. Contrast this to cursory mentions of Jewish-American dramatic actors in Rollins, 2003 and Sklar, 1975. Bial, 2005).

### **Forming The Ambiguous Dramatic Archetype: Paul Muni's And Edward G. Robinson's Contributions, 1929-1945**

In 1946, a young Marlon Brando appeared in the Broadway production of *A Flag Is Born*, in which Paul Muni, then returning to the stage after nearly two decades of screen stardom, played the leading role. Brando later recounted how he spent every off-stage moment on marveling at Muni's ability to vanish into his part. "The best acting I ever saw in my life," Brando later stated in an unpublished section of his memoirs, *Songs My Mother Taught Me*. Years later the two-time Academy Award winner for Best Actor included Muni among his filmic inspirations, along with Spencer Tracy and Cary Grant (Manso, 1994, p. 184; Bosworth, 2002, 38-39; Mann, 2019, pp. 38-39 (quotation)).

Muni's acting career started from a mixture of inner determination and outer serendipity. Born in 1895 in Lvov, a town in the then-Austro-Hungarian empire (now part of the Ukraine), Muni came to the United States at the age of six. Joining his parents in the burgeoning Yiddish theater in New York City several years later, Muni eventually moved to the seemingly all-inclusive milieu of Broadway in 1928, becoming a star in such productions as *We Americans* and *Four Walls*. A film talent scout from Fox Studios soon signed Muni to a two-picture contract, and by the spring of 1929 the actor became the above-the-title lead in the film production of *The Valiant* (Lawrence, 1974, pp. 1-119; Goldfarb and Grimshaw, 1970 [1945], p. 56-58).

The resulting film, expanded from the original forty-minute stage production by only another twenty-six minutes, presents a fascinating demonstration of how early Muni began his development of the ambiguous dramatic film archetype. As Joseph Campbell notes, the heroic archetype involves a person who leaves his or her ordinary milieu and enters a fantastic world where he must overcome obstacles and gain ultimate victory. This archetypal ideal flourished uninterrupted from the early beginnings of the studio system in the 1910s through the late 1960s, particularly in the western and adventure film *genres*. The prototypical hero, first enacted by William Hart and later by Gary Cooper and John Wayne, usually confronted hostile forces in the quintessential shootout. In adventure films (which eventually included science fiction), a usually obscure person suddenly confronts new challenges and becomes a hero through his own efforts.

The attractiveness of this heroic capacity received popular confirmation from the series of films headed by Douglas Fairbanks in the 1920s (such as *The Thief of Baghdad*) to the *Star Wars* films (Brunel, 2015 and Broughton, 2020; Palumbo, 2014 and Schubert, 2014; Taylor, 2015).

But as this genres gained strength and popularity throughout the 1920s and 1930s, a corresponding counter-development in the archetype developed in the film system. Dramatic actors began portraying heroes whose actions exhibited an ambiguousness in both character and eventual results. The flawed, ambiguous hero naturally did not originate with film; characters as Oedipus Rex existed from ancient Greek times. The international stage milieu, however, exhibited a multifaceted process during the nineteenth century. Playwrights as Henrik Ibsen and August Strindberg developed protagonists who, while not always self-defeating, sometimes failed to win positive resolutions. This ambiguousness continued in the early twentieth century in the plays of Eugene O’Neil and George Bernard Shaw. Actors such as Muni and Robinson received their practical thespian training in the 1920s on the Broadway stage as these influences solidified and dominated the theatrical milieu in the United States. They therefore became the natural conduits for the further expanding and refining of the ambiguous heroic archetype in film (Misra, 1992; Solheim, 1991; Robinson, 2009); and Alexander, 1992).

In *The Valiant*, this ambiguous archetype receives interesting, if limited, development (Screenplays, 1929, Muni Papers). The film begins quietly but effectively. After the title sequence plays with somber organ music, a card announces, “A city street—where laughter and tragedy rub elbows.” The camera slowly enters the building and climbs a flight of stairs towards an apartment door. Suddenly we hear a shot. A few seconds later the door opens and out walks a man in a shabby-looking suit and grimy fedora. He stumbles down the stairs and walks out into the city street. Walking through the surrounding area, he encounters the usual scenes of such a milieu, such as children playing baseball. The man briefly helps a fallen child, then resumes his somber expression. He eventually enters a police station and confesses to the murder. Convicted and sentenced to death, Muni’s character, now calling himself James Dyke, refuses to reveal either his real identity or his motive for the murder. An elderly Ohioan woman, Mrs. Douglas, sees Dyke’s picture in the newspaper and notices that the condemned man resembles her long-missing brother, Joseph. In a subsequent scene, she recalls how Joseph would recite dialogue from Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* to his sister, Mary, before her bedtime. Mary Douglas and her fiancé eventually decide to travel to New York’s Sing Sing prison and see Dyke, who convinces her that he is not her brother. The truth is finally revealed in a haunting monologue.

Throughout the relatively short film, Muni impressively conveys the parameters of his ambiguous archetypal hero. In the first scenes he deftly evokes his protagonist’s weariness after the

mysterious murder, particularly during his voluntary surrender to the police, then demonstrates Dyke's determination to face his fate without revealing his true identity. Muni's most effective moments, however, come at the end, when he first denies to Mary Douglas that he is her brother, and then convinces Mary that he personally witnessed James Douglas's death on the Western Front. After Mary leaves, Muni, now all alone, powerfully recites the previously noted Shakespearean passage from *Romeo and Juliet*, proving that he is Mary's brother. He then returns to his prison cell to await execution. In a short epilogue, we first see Mary and her fiancé happily making plans to marry, then Douglas's mother sitting outside her home, clutching the package given to her daughter by Dyke. An imaginary formation of soldiers files by her, including Muni's character (*The Valiant*, 1929).

Muni's characterization of the James Dyke/Joseph Douglas characters thus encompasses one of the essential heroic archetypes: the person who selflessly sacrifices himself to atone for previous misdeeds. The major difference between previous sacrificial heroes, such as Charles Dickens's Sydney Carton in *A Tale of Two Cities*, and Muni's protagonist, lies in the ambiguousness of the latter figure. Carton may be a weak, even pusillanimous character in the early stages of Dickens's novel, but his heroism does stem from his native English culture and elite education. In contrast, Dyke/Douglas stands as a convicted murderer whose reasons for his crime remain tantalizingly

mysterious throughout the film. In addition, he comes from a rural milieu in Ohio. The character, moreover, echoes the later description of the murderer in Albert Camus's 1942 novel *The Stranger*—he is a man who stands apart from society, willing to follow some, but not all, of societal strictures, particularly the most restrictive of all, murder of one's fellow human. In addition, one is struck by Muni's relatively naturalistic performance. One can tell that Muni did not feel entirely comfortable with the camera, for he tends to look away and enunciate his dialogue slowly. The contrast between this performance and his acting in *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang*, shot approximately three years later, can be striking; in the latter film, Muni works *with* the camera, instead of acting *despite* the cinematic tool. The latter stages of *The Valiant*, however, do reveal Muni's already estimable talent at understatement. While the other actors continue the stylized acting of silent pictures, Muni deftly shifts from mood to mood—surprise by Mary Douglas's unexpected visit, determination at concealing his identity, and finally, a quiet, poignant revelation of the truth.

This ambiguous heroic archetype enacted by Muni becomes more striking when one considers the three other extant male lead actor performances eventually nominated for an Academy Award<sup>2</sup>: George Bancroft in *Thunderbolt*, Chester Morris in *Alibi*, and Warner Baxter in *In Old Arizona* (1929) (Author's viewings). Bancroft simply copies his performance from the 1927 box office smash *Underworld*. Morris growls a lot and preens in *Alibi*, although he does

effectively display a whimpering cowardice at the end. The most striking counterexample (and ironically the winner of the 1929 Best Actor award) is the shameless exhibitionism of Warner Baxter in *In Old Arizona*, with painted olive skin, flamboyant mustachios, and uncertain accent (“Race and Hollywood, 2009).

Despite the eventual critical success, and an Academy Award nomination, Muni’s early film career subsequently, suddenly ended due to his difficult relations with Fox Pictures. Studio owner William Fox pronounced Muni “ugly” while viewing daily rushes of *The Valiant* and considered ending production. Although his underlings convinced Fox to finish the film, the studio only gave limited distribution, particularly in the all-important New York City area. Moreover, when Muni refused to do a new film with Janet Gaynor, one of the studio’s biggest stars, Fox executives terminated his contract and lobbied hard for the contrastingly compliant Baxter for the Best Actor Academy Award. A disappointed Muni returned to New York City in late 1929 (Lawrence, *Actor*, pp. 130-131, 156-158. Wiley, Bona, and McCall, 1993, pp. 13-18).

At the same time another Jewish-American actor arrived to perform in a Paramount Pictures “talkie,” *Hole in the Wall*. Edward G. Robinson’s origins echoed those of Muni’s in some significant ways, but his path to filmic stardom followed a different and a more difficult direction. Born in 1893, Robinson (originally Emmanuel Goldenberg), like Muni, journeyed to the United



States as a child. He originally entered the City College of New York, but eventually transferred to the American Academy of Dramatic Arts. Graduating in 1915, Robinson then entered the hurly-burly of Broadway. In the next ten years he became a noted stage actor, essaying everything from Ibsen to an adaptation of Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* (Robinson with Spiegelglass, 1973, pp. 1-94).

In 1928 Robinson's career changed when he accepted a leading part as a mobster in the Broadway production *The Racket*. Rave reviews attracted the attention of a Paramount film studio scout and the offer of the standard one-year contract. While Robinson eagerly encamped in Hollywood, his subsequent experiences dampened that initial enthusiasm. *The Hole in the Wall*, proved neither a critical nor a commercial success, and Robinson's second short-term contract with MGM proved just as frustrating. But when Robinson's agent successfully negotiated a seven-year contract with Warners Brothers ("Warners"), Robinson stayed in California. Within a year studio producer Hal Wallis approached him with a part that proved his commercial breakthrough (Robinson with Spiegelglass, 1973, pp. 100-107).

While gangster films have become an important *oeuvre* within American film, most critics and scholars agree that the genre's most influential period occurred from 1927 through 1933, when Hollywood studios released such pictures as *Underworld* (1927), *The Racket* (1928), and *The Public Enemy* (1932) ("Beer and Blood," 2007). Robinson became a key part of this germane

period when he first agreed to the part of Otero, the main character's chief lieutenant, in *Little Caesar*. But, sensing a better opportunity, he successfully lobbied to garner for the leading role of Caesar Enrico ("Rico") Bandello. The film, released in late 1930, became a box office smash, not least because of Robinson's extraordinary range in enacting this ambiguous archetypal part. He is both ferocious (particularly in one scene where he almost physically assaults the telephone receiver with his snarls) and restrained (where he delicately parades off his new suit in front of his overly fawning assistant, Otero.) Robinson's performance helped establish the ambiguous dramatic archetype, particularly because the lead character, instead of emerging triumphant after internal struggles to receive confirmation of his newly acquired self, dies in a hail of bullets. Rico Bandello echoes his ancient Greek counterparts in that their initial rises become downfalls through the very factors that apparently made him a protagonist in the first place. He acquires ultimate control of the criminal syndicates in the film's unnamed city, only to lose everything by film's end. This ambiguous gangster archetype soon received further confirmation from other actors such as Muni and James Cagney. But Muni would go on to portray more traditional, more attractive aspects, while Robinson remained typecast, despite his increasingly desperate efforts to the contrary (Robinson with Spiegelglass, 1973, pp. 115-116; *Little Caesar* DVD, 2005; McDonald, 2000, pp. 60-61).

Muni's re-entry into the Hollywood movie establishment came by sheer happenstance. As Warners readied the release of *Little Caesar*, nascent film producer Howard Hughes developed his own scenario for a gangster film, based on the life of Al Capone. Hughes then contacted Muni's wife and *de facto* agent, Bella Muni, about her husband's availability. The reasons for Hughes's inquiry remain somewhat vague; while recognizing Muni's established acting abilities, the Texan multimillionaire perhaps secretly hoped to cheaply acquire the failed film star. Bella immediately accepted Hughes's offer, then telegraphed her traveling husband. "I have sold you down the river," the telegram melodramatically proclaimed, "We're leaving for Hollywood tomorrow." Muni at first balked at playing a gangster, particularly as his slim, slight figure did not easily convey menace. Noted director Howard Hawks cleverly overcame these fears by providing the actor with a screen test involving padded shoulders and shorter fellow actors. A now confident Muni returned to the Los Angeles area, three years after his seemingly ignominious retreat (Lawrence, 1974, pp. 157-158; Grimshaw, 1970 [1945], p. 59 (quotation)).

Although *Scarface* encountered nationwide objections due to its inflammatory subject matter, and suffered extensive cuts upon its delayed release in 1932, the resulting, resounding box office success established Muni as a star. When considering this film, moreover, one becomes struck by the sharp, even dark differences between the ambiguous dramatic archetype presented in *The Valiant* and *Scarface*. Although he is a murderer, Douglas accepts full blame for the crime until

his execution. In *Scarface*, however, Tony Camonte, Muni's character, is an increasingly immoral monster who effortlessly assassinates a major crime boss in the first few minutes of the film, recklessly sprays bullets while testing automatic machine guns, and ruthlessly eliminates any contenders for ultimate mob control. Muni's performance does suffer from a certain excess; while not attaining the histrionic heights of Al Pacino's later, more notorious performance in the 1983 remake, the actor's broad characterization of an Italian-American through a "thatsa-nice" accent and the constant eating of spaghetti eventually pales against the relative restraint of George Raft, who plays Camonte's doomed lieutenant. Cultural historian Morris Dickstein's criticism of Muni's "stagy antics" thus seems particularly apropos (Dickstein, 2009, p. 313. Ebert, 2008, p. 202).

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Muni's performance, however, lies in the exploration of how seemingly sacrosanct cultural principles become twisted in the pursuit of criminal power. The pursuit of individual success has been of utmost importance to the United States' culture, as exemplified by the stories of Horatio Alger. Films such as *Scarface* demonstrated how even immigrants by the 1930s shared, as Andrew Bergman notes, in the "country's most cherished myths about individual success," although both the real-life and filmic popularity of the gangster, as personified by Al Capone and John Dillinger, also symbolized how those myths lost their moral

attractiveness in the Great Depression. While previous films like *Little Caesar* did convey a more shadowed version of the capitalistic success myth, Muni's dynamic performance gives us a very memorable, twisted variation on this traditional American quest. Camonte unhesitatingly uses any means available to gain control of events, from the overseeing of the city's underworld to taking away his erstwhile boss's girlfriend. Yet by film's end Camonte lies in a Chicago street, riddled by bullets from the guns of Chicago police, while an illuminated advertising sign, "THE WORLD IS YOURS," shines down on his corpse (Bergman, 1972, p. 607; Warshow, 1962).

Muni wasted no time after *Scarface's* release to establish a permanent foothold in the Hollywood establishment. Signing the usual seven-year contract with Warners, he worked with the studio's chief executives to find a film that could continue his newfound stardom. The choice became a version of the recent bestseller *I Am A Fugitive from A Georgia Chain Gang*, a real-life memoir penned by an escapee. Released in November 1932, the film not only became a considerable commercial success, but secured Muni his second Academy Award nomination for Best Actor. In his enactment of the protagonist James Allen, Muni returned to the ambiguous archetypal parameters previously encountered in *The Valiant*: a man who struggles to find both personal worth and redemption under very difficult circumstances. The major differences lie in two key character facets of the protagonists: while Joseph Douglas is an aimless drifter before his crime, and never denies his guilt, Allen dreams of becoming a noted architect and is innocent.

Thus not only does Allen remind one of Jean Vajeau in Victor Hugo's novel *Les Misérables*, he also becomes a more sympathetic figure. In the film Allen returns from World War I a decorated soldier, only to find his hopes frustrated by familial expectations and the economic frustrations of a post-war recession. Driven to search for work across the country, the drifter wanders into an obviously Southern city and meets a fellow drifter. He goes with his new companion to a local diner, only to be corralled into an unsuccessful robbery attempt that ends with his being sentenced to seven years in prison at hard labor. For a few years Allen stoically endures the horrors of chain gang life, from whipping punishments to execrable food. Eventually escaping from prison, Allen flees to Chicago, where under an assumed name he succeeds in becoming a noted architect. His real identity is eventually revealed, and Allen reluctantly agrees to return to his former penal state in exchange for a promise of eventual release. But when that promise is broken, a desperate Allen escapes again from the chain gang, and by the hauntingly memorable ending, he becomes a wandering, stealing fugitive. This gritty, Dickensian outcome no doubt resonated with a public suffering through the fourth year of an increasingly deepening Great Depression. *I Am A Fugitive* became one of the biggest box office successes of 1932 (Jewell commentary, 2005; McDonald, 60-61).

While Muni continued to diversify his depiction of the ambiguous dramatic archetype, Robinson found himself confined within the *genre* that established his filmic prominence. The actor did break out, albeit temporarily, in a few films such as *Five Star Final* (1931), but for the rest of the 1930s Robinson remained ensconced in gangster films, such as the critical and commercial success *Bullets or Ballots* (1936). Robinson continued to fight for greater creative control from Warner, but only received the right to reject scripts, not directors (as Muni could.) Robinson did get another opportunity to expand his ambiguous dramatic archetypal persona when he starred in *Dr. Ehrlich's Magic Bullet* (1940). But although Robinson enjoyed enacting the excellent script (co-written by aspiring director John Huston), audiences ignored the film, and only one Academy Award nomination (Best Screenplay) resulted. Robinson could therefore only sit in his palatial Hollywood home, ruminating on his artistic non-fulfillment (Robinson with Spiegelglass, 1973, pp. 162-177. 181, 211-216; Osborne, 1989, p. 68).

Several years later, as Robinson continued to despair about playing “parts with substance—characters with maturity,” as he later described it, he now encountered a quandary natural for aging stars: the acceptance of either supporting ones or relatively minor leading parts. The first film he accepted a supporting part in did assuage, at least temporarily, Robinson’s qualms. His performance as the anal-retentive insurance claims investigator Barton Keyes in Billy Wilder’s *Double Indemnity* is a *tour de force* that for some reason never led to an Academy Award



nomination as Best Supporting Actor. The most important long-term consequence, however, became Robinson's initial immersion in the growing *film-noir* genre. In the same year he acted in two important films directed by Fritz Lang. Now considered a leading *auteur* in such genres as science fiction (*Metropolis* (1925)) and psychological thriller (*M* (1931)), Lang's career after fleeing Nazi Germany in 1933 followed a disparate path in the United States in the 1930s through 1950s. Through such productions as *Fury* (1936) and especially *You Only Live Once* (1937), Lang helped initiate the genre known as *film noir*, which usually centers on a protagonist faces a seemingly implacable fate. Robinson's two efforts with Lang, *The Woman in the Window* (1944) and *Scarlet Street* (1945), made important contributions to this film *oeuvre*. In the first film, Robinson plays a college professor seemingly content with his *bourgeois* lifestyle, yet in reality feeling more suffocated. When his wife and children embark on a vacation, Robinson's character makes a seemingly fortuitous encounter with a young woman that leads to murder and blackmail. *Scarlet Street* is a more evocative experience as Robinson's middle-class milquetoast, this time a painter, evades responsibility for the murder of his demanding muse and subject, only to forever haunted by memories of his crime. Although now regarded as landmark films, the tepid box office performance of both films forced Robinson to return to the gangster milieu in John Huston's *Key Largo* (1948). His new subordinate status in the Hollywood filament received further

confirmation, moreover, when star Humphrey Bogart killed him during the film; twelve years earlier, the exact opposite occurred in *Bullets vs. Ballots* (Robinson with Spiegelglass, 1973, pp. 235, 238-239; Crowther, 7 September 1944; Silver, et al., 1992; Biesen, 2005; Hare, 2003; Bingham, 1994. For Lang, see McGilligan, 2013 and Smith, 2014. For contemporary assessments of the two Lang films considered here, see Crowther, 16 February 1946 and Crowther, 26 January 1945).

Even with these setbacks, Robinson could still count on one factor in the late 1940s: his continuing employability as a film actor. By that time, however, Muni became a victim of what Robinson later called in his memoir, the “terrifying” underside of being a leading archetypal actor in the movie system, particularly as film critic Pauline Kael once noted, the “quickly exhausted” vitality of any new star. Two years after he appeared in *The Life of Emile Zola*, Muni, now called “Mr. Muni” on movie posters due to his demands, starred in *Juarez* (1939), a film based on the life of nineteenth-century Mexican revolutionary Benito Juarez. The film, however, barely turned a profit due to its extensive costs of two million dollars, the largest in Warner's history.<sup>27</sup> In addition, Muni's increasing interference in screenwriting and directorial decisions made him unpopular. “[Muni] was a very fine actor,” John Huston, one of the film's screenwriters, later remembered, “but he had a huge ego . . . . It was heavy going around [him].” The breaking point came when Hal Wallis, now the studio's chief producer, asked Muni to play the lead part in the

adaptation of a recent bestselling novel, *High Sierra*. Muni refused, insisting on starring in a film about Ludwig von Beethoven. Wallis subsequently cancelled the Beethoven production and informed Muni that his Warners contract extension would not be renewed. Muni's film career continued, albeit at a relatively minor studio, Columbia Pictures. By 1946, facing an increasingly erratic film career, Muni returned to the Broadway stage. Other Jewish-American actors would need to fill the gap in enacting the ambiguous dramatic archetype (<sup>27</sup> Robinson with Spiegelglass, 1973, *All My Yesterdays*, pp. 1, 4; Kael, 2011, p. 116. Nugent, 26 April 1939; *Life*, 8 May 1939, p. 70; Viera, 2013, pp. 85-86; Mithani, 2007, p. 190; Grobel, 1989, pp. 104, 115-117).

### **The Complexities of the Ambiguous Dramatic Archetype, 1937-1939**

While Muni and Robinson helped to expand the ambiguous heroic archetype in the 1930s and 1940s, they also needed to deal with cultural ambiguities. As film historian Vincent Brook points out, the studio system, primarily overseen by such Jewish-Americans such as Louis B. Mayer and Jack Warner, still needed to not only satisfy censorship authorities such as the Production Code Administration, usually dominated by white Anglo-Saxon Protestants and Irish-American Catholics, but also the proclivities and prejudices of a predominately non-Jewish public consumer audience. Studio heads also needed to consider the ramifications of the rising fascist movement

in Europe, particularly in the financially important countries of Germany and Italy. As scholar Patricia Erens points out, moreover, these same studio heads proved correspondingly reluctant to highlight Jewish-American ethnicity in their films, unless it resulted in popular (and naturally lucrative) productions such as music film shorts or, particularly, comedies. Thus, even as the circumstances of increasingly diverse audiences and the demands of the new sound film system allowed these studio owners to expand archetypal opportunities to ethnic actors, Hollywood titans still needed to remain aware of the deep-seated prejudices held in rural areas, particularly in the South (Gabler, 1989; Brook, 2017, 7; Erens, 1985, pp. 126-163.)

This sensitive situation became even more complicated with the rise of fascism, and a corresponding anti-Semitism, in the lucrative European film market. Ben Urwand's recent, controversial study of the Hollywood film studios' relationship with the Nazi regime, *The Collaboration: Hollywood's Pact With Hitler*, directly charges people like MGM's Louis B. Mayer and Samuel Goldwyn with at least implicit collaboration with Nazi Germany. As other scholars have subsequently pointed out that such a conclusion ignores the complex factors in such a relationship, such as the fact that major studios such as Warners found their assets frozen in Nazi Germany by the mid-1930s. Perhaps the best assessment of the foreign situation can be found in David Denby's conclusion that the Hollywood response to Nazism in the 1930s constituted a complex mixture of "half-boldness, half-cowardice, and outright confusion." Thus, the studio

heads' reactions reflected their constant need to balance moral considerations against commercial successes (Urwand, 2013; Doherty, 2013); and Denby, 2013)

Two films made by Muni and Robinson and released, respectively, in 1937 and 1939 reflect these central ambivalences: *The Life of Emile Zola* and *Confessions of A Nazi Spy*. *Zola* still emerges today as a well-made product of Warners' "A-Picture" production process, smoothly interweaving in its first two-thirds running time an interesting story about the (admittedly half-fictionalized and dramatized) early and middle life of its protagonist, the famed French writer Emile Zola, in the subject's mid-and-late nineteenth century Paris milieu. We witness the young, struggling Zola living in the prototypical Paris garret with painter friend Paul Cezanne; we commiserate, then celebrate with Zola when he encounters first failure, then success with the novel *Nana*, and we feel further satisfaction as Zola further emerges as a leading novelist and social critic. But the film stumbles when it depicts the important part Zola played in helping to exonerate the French Jewish army captain, Alfred Dreyfus, from false accusations of treason. While the fiery performance of Joseph Schildkraut as Dreyfus won a well-deserved Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor, not one scintilla of the French Army's anti-Semitism emerges, except for an entry in an army detail book (seen for just a few seconds) identifying the captain as Jewish. Muni especially shines in the sequences where Zola defends himself against criminal libel and eloquently

declares his faith in Dreyfus, but the film's continuing elision of the real reason for the Dreyfus crisis becoming an annoying factor by its conclusion. Thus a Jewish-American actor at the apex of his career unwittingly, but definitely, becomes a primal player in the denial of anti-Semitism in the film which won the Academy Award for Best Picture of 1937 (*Life of Emile Zola* DVD; Baron, 2017, 30).

While Muni struggled with these complexities, Robinson more directly confronted the issue in *Confessions of A Nazi Spy* (1939). While this film never directly addresses anti-Semitism, it does portray Nazism negatively. Robinson essays a figure that he would play again in Orson Welles's *The Stranger* (1946): the seemingly staunch law enforcement figure who quietly, yet effectively, pursues the malignant element of Nazism surviving the end of World War II. But Welles's film came in the victorious aftermath of the world's greatest conflict and the stunning revelation of the heinous extermination camps (*The Stranger* arguably became the first Hollywood film to show the extermination camp newsreels, albeit briefly.) Robinson later remembered how "scared" the studio was about releasing the film, even though Hitler's government had already banned Warners films in the Third Reich (*Confessions of A Nazi Spy* DVD, 2010; Robinson with Spiegelglass, 1973, pp. 204-205).

As previously noted, Muni's and Robinson's major contributions to the development of the ambiguous dramatic archetype ended by the mid-1940s. The resulting gap would be soon fulfilled, albeit only temporarily, by the rise of a new, dynamic Jewish-American successor.

### **Continuing The Ambiguous Dramatic Archetype: John Garfield and Film Noir, 1946-1948**

In May 1952 actor John Garfield suddenly died of a heart attack a few days before he reached the age of thirty-nine. Perhaps Garfield's sudden coronary did not come as a total surprise; the actor had faced continued questioning about his supposed Communist sympathies from the House Un-American Activities Committee, and saw his once-substantial film career effectively end because of the continuing controversy. A few days later, Garfield's still shell-shocked, disoriented wife and children prepared for the funeral services. The doorbell rang. Garfield's wife answered, half-expecting Federal Bureau of Investigation agents. Instead, two somewhat abashed New York City policemen stood at the door. They informed her that long lines of fans now waited outside the funeral home containing Garfield's remains. Would the family consent to allowing an open casket? Garfield's wife allowed the request. By the time that the last viewing took place, an estimated 10,000 New Yorkers saw the handsome, if deceased, visage of John Garfield, an ironic coda to his tumultuous and ill-fated career (Prologue, Nott, 2003, pp. 3-5).



Garfield possessed some similarities with Muni and Robinson, particularly in his starting on Broadway. But besides his age difference, Garfield's early life proved a rougher milieu, showing the aptness of scholar Robert Sklar's description of Garfield as a "city boy." By the age of thirteen Garfield dropped out of high school and seemed effectively destined for a criminal career. His budding interest in acting, however, enticed him to join the Group Theater, an initially informal assemblage of actors, directors, and writers whose alumni eventually included Clifford Odets, Elia Kazan, Lee Strasberg, and Harold Clurman. Through such Group Theater productions as *Waiting for Lefty*, the actor attracted a Warners talent scout. In his first film, *Four Daughters* (1938) Garfield not only proved his charisma, but received an Academy Award nomination for Best Supporting Actor (Nott, 2005, 10-40; Sklar, 1975; Weinraub, 30 January 2003). Now a permanent contract player at Warners, Garfield became a major star, but only by either playing variations of his *Four Daughters* loner character—such as in 1939's *They Made Me A Criminal*—or a wisecracking ethnic, as in *Air Force* (1943). Garfield's frustration with this hardening archetypal *persona* led to a solution different from his two predecessors. Instead of leaving the studio system, as did Muni, or compromising, as did Robinson, Garfield sought new opportunities. In 1945 the studio agreed to "loan" him to MGM, now readying its filmic version of James M. Cain's controversial best-seller, *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, in 1945. This provided Garfield with his first opportunity to participate in the ambiguous dramatic archetype in *film noir*

already established by such actors as Robinson, Fred MacMurray as Walter Neff in *Double Indemnity*, and Dick Powell as detective Philip Marlowe in *Murder My Sweet* (1944).

MGM, the largest and most powerful film studio in the United States, nonetheless proved to be an equivocal choice for the production of Cain's novel. *The Postman Always Rings Twice* is now included in the Modern Library's "Best 100 Novels of the Twentieth Century" list, but was considered "trash" upon its original publication in 1934. Given the sensationalistic elements involved—a drifter and his married girlfriend plot to kill her immigrant husband, only to encounter unexpected twists and turns—and the restrictions of the Production Code, it is no wonder that even a sanitized form of the story failed to materialize on the mainstream screen until the mid-1940s. But, perhaps emboldened by the critical and commercial success of *Double Indemnity*, made from a 1936 Cain novella, studio head Louis B. Mayer took a risk. Taking a risk, however, did not mean taking a needless one. Mayer prided himself on presenting glamorous films to filmgoers, and *Postman* only promised to sully that image, even in a censored form. Thus any hint of steamy sex between the drifter, Frank Chambers, and his girlfriend, Cora Smith, thus became excised, or barely mentioned, and filmgoers only received a tantalizingly brief glimpse of Lana Turner's famous white-shortened figure. The film did gross \$5 million, assuaging Mayer's private doubts,

and Garfield would further emerge himself into *film noir* in the upcoming years (Eyman, 2005), pp. 379-380; *The Postman Always Rings Twice* DVD, 2005).

The next year, 1947, continued Garfield's expansion of the ambiguous dramatic archetype, first in playing Gregory Peck's Jewish-American friend in Twentieth-Century Fox's *Gentleman's Agreement*, the 1947 Academy Award Best Film winner, then in producing through his new independent company *Body and Soul*. Released in August 1947, the latter film combined the talents of a formidable coterie: Garfield, rising young director Robert Rossen, acclaimed cinematographer James Wong Howe and aspiring screenwriter Abraham Polonsky. While the film seemingly dealt with a well-worn area--the rise and possible fall of a boxing champion--the resulting critical and commercial acclaim removed any qualifications. Most newspaper critics, particularly the all-important Crowther, lauded *Body and Soul* for its seemingly clear-eyed depiction of the smarmy underpinnings of the boxing industry and its exhilarating boxing sequences filmed by Howe's hand-held camera. Moreover, the film became United Artists' top-grossing picture of the year and garnered three nominations (Best Actor, Best Screenplay, and Best Editing) at the 1948 Academy Awards (McGrath, 1993), pp. 103-105; Crowther, 10 November 1947; *Body and Soul* DVD, 2012; Hoberman, 2013).

Garfield's character, Charles Davis, comes close to the ambiguous archetypal figures played by Muni, particularly in *The Valiant* and *I Am A Fugitive*. Davis is neither a murderer, as in *Postman*,

nor a corrupt lawyer, as in the later *Force of Evil*. Unlike Joseph Douglas or James Allen, however, the character is not someone, at least initially, who valiantly strives to maintain his integrity or to seek redemption. Instead, in line with the *film noir* archetype, Charles Davis is a morally compromised person, someone on the brink of losing everything honorable in his life. In a series of flashbacks throughout the film's first half, we see how Davis abandoned plans of marriage to his true love; allowed his best friend to slip away, and rejected his immigrant roots on his way to becoming middleweight champion of the world. The film's conclusion, moreover, present a mixed message. While Davis refuses to take a "dive" in facing his younger, more aggressive challenger in defending his title, and reunites with his fiancée and family, the film provides no clear-cut answers to some pressing questions, as whether the protagonist can remain in boxing without encountering the wrath of his former supporters

The last picture of Garfield's late 1940s trio of *film noir*, *Force of Evil*, continues and reinforces the complexities of the ambiguous dramatic archetype. We see the development of two themes later promoted in the first two *Godfather* films and the *Sopranos* television series: the corporatization of crime and the moral ambiguity of persons involved in that milieu. Garfield plays Joe Morse, a slick, well-educated lawyer assisting an unnamed major crime syndicate in New York City. Morse evidently does not regard his criminal clients as any more reprehensible

than other, “legitimate” persons seeking his services; as he rather bluntly tells his partner, the extensive legal fees coming in from the underworld provides munificent economic security.

A dilemma soon arises, however, when the major *capo* orders the closing of small bookie operations throughout the city. This decision squarely puts Joe in conflict with his older, ailing brother, Leo, who directs a “mom and pop” operation on Manhattan’s Lower East Side. Joe tries to play the middleman, constantly reassuring his bosses of Leo’s fealty while assuring his brother of the continuation of his lucrative livelihood. Leo’s refusal to compromise, however, leads to his kidnapping by the syndicate. Joe tries to secure his brother’s release, only to be told that he can finally find Leo “down by the river.” In a poetic if sometimes overelaborate sequence, Joe and his fiancée plunge down the steps near the George Washington Bridge, only to find Leo’s body near the Hudson River’s edge. The film then bleakly, arbitrarily ends with Joe’s avowal to wreak vengeance upon his Mafia masters. Morse thus faces the darkest future confronted by any protagonist played by John Garfield: he must either continue to serve the persons who murdered his brother, or risk his life by becoming an informant for the law (*Force of Evil* DVD, 1948; Scorsese, 1997).

Garfield’s subsequent life hewed close to the fates usually confronted by his *film noir* protagonists. *Force of Evil* eventually became the subject of praise film scholars and received inclusion in the Library of Congress’s National Film Registry. Its box office failure, however,

ended Garfield's production company, as it declared bankruptcy. Only four years elapsed between that disastrous conclusion and the actor's death (Weinraub; Hoberman).

What one can say about Garfield is truncated, but important; film career is that he occupied a middle niche between the ambiguous dramatic archetypal personas of his predecessors, Muni and Robinson. His acting rarely strays into the solemnity (some may say pompousness) of Muni's acting, and his natural handsomeness became balanced by a certain feral charm that could turn into true romantic fervor (such as in *Postman*) or a sudden, sometimes literally fatal, aggressiveness (such as in *Body and Soul*.) It remains a topic of interest as to whether Garfield could have taken his combination of charisma and menace into further extensions of the heroic archetype.

Jewish-American actors' contributions to the ambiguous dramatic archetype did not end with Garfield's death, but they represented a transition away from the cultural ambiguities surrounding the archetype. This can be seen most clearly in the film careers of Kirk Douglas and Dustin Hoffman. Douglas's life exhibited some significant similarities to his three predecessors—extreme poverty as the scion of a Russian-Jewish emigrant and rag seller, and the need to change his name—but a major difference existed in Douglas's willingness to extend the ambiguous archetypal archetype in deeper, darker directions. In the film *Champion* (1949), which established Douglas's stardom, the actor plays a protagonist, the prizefighter Midge Kelly, who shows no

redeeming qualities, unlike Garfield's counterpart in *Body and Soul*. Kelly allows nothing to stand in his way of becoming a titleholder, abandoning his first wife and even defying criminal interests when they want him to "lose" an early major fight. While Kelly at film's end overcomes his younger opponent in a title defense, he does not return to kith and kin, but dies from injuries sustained during the fight.

Douglas took this darkness even further in Billy Wilder's acerbic *Ace in the Hole* (1951). Douglas's character, newspaper journalist Jim McLeod, seizes upon the incident of a man trapped in an ancient Native American tomb in New Mexico to regain his former notoriety as a New York City scribe. McLeod conspires with the local sheriff and head rescuer to delay the effort as to reap more newsprint and treats the victim's wife with increasing contempt, even unexpectedly slapping her to induce newsworthy tears. When McLeod's efforts finally fail due to the trapped man dying of pneumonia, he receives a drastic comeuppance, dramatically dying of a knife wound (Douglas, 1988; Thomas, 1972, 1991).

Hoffman's career stands as an interesting contrast to his predecessors in two ways. First, the actor did not emerge from either a poverty-stricken background (his father actually worked as a studio prop supervisor) nor did he change his original name. In addition, Hoffman's initial performances show a diversity of subject matter unmatched in earlier periods, particularly in its inclusion of Jewish-Americans. Hoffman's cinematic breakthrough as Benjamin Braddock in



*The Graduate* (1967) seems initially ironic because the character seems the very picture of a White-Anglo-Saxon Protestant benefited by a sun-lit Californian middle-class upbringing and a distinguished college record. As the film eventually reveals, however, Braddock's seeming privileged, confident façade hides a restlessness and anxiety about his future. Hoffman continued to diversify the ambiguousness of the dramatic archetype over the next thirteen years: the social misfit Ratso Rizzo in *Midnight Cowboy* (1969); the Native American centenarian who discusses his multifaceted life in *Little Big Man* (1970); the acerbic, influential Jewish-American standup comedian Lenny Bruce in *Lenny* (1974); and an urban professional struggling to raise his young son after his wife leaves in *Kramer v. Kramer* (1979) (Lenburg, 1983, 2001 and Frankel, 2021).

## CONCLUSION

As delineated by scholars as disparate as Carl Jung and Joseph Campbell, societies tend to create universal forms of human identity, or archetypes, which reflect the aspirations, desires, and goals of societal members. This tendency reveals itself very clearly in the mainstream film industry of the United States from 1900 through 1950. Responding to the commercial pressures from their film audiences in the early 1900s, the major film studio entrepreneurs of the United

States accordingly formed a dramatic film archetype for their major male actors based on an Anglo-Saxon, heroic mold. With the ethnic diversification of filmgoers by the late 1920s, and the contemporaneous introduction of sound prompting a widespread search for classically trained actors, film studios needed to expand beyond previous stars that exemplified the archetype such as Wallace Reid, Douglas Fairbanks, Sr., and Richard Barthelemess. Thus, the scene was set for non-Anglo-Saxon film actors, particularly Jewish-American actors such as Paul Muni, Edward G. Robinson, and John Garfield. Such actors garnered this opportunity because of their considerable acting skills honed on stage and perhaps most important, their ability to fit within the previously established male actor prototype, unlike their Latino and Italian-American counterparts.

From the introduction of sound to the end of the 1940s, Paul Muni, Edward G. Robinson, and John Garfield proved Jewish-American pioneers in helping to form the ambiguous dramatic archetype in the United States. Muni began his contribution with his very first film, *The Valiant*, and continued with such films as *Scarface*, *I Am A Fugitive From A Chain Gang*, eventually becoming the first Jewish-American to win an Academy Award for Best Actor. In contrast, Robinson found himself trapped in gangster part established by his breakthrough performance in 1930's *Little Caesar*. Despite his best efforts, the classically trained actor could not extend his established box office prowess into fresh acting opportunities until he expanded the archetype into the nascent genre of *film noir* with his performances in *Double Indemnity*, *The Woman in the Window*, and

*Scarlet Street*. Through these films Robinson helped establish the *oeuvre*'s protagonist as a seemingly innocent person ensnared by a combination of personal weaknesses and overall circumstances. Finally, despite his truncated career, Garfield helped expand the new *film noir* ambiguous dramatic archetype from 1946 through 1948 in three memorable, intense leading film performances in *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, *Body and Soul*, and especially *Force of Evil*. While Garfield's sudden death in 1952 ended this first era of breakthrough, new Jewish-American actors such as Kirk Douglas and Dustin Hoffman would continue the diversification of the archetype in the 1950s through the 1980s.

## REFERENCES

"Academy Awards 1936 Outtakes," YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2VJU61IKJ6E>, accessed 27 June 2020.

Alexander, D. (1992). *Eugene O'Neill's Creative Struggle: The Decisive Decade, 1924-1933*. Pennsylvania State University Press.

Anderson, M. L. (2011). *Twilight of the Idols: Hollywood and the Human Sciences in 1920s America*. University of California Press.

Baron, L. (2017). "Caution or Collaboration?" in Michael Renov and Vincent Brook, eds. *From Shtetl to Stardom: Jews and Hollywood, Annual Review, Volume 14*. West Lafayette, Ind.: Perdue University Press for the USC Casden Institute for the Study of the Jewish Role in American Society, University of Southern California.

"Beer and Blood: Enemies of the Public." 2005. Documentary found on *The Public Enemy* DVD, directed by William Wellman (1931).

Bergman, A. (1972). *We're In The Money: Depression America and Its Films*. Harper and Row.

Bial, H. (2005). *Acting Jewish: Negotiating Ethnicity on The American Stage and Screen*. University of Michigan Press.

Biesen, S. C. (2005). *Blackout: World War II and the Origins of Film Noir*. John Hopkins University Press.

Bingham, D. (1994). *Acting Male: Masculinities in the Films of James Stewart, Jack Nicholson, and Clint Eastwood*. Rutgers University Press.

*Body and Soul* DVD. 2012. Directed by Robert Rossen (1947)

Bordwell, D., J. Staiger and K. Thompson (1985). *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960*. Columbia University Press.

Bosworth, P. (2001). *Marlon Brando*. Penguin.

Briggs, S. D. (2012). *Psychology at the Movies*. Wiley-Russell.

Brook, V. (2017). Still an Empire of Their Own: How Jews Remained Atop A Reinvented Hollywood, in Michael Renov and Vincent Brook, eds. *From Shtetl to Stardom: Jews and Hollywood, Annual Review, Volume 14*. West Lafayette, Ind.: Perdue University Press for the USC Casden Institute for the Study of the Jewish Role in American Society, University of Southern California.

Broughton, L. (2020). *Reframing Cult Westerns: From the Magnificent Seven to the Hateful Eight*. Bloomsbury.

Brunel, P. (2015). *Companion to Literary Myths, Heroes and Archetypes*. Taylor and Francis.

Campbell, J. (1968) [1949]. *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*. Princeton University Press.

Cohen, L. (2008). *Making A New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*. 2d ed. Cambridge University Press.

*Confessions of A Nazi Spy* DVD. (2010). Directed by Anatole Litvak (1939).

Crowther, B. 7 September 1944. "Double Indemnity—A Tough Melodrama," *New York Times*, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=9E03E4D7143EE03BBC4F53DFBF66838F659ED> (accessed 23 June 2015).

Crowther, B. 26 January 1945. "The Screen in Review," available at <http://www.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=9F02E4D81E38EE3BBC4E51DFB766838E659ED> (accessed 23 June 2015.)

Crowther, B. 16 February 1946. "The Screen," *New York Times*, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=9900E1DD1339E53ABC4D52DFB466838D659ED> (accessed 23 June 2015).

Crowther, B. 10 November 1947. "'Body and Soul'—Exciting Story of Prizefighting," *New York Times*, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=9502E0D6103AE233A25753C1A9679D946693D6CF> (accessed 23 June 2015).

De Cordova, R. (1990). *Picture Personalities: The Emergence of the Star System in America*. University of Illinois Press.

Denby, D. (2013). Hitler in Hollywood, *New Yorker On-Line*, 16 September 2013 (accessed 13 June 2015).

Dickstein, M. (2009). *Dancing in the Dark: A Cultural History of the Great Depression*. Norton.

Doherty, T. P. (2013). *Hollywood and Hitler, 1933-1939*. Columbia University Press.

*Double Indemnity* DVD (2005). Directed by Billy Wilder (1944).

Douglas, K. (1988). *The Ragman's Son: An Autobiography*. Simon and Schuster.

Ebert, R. (2008). *Scorsese*. University of Chicago Press.

Epstein, L. J. (2001). *The Haunted Smile: The Story of Jewish Comedians in America*. Public Affairs.

Erens, P. (1984). *The Jew in American Cinema*. University of Indiana Press.

Eyman, S. (2005). *Lion of Hollywood: The Life and Legend of Louis B. Mayer*. Simon and Schuster.

Fishel, J. R. and S. M. Ortmann. (2009). *Encyclopedia of Jewish-American Popular Culture*. Greenwood Press.

*Force of Evil* DVD. 2012. Directed by Abraham Polonsky (1948).

Frankel, G. (2021). *Shooting Midnight Cowboy: Art, Sex, Loneliness, Liberation and the Making of a Dark Classic*. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

*Fury* DVD (2006). Directed by Fritz Lang (1936).

Gabler, N. (1989). *An Empire of Their Own: How the Jews Invented Hollywood*. Anchor Books.  
Goldfarb, P. (1970) [1945]. "Muni, Paul," and Myrtle Lecky Grimshaw, "Paul Muni—Master Character Actor," in Philip Henry Lotz, *Distinguished American Jews*. New York: International Committee of Young Men's Christian Associations; Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press.

Greene, V. (1999). "Ethnic Comedy in American Culture," *American Quarterly* 51(1): 144-159.

Grobel, L. (1989). *The Hustons: The Life and Times of a Hollywood Dynasty*. Scribner.

Hare, W. (2004). *Early Film Noir: Greed, Lust, and Murder Hollywood Style*. McFarland.

Hoberman, J. 4 March 2013. "The Jewish Brando," *Tablet*, available at <http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-arts-and-culture/125598/the-jewish-brando>, (accessed 25 June 2015).

Jenkins, H. (1992). *What Made Pistachio Nuts?: Early Sound Comedy and the Vaudeville Aesthetic*. Columbia University Press.

Jewell, Richard. Commentary. (2005). *I Am A Fugitive From A Chain Gang* DVD. Directed by Mervyn LeRoy (1932).

Jung, C. G. (2003) [1972]. *Four Archetypes: Mother, Rebirth, Spirit, Trickster*. Routledge.

Kael, P. (2011). Marlon Brando: An American Hero, in Sanford Schwartz, ed., *The Age of Movies: Selected Writings of Pauline Kael*. Library of America.

Konigsberg, I. 1987. *The Complete Film Dictionary*. New American Library.

Lawrence, A. (2010). Rudolph Valentino: Italian-American. in P. Petro, ed., *Idols of Modernity: Movie Stars of the 1920s*. Rutgers University Press

Lawrence, J. (1974). *Actor: The Life and Times of Paul Muni*. Putnam.

Lenburg, J. (2001) [1983]. *Dustin Hoffman: Hollywood's Antihero*. St. Martin's Press.

*Little Caesar* DVD. 2005. Directed by Mervyn LeRoy (1930)

Mann, W. J. (2019). *The Contender: The Story of Marlon Brando*. HarperCollins.

Manso, P. (1994). *Brando: The Biography*. Hyperion.

McDonald, P. (2000). *The Star System: Hollywood's Production of Popular Identities*. Wallflower Press.

McGilligan, P. (2013). *Fritz Lang and the Nature of the Beast*. University of Minnesota Press.

McGrath, P. J. (1993). *John Garfield: The Illustrated Career in Films and On Stage*. McFarland.

Mintz, S., and R. W. Roberts, eds. (2010). Introduction, *Hollywood's America, Fourth Edition*. Blackwell.

Misra, K. S. (1992). *The Tragic Hero Through Ages*. Northern Book Centre.

Mithani, S. (2007). *The Hollywood Left: Cinematic Art and Activism in the 1930s* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Southern California).

“Movie of the Week: JUAREZ,” *Life*, 8 May 1939, 70.

Musser, C. (1991). Ethnicity, Role-Playing, and American Film Comedy: From *Chinese Laundry* to *Whoopee* (1894-1930), in L. D. Freidman, ed., *Unspeakable Images: Ethnicity and the American Cinema*. University of Illinois Press.

Nott, R. (2003). *He Ran All The Way: The Life of John Garfield*. Limelight.

Nugent, F. 26 April 1939. “The Screen In Review,” *New York Times*, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=9907E2DC113CE73ABC4E51DFB2668382629ED> (accessed 27 June 2015).

Osborne, R. (1989). *60 Years of the Oscar: The Official History of the Academy Awards*. Abbeville Press.

Palumbo, D. E. (2014). *The Monomyth in American Science Fiction Films: 28 Visions of the Hero's Journey*. McFarland.

“Race and Hollywood: Latino Images on Film.” 2009. Turner Classic Movies presentation, May 5, 2009, at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g3R1TfoDtQI>, accessed on June 15 2012.

Robinson, E. G. with L. Spiegelglass. (1973). *All My Yesterdays: An Autobiography*. Hawthorn Books.

Robinson, M. (2009). *The Cambridge Companion to August Strindberg*. Cambridge University Press.

Rollins, P.C. (2003). *The Columbia Companion to American History on Film: How the Movies Have Portrayed the American Past*. Columbia University Press.

*Scarface* DVD. (2007). Directed by Howard Hawks.



Solheim, W. A. (1991). *Ibsen: From Historical Drama to Profane History*. University of Minnesota Press.

Sarno, A. (1980). *Academy Awards 1980 Oscar Annual*. ESE.

Schubert, R. (2014). *Super Bitches and Action Babes: The Female Hero in Popular Cinema, 1970-2006*. McFarland.

Scorsese, M., and M. H. Wilson. (1997). *A Personal Journey With Martin Scorsese DVD* (1995).

Screenplays, 1929. "The Valiant, February 4, 1929" (second version of the working script) in Box 1, Folder 33, Series II, Personal Papers, ca. 1929-1959, in Paul Muni Papers, ca. 1920-1967, The Billy Rose Theater Division, New York Public Library.

Silver, A. et al. (1992). Introduction, *Film Noir: An Encyclopedic Reference to the American Style, Revised and Expanded Edition*. Overlook Press.

Sklar, R. (1975). *Movie Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies*. Random House.

Smith, I. S. (2014). *In A Lonely Place: Film Noir Beyond the City*. HarpersCollins.

Solheim, W. A. (1991). *Ibsen: From Historical Drama to Profane History*. University of Minnesota Press.

Solomonik-Pankrašova, T., & Lobinaitė, V. (2016). Adaptation of the epic legend of Siegfried: from archetypal hero myth to film. *Respectus philologicus*, (30), 121-130.

Sontag, S. (1966). Godard's *Vivre Sa Vie* in S. Sontag, *Against Interpretation and Other Essays*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Taylor, C. (2015). *How Star Wars Conquered the Universe: The Past, Present, and Future of a Multimillion Dollar Franchise*. Basic Books.

"The Dawn of Sound: How the Movies Learned to Talk." 2007. Documentary on *The Jazz Singer*, directed by Alan Crosland (1927).

*The Life of Emile Zola* DVD (2007). Directed by William Dieterle (1937).

*The Postman Always Rings Twice* DVD (2005). Directed by Tay Garnett (1946).

Thomas, T. (1991)[1972]. *The Films of Kirk Douglas*. Citadel Press.

*Underworld* DVD. n.d. Directed by Joseph Von Sternberg. (1927).

Urwand, B. (2013). *The Collaboration: Hollywood's Pact With Hitler*. Harvard University Press.

Vieira, M. A. (2013). *Majestic Hollywood: The greatest films of 1939*. Running Press Adult.

Warshow, R. (1962). The Gangster as Tragic Hero, in *The Immediate Experience*. Doubleday.

Weinraub, B. 30 January 2003. "Recalling John Garfield, Rugged Star K'Oed by Fate," *New York Times*, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/01/30/movies/recalling-john-garfield-rugged-star-ko-d-by-fate.html>,(accessed 25 June 2015).

Wessbecher, G. (2008). Mythological Archetypes Portrayed in Film, *Journal of the Georgia Philological Association*: 136-144.

Wiley, M., & Bona, D. (1993). *Inside Oscar: The Unofficial History of the Academy Awards*. Ballantine Books.

Wyman, L. M., & Dionisopoulos, G. N. (1999). Primal Urges and Civilized Sensibilities: The Rhetoric of Gendered Archetypes, Seduction, and Resistance in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 27(2), 32-39.

*You Only Live Once* DVD, n.d., directed by Fritz Lang (1937).

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Richard Dreyfuss did win an Academy Award for Best Actor in 1978, but for a romantic comedy, *The Goodbye Girl*.

<sup>2</sup> Lewis Stone's performance as the crazed Tsar of Russia's pre-eminent advisor in Emil Lubitsch's *The Traitor* (1928) received the fifth nomination for Best Actor that year. But the film is now considered lost.