

**A Sensationalistic Press:
The Image of Journalists in Billy Wilder's Films**

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Introduction

Over the last decades, cultural cultivation or incubation theories have addressed the effects of how repetitive images and themes affect our view of reality, shaping our perception in line with the perspective offered by such media.¹ According to this view, the lessons learned from the media environment are extrapolated, sometimes incorrectly, to the social environment.²

Film has been one of the most sophisticated representations of the human dimension, from the deepest and most intimate aspects to the most external and sociological, because of the suggestive manner in which it makes everything seem real.³ The perspectives that movies offer on life and human behavior thus turn them into important agents of social knowledge that convey the most common stereotypes.

In the case of the profession of journalism, this image takes on even more relevance if we consider that the news media rarely present their audience with detailed and accurate insight into how they work, so the main source for generating this image is film and television series.⁴ For the vast majority of people, it is unusual to see a journalist in action or visit a newsroom or TV studio; however, the image they have of the profession is usually quite distinct regardless of the degree of its relationship with reality.⁵ Therefore, the analysis of the image of journalists in film acquires a unique

importance, especially since film, as concluded by Bezunartea et al., does not usually deal with ordinary journalists or everyday situations faced by the news media but rather focuses on out-of-the-ordinary behavior.⁶

The subject of this study is the analysis of the image that Billy Wilder films present about journalism and its professionals. With this objective, it conducts an analysis of the journalist characters Billy Wilder used in the 26 films he both wrote and directed, particularly the two that are set in the profession: *Ace in the Hole* (1951) and *The Front Page* (1974).

Literature Review

Journalism in Cinema

The study of the image of journalism in cinema is a growing area of research in the academic field. The first attempts at its analysis focused on cataloguing existing film works. In 1976, Maxwell Taylor Courson analyzed the evolution of the portrayal of journalists throughout 615 movies in his doctoral thesis, *The Newspaper Movies: An Analysis of the Rise and Decline of the News Gatherer as a Hero in American Motion Pictures, 1900-1974*. This pioneering compilation has subsequently been added to by Richard R. Ness's *From Headline Hunter to Superman: A Journalism Filmography*; Larry Langman's *The Media in the Movies: A Catalog of American Journalism Films, 1900-1996*; and Christa Berger's *Jornalismo no cinema*, among others.⁷ Moreover, since 2000, *The Image of Journalism in Popular Culture* (IJPC) project at the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism at the University of Southern California systematically and comprehensively researches and analyzes the image of journalism and media professionals as portrayed in films, television, literature, advertisements, comics, cartoons, music, art, and videogames.⁸

In addition to cataloguing, the study of journalists in film has also taken other forms. In the field of stereotypes, Canadian journalist Alex Barris characterized the main professional profiles in film newsrooms in his influential *Stop the Presses! The Newspaperman in American Films*. This work has been added to by typologies made in Loren Ghiglione's *The American Journalist: Paradox of the Press*, Joe Saltzman's *Frank Capra and the Image of the Journalist in American Film*, and Wibke Ehlers's "With Pad and Pencil: Old Stereotypes in a New Form?" More recently, Brian McNair includes numerous examples of two opposing profiles in his *Journalism in Film*—namely, the dichotomy between heroes and villains.⁹

The deontological challenges of journalism have also been a focus of great interest to researchers. In *Media Ethics Goes to the Movies*, Howard Good and Michael J. Dillon review major ethical problems in a dozen Hollywood films, including *Ace in the Hole*, which they call a dismal allegory of shady tabloid journalism in the 20th century. Moral conflicts of reporters in film have also been addressed by Roger Manvell, by Matthew C. Ehrlich, and by Bezunartea et al., while Nora Henry focuses her study *Ethics and Social Criticism in the Hollywood Films of Erich von Stroheim, Ernst Lubitsch and Billy Wilder* on the multiple affinities in the filmographies of the three directors.¹⁰

Billy Wilder and Journalism

Billy Wilder's relationship with journalism in film spans his entire career. At the age of 18, influenced by the image that American newsreels offered about reporters of the era,¹¹ he applied for a job at the Viennese weekly paper *Die Bühne* through a letter to the editor in which he expressed his desire to become an "American journalist."¹² Young Wilder's interest in journalism was matched only by his fascination for the United States. According to one observer, "In a way, before Billy Wilder went to

America, America went to Billy Wilder.”¹³

In Vienna, Wilder worked for two intense years (1925-1926) for two Kronos Verlag publications, the weekly *Die Bühne* and the daily *Die Stunde*. After his move to Berlin, the high-spirited capital of the Weimar Republic, he began to alternate his sporadic work as a journalist or freelancer at publications like the *Berliner Nachtaugabe*, *Berliner Zeitung am Mittag*, *Der Querschnitt*, *Berliner Börsen Courier*, and *Tempo* with ghostwriting for screenwriters in the powerful German film industry from 1926 to 1931. Interestingly, Wilder earned his first film credit for a wild adventure starring a journalist, *Hell of a Reporter*, which was directed by Ernst Laemmle in 1929. By the early 1930s, Wilder had managed to get a comfortable position as a writer in the industry, but the arrival of Hitler forced him to seek refuge to continue writing screenplays, first in Paris and later in the United States. He arrived in the U.S. in 1934.

Save for a few sporadic jobs for the magazine *Der Querschnitt* and barely 12 months working at Emil Faktor’s *Berliner Börsen Courier*, Wilder’s entire journalistic career—like that of almost all of his film reporter characters—was spent at tabloids. As a reporter, the young “Billie”¹⁴ embodied many of the traits that he would later attribute to his characters. He had no university education, but rather learned the tricks of the trade in the streets. He was constantly gripped by the financial precariousness he was condemned to by his profession; his journalism career in Berlin, with no steady or secure job, forced him to wander from one outlet to another. Even his impudence and indolence, so common among his film reporters, cost him his job at least twice at the Berlin publications *Nachtaugabe* and *Börsen Courier*, respectively. The privileged relationship between the press and political power, shown in Wilder’s films as being mutually dependent in a context of corruption, was foreshadowed by the man who owned Kronos Verlag and served as Wilder’s boss in Vienna, Imre Békey. Békey’s

propensity for blackmail with the connivance of political authorities ended up forcing him to flee the country and prompted Wilder to depart to Berlin.

Wilder's film work in America has, of course, also been researched and critical studies of his films abound, especially in the United States.¹⁵ His personal biography in Europe, however, is opaque and has not been researched like his creative work, due in large part to the reserved character of the Viennese director and his roving tour through Europe up until his arrival in America in 1934. Undoubtedly the most rigorous and widely documented studies on Wilder's journalistic and cinematic career on the old continent are from the Austrian journalist Andreas Hutter.¹⁶ Two anthologies of Wilder's journalistic works in Vienna and Berlin have also been published.¹⁷

These publications in German cover a particularly wide gap in American literature concerning Wilder.¹⁸ Much of that work relied on the memories of the director—especially after he had retired—for the story of events that had occurred half a century before, which Wilder used to reduce, as Cameron Crowe pointed out, to a recurring set of well-polished anecdotes after many years of dinners before enthralled fellow diners.¹⁹ Among the works on Wilder, Ed Sikov's *On Sunset Boulevard: The Life and Times of Billy Wilder* deserves special mention for being a widely documented investigation and detailed review of the life and career of the director. It is probably the most comprehensive biography published to date.²⁰

Methodology

This study aims to detect the stereotypes and traits of journalists present in Wilder's films and compare them with the events and real people on which they are based. The study is also based on the hypothesis that the portrait of journalists in Billy Wilder's films stresses the most negative stereotypes of journalism and pays special

attention to the customs and techniques of the sensationalistic press.

The author prepared a catalogue of journalist characters in the 26 films both written and directed by Wilder. This catalogue was developed by drawing upon previous written studies of Wilder's films. It also drew upon film databases and the opening and closing credits of the films themselves. In the case of the two films specifically about journalism (*Ace in the Hole* and *The Front Page*), the films' final scripts also were consulted. Finally, the documentation of minor characters and extras, whose presence is important to note in some quantitative aspects, was based on having watched each of the 26 films.

A flexible approach was used for considering characters that included not only journalists (i.e., characters who perform explicitly journalistic labors on camera), but also media workers as a whole (photographers, television camera operators, technical staff, etc.), plus characters who occasionally perform journalistic roles without actually being journalists themselves. Even without dialogue, media workers are clearly identifiable by such things as their press cards held in the bands of their hats or by their notebooks, cameras, and microphones.

In all, there are 240 media worker characters in Wilder's films, with 12 of the 26 films featuring such characters. Of those characters, 162 (67.5%) perform specifically journalistic work. Not all of those 162 characters, obviously, share the same relevance in the films. Following a set of character typologies described by Atchity and Wong,²¹ five may be considered leading characters, two as secondary characters, and 20 as minor characters, with the rest serving merely as "functional" characters or as "extras."

This study focuses on the 27 most relevant characters in Billy Wilder's screenplays—i.e., those considered as leading, secondary, or minor characters. A list of them and the films in which they appear is in Table 1.

Table 1
Leading, Secondary and Minor Characters

Film	Year	Character	Actor/Actress	Char. type	Media	Position
<i>Sunset Boulevard</i>	1950	Hedda Hopper	Hedda Hopper	Minor	<i>Los Angeles Times</i>	Gossip columnist
		Chuck Tatum	Kirk Douglas	Lead	<i>Sun-Bulletin</i>	Reporter
		Jacob Q. Boot	Porter Hall	Secondary	<i>Sun-Bulletin</i>	Editor-in-chief / Owner
		Herbie Cook	Robert Arthur	Secondary	<i>Sun-Bulletin</i>	Reporter/Photographer
		Bob Bumpas	Bob Bumpas	Minor	<i>Radio KOAT</i>	Narrator
<i>Ace in the Hole</i>	1951	Indian copy boy	Iron Eyes Cody	Minor	<i>Sun-Bulletin</i>	Editorial assistant
		Jessop	Ken Christy	Minor	-	Reporter
		McCardle	Lewis Martin	Minor	-	Reporter
		Miss Deverich	Edith Evanson	Minor	<i>Sun-Bulletin</i>	Writer
		Morgan	Bert Moorhouse	Minor	-	Reporter
		Nagel	Richard Gaines	Minor	-	Editor-in-chief
<i>The Spirit of St. Louis</i>	1957	E. Lansing Ray	Maurice Manson	Minor	<i>Globe-Democrat</i>	Owner
<i>One, Two, Three</i>	1961	Untermeier	Til Kiwe	Minor	<i>Tageblatt</i>	Reporter
<i>The Fortune Cookie</i>	1966	Harry Hinkle	Jack Lemmon	Lead	<i>CBS</i>	Cameraman
		Hildy Johnson	Jack Lemmon	Lead	<i>Examiner</i>	Reporter
		Walter Burns	Walter Matthau	Lead	<i>Examiner</i>	Editor-in-chief
		Bensinger	David Wayne	Minor	<i>Tribune</i>	Reporter
		Duffy	John Furlong	Minor	<i>Examiner</i>	Editor's assistant
		Endicott	Lou Frizzell	Minor	<i>Post</i>	Reporter
<i>The Front Page</i>	1974	Kruger	Allen Garfield	Minor	<i>Jour. of Commerce</i>	Reporter
		McHugh	Dick O'Neill	Minor	City News Bureau	Reporter
		Murphy	Charles Durning	Minor	<i>Evening Journal</i>	Reporter
		Rudy Keppler	John Korkes	Minor	<i>Examiner</i>	Reporter
		Schwartz	Herb Edelman	Minor	<i>Daily News</i>	Reporter
		Wilson	Noam Pitlik	Minor	<i>American</i>	Reporter
<i>Buddy Buddy</i>	1981	Victor Clooney	Jack Lemmon	Lead	<i>CBS</i>	Censor / Legal Dept.
		Celia Clooney	Paula Prentiss	Minor	<i>CBS</i>	Ex-reporter

Source: Prepared by the author

An analysis was also conducted to distinguish and validate the presence of stereotypes in Wilder's journalistic characters. Based on previous studies of how journalists have been depicted in film,²² the 12 most common stereotypes that cinema uses to portray the profession include (1) masculinity, (2) excessive alcohol consumption, (3) contempt for university training, (4) renouncement of family life, (5) job insecurity along with an intense passion for news, (6) comradeship, (7) aggressiveness, (8) cynicism, (9) manipulation of events, (10) lack of ethics, (11) the power of the press to do harm or good, and (12) the primacy of the printed press.

Wilder's films were studied to determine the extent to which those stereotypes

appear. Due to their special relevance, the stage directions in the scripts of *Ace in the Hole* and *The Front Page* were also examined. A summary of results appears in Table 2. Indicators of stereotypes #1 and #12 were taken from a quantitative, frequential content analysis of all 240 journalists/media workers in the films. Indicators #2 to #11 were taken from a qualitative, thematic analysis of principal, secondary, and minor characters (again, 27 in all).

Table 2
Filmic Stereotypes in Billy Wilder's Journalist Characters

Filmic stereotype	Quantitative/qualitative indicator in Billy Wilder's journalists (%)
1. Masculinity	▪ Man: 90% ▪ Woman: 10%
2. Excessive alcohol consumption	▪ Doesn't drink alcohol: 63% ▪ Drinks alcohol: 33% ▪ Gets drunk: 4%
3. Contempt for university training	▪ Journalism school education: 8.3% ▪ Other university studies: 4.2% ▪ No higher education: 45.8% ▪ No references: 41.7%
4. Renouncing family life	▪ Single: 29.2% ▪ Married: 20.8% ▪ Separated or divorced: 4.2% ▪ No references: 45.8%
5. Job insecurity/passion for news	▪ Financial troubles: 41.7% ▪ Passion for news: 54.2%
6. Comradeship	▪ Deceive or betray colleagues: 37.5% ▪ Ridicule or make fun of them: 58.3%
7. Aggressiveness	▪ Verbal insolence: 58.3% ▪ Physical violence: 29.2%
8. Cynicism	▪ A lot: 20.8% ▪ Some: 33.3% ▪ A little: 29.2% ▪ None: 16.7%
9. Manipulation of events	▪ Regularly: 37.5% ▪ Sometimes: 12.5% ▪ None /No references: 50%
10. Lack of ethics	▪ Very ethical: 4.3% ▪ Quite ethical: 21.7% ▪ Not very ethical: 47.8% ▪ Not ethical at all: 26.1%
11. Power of the press	▪ Press serves personal advancement: 8.3% ▪ Press serves society: 16.7% ▪ Press seduces audiences: 75.0%
12. Primacy of the printed press	▪ Print: 80.4% ▪ Radio: 1.7% ▪ TV: 15.8% ▪ Cinema: 2.1%

Source: Prepared by the author

A thorough study about the stereotypes in Billy Wilder's films by the author is found in *Kosmorama*, the journal of the Danish Film Institute.²³ This paper, for its part, focuses on the individual journalistic characters in the films and their real-life models.

***Ace in the Hole* (1951)**

In *Ace in the Hole*, Billy Wilder recreates in 1950 New Mexico the excitement that Floyd Collins provoked in 1925 Kentucky after Collins became trapped in a cave and died. It was one of the biggest media events in the United States in the interwar period.²⁴ In Wilder's film, reporter Chuck Tatum's longing for a scoop and his cynicism that degenerates into potentially murderous behavior are purely fictional. However, some of the details of the event and in particular the carnival atmosphere surrounding it are reproduced quite accurately.²⁵

After the end of his creative marriage with Charles Brackett following *Sunset Boulevard*, Wilder faced full creative responsibility alone, and the topic chosen was none other than the bitter portrait of a profession that he knew perfectly well. However, the resounding commercial failure of his most cherished and personal film, which he later defined as "the runt of the litter,"²⁶ turned it into the black sheep of his filmography. Despite this and the critiques that the film received, Wilder felt that the harsh image of the profession shown in *Ace in the Hole* could not be considered under any circumstances a perverse distortion of reality, but rather to the contrary, a softened portrait of what he himself had lived as a journalist.²⁷

As clearly shown in *Ace in the Hole*, journalists' fabrications aim to resonate with readers' tastes and interests, however low they may be, which ultimately places some of the responsibility for the journalists' behavior on public opinion. Nevertheless, it must be also recalled that in the years in which Billy Wilder's two films about

journalism are set, the press responded to a greater extent to the entertainment needs of its audience due to the absence or weakness of other media and to people's lower levels of education.

Chuck Tatum (Kirk Douglas)

Unlike some of Wilder's other antiheroes, there is no dark or traumatic past—at least not explicitly—that justifies the moral swamp Chuck Tatum is submerged in,²⁸ making him one of the quintessential classic journalistic film villains²⁹ and the most sinister main character in the entire Wilder filmography.

The characterization of the reporter, played fiercely by Kirk Douglas, has little to do with the real-life journalist on whom he is based. William Burke Miller risked his life in 1925 Kentucky on up to seven occasions to try to rescue Floyd Collins, a farmer helplessly trapped in a cave. That was many more times than had been needed to obtain the information that ended up winning Miller a Pulitzer.

Tatum, however, perceives the story exclusively in terms of its narrative potential, which causes him to act in a strictly instrumental manner. His actions are blinded by his ambition, which leads him to apply the well-learned techniques of tabloid journalism to fabricate a "human interest story" that allows him to restore his professional success with no compassion whatsoever for the suffering of the trapped man, Leo Minosa. His repentance, too late, fails to save the life of Minosa, for whom he feels about as much compassion as a fisherman feels for his bait.³⁰

While the character is profiled in an extreme way without nuances, the vast majority of reporters in Billy Wilder's screenplays share Tatum's motivations. For three out of four of them, seducing the public and increasing the dissemination of the media for which they work is their main goal, and they ignore their social responsibility or their role as the Fourth Estate.

The protagonist in *Ace in the Hole* also embodies other generalized traits of the film stereotype of journalists: he is arrogant, a drinker, dirt-poor, seductive but allergic to commitment, a storyteller, insightful, self-made, and a hardened veteran despite his youth. As the stage directions in the script describe him, “He has not only travelled—he has been around.”³¹

However, despite his amoral portrait, the most poisonous darts in *Ace in the Hole* are aimed at the audience of thousands who throng the place, seemingly driven by blameless, honest, and innocent motives, but whose appetite for the morbid is actually the origin of all sin.³² For Tatum, they are simply Mr. and Mrs. America.

Jacob Q. Boot (Porter Hall)

Chuck Tatum’s counterpoint in *Ace in the Hole* is also the most faultless journalist in Billy Wilder’s films. The editor-in-chief of the *Albuquerque Sun-Bulletin*, Jacob Boot, cherishes all qualities—human and journalistic—that his reporter lacks. The script describes him as a man about 60 years old, “small town, but nobody’s fool.”³³

Two visual touches are enough for Wilder to give substance to the character. The first is the embroidery hung from his office door that reads, “Tell the Truth.” It describes a person who only understands the profession from a respect for the truth and who does non-sensationalistic journalism about everyday things. The second, which is pure Wilder, characterizes Boot as the man who wears a belt and suspenders at the same time. No more words are needed to profile a cautious and truthful editor-in-chief, who double-checks information before publishing it versus the impulsive and aggressive Tatum and the in-the-gut journalism he develops as a lure for audiences.

Professional integrity finds an unblemished example in Boot that represents all the ideals of journalism.³⁴ *Ace in the Hole* is constructed as an allegory in which, in contrast to the ruthless reporter from New York, the unimpeachable figure of the chief

of the *Sun-Bulletin* sharply establishes the borders for correct journalistic practices.

Although Wilder focuses his gaze on the black sheep of the profession, his films are not without clear moral leaders.

Herbie Cook (Robert Arthur)

The young photographer from the *Albuquerque Sun-Bulletin*, initially skeptical of Tatum's methods, ends up becoming his shadow. Like Rudy Keppler in Wilder's *The Front Page*, Herbie Cook represents a generation of rookie journalists with university degrees whose training is despised by their hardened mentors. No one ever taught Cook the methods to increase the demand for newspapers, and having been used to the faded and worn atmosphere of the *Sun-Bulletin*, he is fascinated by Tatum's dynamism. The fierce New York reporter gradually alienates Cook from the virtuous but dull journalistic path of the upstanding Jacob Boot and shows him the bait of success offered by the sordid path of sensationalism.³⁵

In Wilder's films, journalists with university training—only 8.3% of the total—are always shown as naïve and manipulable, and they lack the real knowledge necessary to work in the profession. Worse yet, as they gain experience in the shadow of their self-taught mentors, they reproduce their mentors' behavioral patterns. The journalist's street training is imposed on their university training, a portrait that reinforces what Stephen Farber describes as a theme that constantly preoccupies Wilder: the confrontation between innocence and experience.³⁶

Nagel (Richard Gaines)

If Boot's honesty and calm represents the antithesis of Tatum, Nagel—Tatum's old boss in New York—embodies the model and inspiration for Tatum's frenetic style. The script for *Ace in the Hole* briefly characterizes him in the same dry and sharp style with which the character expresses himself: "He's a man in his fifties. He's in a hurry. He's

on the spot. He doesn't like it."³⁷ Nagel personifies sensationalistic journalism, stories that continually hit the gut to try to grab an audience at any cost.

The name of the newspaper Nagel works for is not identified in the script or the film, but it is irrelevant for the purposes of the story given that he represents a complete manner of understanding journalism. As Richard Armstrong puts it, "Nagel epitomizes the driven and corrupt 'eastern' ethos embodied by Tatum and his cronies."³⁸

McCardle, Jessop, and Morgan (Lewis Martin, Ken Christy, and Bert Moorhouse)

These three journalists do not receive personalized treatment, but behave as three elements of the same set: aggressive tabloid reporters, all of whom are Tatum's former co-workers from his time at the newspapers on the East Coast. The protagonist in *Ace in the Hole* cannot hide the mistrust and contempt they provoke in him, probably because he still feels like one of them. By mocking his colleagues, Tatum expresses the resentment and bitterness for a world that has abandoned him.

Their presence clearly exemplifies Wilder's contribution to one of the most common stereotypes about film journalism. If it is traditionally shown that camaraderie prevails in relationships between journalists at the expense of any other kind of personal life,³⁹ in the hands of the Viennese director, this idealized trait shows its darker side. In his films with journalists who are main characters, 37.5% deceive or betray their colleagues, while a significant 58.3% ridicule or make fun of them at some point in the plot. McCardle, Jessop and Morgan are great examples of this.

Miss Deverich (Edith Evanson)

Miss Deverich is one of the few female journalists in Billy Wilder films, where they only account for a meager 12.3% of journalists, none of them in the lead role.

In the case of Miss Deverich, her characterization resembles that of an endearing housewife whose job is writing household hints. The script describes her as "a dumpy

middle-aged society editor, dressed with provincial elegance, wearing a floppy straw hat adorned with artificial roses.”⁴⁰ She embodies ingenuousness in the face of which Tatum is unable to hide his sarcasm.

Surprising as it may seem, the character of Miss Deverich is much more akin to Wilder’s journalistic experience than it might seem at first sight. Taking advantage of the ambiguous gender identification that gave him the nickname “Billie,” the young journalist wrote household advice in the Berlin tabloid *Tempo* from September 1928 to early 1930, presenting himself as a woman. In his column, “Billie” Wilder offered tips on fashion, beauty, health, home, and food in the section “*Das Gute Aussehen – Die Gute Haltung*” (Good Appearance – Good Manners). He even managed to invent a Parisian collaborator named Raymonde Latour (Raymonde being a female name in France).⁴¹

However, the provincialism and naivety of Miss Deverich of Albuquerque has little to do with the cosmopolitanism and the sophistication of 1920s Berlin that was displayed by “Billie,” who in his columns even hinted at a lesbian relationship between his two female alter egos.

Bob Bumpas (himself)

Unlike the fictional *Sun-Bulletin* of Jacob Boot, the radio and television stations in *Ace in the Hole* do correspond to real media in Albuquerque. In the case of the KOAT, its announcer Bob Bumpas plays himself⁴² in the radio broadcast that his station makes from outside the cave. KOB-TV cameras can also be seen interviewing the sheriff, although there is no reporter from the station with a line of dialogue because those scenes, though present in the final script, were eliminated from the final film cut.⁴³

The presence of Bumpas is a rather exceptional in Wilder films, in which only 1.7% of journalists work for radio compared with the print news media for which four

out of five work. The presence of television reporters is somewhat higher, 15.8% of the total, although references to this medium are always accompanied by a note of contempt.

Although his personal characterization lacks any distinctive features, Bumpas acts to narrate and contextualize the film's story, and his words help to establish the epic tone with which the media retell the event in the public eye. In the construction of human interest stories, as shown in *Ace in the Hole*, it matters little that the truly valuable information and expert opinions are lost among anecdotes and irrelevant information. The drama of the story is what matters the most.

Indian Copy Boy (Iron Eyes Cody)

The brief appearance of the copy boy, or editorial assistant, of the *Albuquerque Sun-Bulletin* serves to establish the "Indian-ness" of New Mexico and, in passing, frames the very politically incorrect characterization of Tatum. As a "jack of all trades" in the newsroom, the Native American worker is shown performing only routine tasks. His brief presence in Wilder's screenplay contains mostly symbolic interest, since only two of the 240 media workers in Billy Wilder's films are not white.

The Front Page (1974)

The second half of Wilder's film career was marked by his long collaboration with another ex-journalist, I.A.L. Diamond. In the decline of Wilder's career, the commission to direct a remake of *The Front Page* was an opportunity to regain the public success that had been denied him and Diamond in their four previous feature films, all of them shot with Mirisch Company and United Artists.

In the same way that Wilder had worked as a journalist before joining the world of cinema as a ghostwriter, all of his collaborators on the scripts for *Ace in the Hole* and *The Front Page* knew the intricacies of the trade from within. In the case of *Ace in the*

Hole, Walter Newman had worked as a radio writer before Billy Wilder recruited him to write the first draft. The writing team was joined shortly thereafter by Lesser Samuels, who had abandoned his job in the press to try his luck in Hollywood. In the case of *The Front Page*, I.A.L. Diamond had studied journalism at Columbia University.

The real-life journalists who inspired most of the reporters who populate the seedy newsroom in *The Front Page* can be traced back to the experiences of Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur, who wrote the original version of *The Front Page* for the stage in 1928 after having worked as Chicago journalists themselves. Faced with the accusations that the devastating portrait of the profession they presented was unrealistic and distorted, Hecht and MacArthur (and later Wilder) contended that what they showed was just a watered-down version of the journalistic practices they themselves had seen and employed. Moreover, they explicitly stated in their works that the professionals they described had already begun to disappear by the late 1920s.

Viewed in historical context, the portrait of journalism in *The Front Page* is not unrealistic or implausible, but it is romantic. According to film critic Pauline Kael, the writers of the 1920s and 1930s—and Billy Wilder could doubtlessly be considered one of them—were “ambivalently nostalgic about their youth as reporters, journalists, critics, or playwrights, and they glorified the hard-drinking, cynical newspaperman.”⁴⁴

In the epilogue to the original play, Hecht and MacArthur indicated that their initial impulse was to show the contempt they harbored for what had been their profession in Chicago in the early 20th century. However, as they wrote it, they realized that their attitude was fallacious, as both longed for the years they had spent in press rooms. The play ended up being a loving tribute to their old profession and colleagues, as well as a tribute to the city of Chicago. Writing *The Front Page*, Hecht and MacArthur finally confessed, had helped them to understand that in reality they were not two playwrights

or intellectuals, but simply “two reporters in exile.”⁴⁵

Wilder’s adaptation meant bringing Hecht and MacArthur’s theatrical classic back to the big screen, which had already experienced two prior film adaptations: one directed by Lewis Milestone and starring Adolphe Menjou and Pat O’Brien as Walter Burns and Hildy Johnson (*The Front Page*, 1931), and the other being Howard Hawks’s classic *His Girl Friday* (1940), with Cary Grant as Walter Burns and Rosalind Russell as Hildy Johnson.

Although their play laid out a fictional plot, Hecht and MacArthur took real journalists whom they had met during their years working in Chicago and whose names were altered slightly⁴⁶ as the basis for the characters that populate the press room and that George Hilton identifies in detail in *The Front Page: From Theater to Reality*.⁴⁷

Hildy Johnson (Jack Lemmon)

Although the relationship between Hildy Johnson and Walter Burns is based on the one Charles MacArthur and editor Walter Howey maintained in the *Chicago Herald and Examiner* of William Randolph Hearst,⁴⁸ the character’s name pays tribute to John Hilding Johnson, a crime reporter at the newspaper. Born in Sweden in 1889, Johnson began working at the local Chicago news agency, the City News Bureau, at the age of 15, and he went to the *Chicago Herald and Examiner* in 1916 where he worked as a crime reporter until his death at 42.⁴⁹

On the big screen, the reporter Hildy Johnson embodies all the virtues and defects Wilder and films attribute to journalists, especially their passion for the profession and their inability to reconcile work and personal life. The screenplay by Wilder and Diamond characterizes him as “a middle-aged leprechaun, with a twinkle in his eye and a jauntiness in his walk.”⁵⁰

In *The Front Page*, the conflict in the main plot is none other than the choice

Hildy has to make between marrying his fiancée Peggy and leaving journalism or staying with his editor Walter Burns as a journalist in Chicago. The sweet emotional relationship between the reporter and his fiancée, in contrast to the sordid sexual relationship between Tatum and Lorraine (the trapped man's wife) in *Ace in the Hole*, is displayed at all times as full of love, but it simply lacks the strength to withstand Burns' ruthless possessive instinct and Hildy's overflowing journalistic passion.⁵¹ In Wilder's screenplays, 41.7% of journalists at some point in the plot refer to their financial problems, while 54.2% call their work engrossing.

By turning Hildy back into a man with a stroke of his pen and ignoring the gender transformation that the character had undergone in Howard Hawks's *His Girl Friday*, Wilder erased the central romantic plot (in which Cary Grant was struggling to get back his ex-wife) and returned it to a purely journalistic plot, in which the editor-in-chief of the *Examiner* wants to keep his best reporter and friend at all costs, a relationship stronger than any marriage.

Walter Burns (Walter Matthau)

The unscrupulous editor-in-chief Walter Howey is, without doubt, the character who has gained the most prominence in subsequent adaptations of the play. In the first edition of the theatrical script by Hecht and MacArthur in 1928, Walter Burns did not appear on stage until the climax of the second act, or two-thirds into the plot. In the last revision of the work made by the authors in 1950, the presence of Burns had expanded and his off-stage commentary was heard in the auditorium during the first two acts. The film adaptations, not limited by the need to use the press room as the only setting, manage to get the most out of his magnetic personality, and despite the fact that his presence remains concentrated in the third act, Wilder also includes him in two long sequences at the beginning of the film.

In the characterization they make about Walter Burns in the script for *The Front Page*, Wilder and Diamond point out that there are no longer editor-in-chiefs like him in the press, which is both “a shame and a blessing. He operates in the great tradition of Machiavelli, Rasputin and Count Dracula. No ethics, no scruples and no private life—a fanatic, oblivious of ulcers and lack of sleep, in his constant pursuit of tomorrow’s headlines.”⁵² This does not differ greatly from the devastating characterization Hecht and MacArthur made of the character in the original play:

Beneath a dapper and very citizen-like exterior lurks a hobgoblin, perhaps the Devil himself. But if Mr. Burns is the Devil he is a very naive one. He is a devil with neither point nor purpose to him—an undignified Devil hatched for a bourgeois Halloween. In less hyperbolic language, Mr. Burns is that product of thoughtless, pointless, nerve-drumming amorality that is the Boss Journalist—the licensed eavesdropper, troublemaker, abominator and Town Snitch, misnamed The Press.⁵³

Walter Burns shares with Hildy Johnson his absolute dedication to journalism and inexhaustible repertoire of tricks—all of them of dubious integrity—that he displays to achieve his objectives. Unlike the film adaptations of Milestone and Hawks that portray Burns as elegant and impeccably dressed⁵⁴ and in which he is played by two symbols of elegance in Adolphe Menjou and Cary Grant, Wilder’s Walter Burns is a scruffy, lanky character (in line with the usual performances of Walter Matthau). He has completely renounced his personal life and has made the workplace his home.

To create Walter Burns, Hecht and MacArthur used Walter Crawford Howey as a reference, editor-in-chief of Hearst’s *Herald and Examiner* and possessor of a legendary aura in Chicago journalism.⁵⁵ The character's name, however, is taken from one of his colleagues in the twenties, Walter Noble Burns from the *Tribune*, whose personality and work as a journalist had nothing to do with the peculiarities of Howey.⁵⁶

In the cinematic representation of journalists, you can hardly find an embodiment

of professional cynicism like that of Walter Burns. Unlike the exemplary editor-in-chief of the *Sun-Bulletin*, Jacob Boot, who gives the moral counterpoint to the characterization of Tatum as a rotten apple in the profession, Walter Burns in *The Front Page* represents the most skilled and capable practitioner of a frantic bygone era of the press.

In this regard, the big difference between the two films that Wilder dedicated to journalism is that while *Ace in the Hole* shows the individual behavior of a journalist, *The Front Page* reflects an institutionalized procedure, a way of understanding journalism that can be extended to all members in the press room with Burns standing out among them all.⁵⁷ Perhaps because of this, 45.8% of Wilder's journalists show explicit traits of cynical behavior.

Wilson (Noam Pitlik)

In *The Front Page*, Wilson is a reporter for the *American*, Hearst's evening paper in Chicago. Despite his low importance in the plot, the presence of the *American* to complement the morning *Examiner* conforms perfectly to the historical period.

When writing their adaptation, Wilder and Diamond were well aware of the nature and role of the newspaper, as they added a line of dialogue for Wilson in which the reporter laments having to chase an escaped criminal while his boss has organized a dance in San Simeon with Marion Davies. This is a clear reference to William Randolph Hearst, to whom the original play and its earlier film adaptations curiously do not make any explicit reference, despite his being the undisputed star of the American press of the early 20th century.⁵⁸

Endicott and Schwartz (Lou Frizzell and Herb Edelman)

While tracking the real journalists who inspired the play, Hilton found no clear equivalent in real life for the reporters at the *Chicago Post* and the *Chicago Daily News*.⁵⁹ Both lack a specific treatment in the play and show a less elaborate profile than

some of their newsroom colleagues, although they share the fact of being the only married reporters in the press room, something they lament on more than one occasion.

They contrast with the rest of their colleagues in Billy Wilder screenplays, in which only 20.8% of the journalists who are main characters are married, compared with 29.2% who are single and 4.2 % who are separated or divorced. In the rest of the cases, there is no hint in the scripts about their marital status.

Murphy (Charles Durning)

The play by Hecht and MacArthur presents the *Chicago Evening Journal* reporter as "the hardest hard-boiled."⁶⁰ And indeed, he meets that definition perfectly, showing himself as the most aggressive reporter in the press room with a leadership that seems to stand out among his peers. In Wilder's films, this aggressiveness is one of the characteristic traits of journalists, as 58.3% of his reporters show their impudence, while 29.2% even resort to physical violence.

After the premiere of the play, the real Jimmy Murphy—whom Hecht had met in his career as a reporter at the *Journal*⁶¹—published a letter in the *Chicago Evening Journal* stating that he did not identify with the infamous, foul-mouthed character named after him, though he added sarcastically that he was not angry with Hecht and MacArthur, but rather only hurt because they had chosen Hildy Johnson as the protagonist and not him.⁶²

McHugh (Dick O'Neill)

In his version of *The Front Page*, Wilder explored the play's link with real journalists and used the real name of the journalist who inspired the character (his name had been transformed into McCue in the play and the two prior film adaptations). The script places him as a reporter for the City News Bureau, the local Chicago news agency that was considered a training school for young journalists where they were taught, in

exchange for a lower salary, to cover routine news.⁶³

Leroy “Buddy” McHugh always seemed delighted with his presence in the play and, as the only survivor of the journalists who had originally inspired the story, he held a place of honor at the showing of Wilder’s adaptation for veterans of the Chicago press on December 21, 1974.⁶⁴

Bensinger (David Wayne)

Without a doubt, Bensinger is the most disparate journalist in the Chicago courthouse press room. In *The Front Page*, Wilder takes the character’s mocking a bit further than the original play and, where Hecht and MacArthur portrayed the *Tribune* reporter as a hypochondriac obsessed with hygiene, the Viennese director gives him a caricature with a stereotyped portrait of effeminacy. His description in the film’s script summarizes, in a purely Wilder style, this characterization: “There is one thing he’s got in common with Oscar Wilde—and it’s not his wit.”⁶⁵

Bensinger’s character is the journalistic and personal counterpoint to the rest of his colleagues in the press room. He does not match his press room colleagues in the way he dresses, nor in his manners (or lack thereof), nor in a penchant for drinking and poker. Visually in the composition of the scene, he does not even share the same space as the others, as his higher ambitions are manifested by his large desk that faces away from the central tables the other reporters whirl around.

Caricatured to the extreme, Bensinger largely represents the type of journalist that others despise and mock, the opposite of the street reporter they represent—visceral and self-taught. The *Tribune* he works for, more distinguished than the popular newspapers of his colleagues, was a leader of the morning press in Chicago in the twenties and had a strong rivalry with the *Herald and Examiner*.

Hecht says in *Gaily, Gaily* that the character was based on Roy C. Benzinger

from the *Tribune*, but with the neurasthenic features of LeRoy “Spike” Hennessey from the *American*, who was only interested in retiring to Florida and who had no desire for fame.⁶⁶ Hilton, however, identifies him with Albert F. Baenziger, the crime reporter at the *American* between 1906 and 1952.⁶⁷

Kruger (Allen Garfield)

The reporter from the *Chicago Journal of Commerce* undergoes a major transformation at the hands of Wilder. In the original play, Hecht and MacArthur defined him as a “chronic slacker” who lounged around the courthouse press room, playing a banjo and humming.⁶⁸ Kruger showed a minimal interest in his work and what happened around him at all times. Milestone’s adaptation faithfully followed this characterization, while Hawks recast the characters of Kruger and Schwartz in *His Girl Friday* and changed them into a new reporter, Sanders. Wilder brings Kruger back for his screenplay, but equated him to other journalists, straying away from his status as comic relief and his caricatured profile as a lazy reporter.

Duffy (John Furlong)

Wilder’s version of *The Front Page* increases the on-screen prominence of the right hand of Walter Burns in the newsroom at the *Examiner*. In the original play by Hecht and MacArthur and in Milestone’s film adaptation, Duffy has no voice and does not appear on the scene, but is simply a contact person the journalists at the *Examiner* refer to when they phone the newspaper editor. Wilder, meanwhile, returns to the incorporation of Duffy by Howard Hawks in *His Girl Friday*, making him the right hand of Burns.

In the 1950 edition of the play, there is an explicit mention to Duffy Cornell, who becomes one of the few characters whose real name remains unchanged in the work.⁶⁹ Roscoe Conkling “Duffy” Cornell, editor-in-chief of the *Chicago Herald and*

Examiner, had a remarkable journalistic career, always linked to Hearst's newspapers.⁷⁰

In the adaptation by Wilder and Diamond, strengthening Duffy's presence goes along with the deletion of one of the most distinctive characters from the original play, the undisguised gangster "Diamond" Louie, who acted as the shadowy executive arm of the machinations of Walter Burns. His presence in the play reproduced the atmosphere of fierce rivalry among the seven big newspapers that were published in the Chicago metropolitan area during the first two decades of the 20th century. Their circulation wars came to acquire criminal and bloody ties at the hands of thugs hired by newspapers themselves at a time when the press not only had been close to the violence that reigned in the city, but also had actively participated in it.⁷¹

Rudy Keppler (John Korkes)

The character of Rudy Keppler is the main novelty introduced by Wilder and Diamond in the Chicago courthouse press room. From the plot's point of view, his arrival in the press room is not just a ploy to awaken Hildy's professional jealousy of Walter Burns—and to give a love interest to Bensinger—but it also solves one of the gaps in the play's plot, since it seems inconceivable that a such an important newspaper as the *Examiner*, after Hildy's resignation, would not send anyone to cover the execution of an inmate.

Billy Wilder also introduces Rudy Keppler in a press room full of veteran reporters in order to embody some of the flaws of novice journalists who, despite having received a university education, lack some of the talents truly necessary for the profession. Faced with the skeptical attitude of his hardened colleagues, the naive Keppler lacks the critical spirit regarding official information sources and is unable to identify what is really important in an event. In the struggle between the corrupt and unscrupulous politicians (who try to disguise their actions with an aura of respectability

in the face of public opinion) and the skeptical journalists, Keppler appears as an easily manipulated toy. In a world of wolves, he is a harmless lamb.

Other Media Workers

Hedda Hopper (herself) – Sunset Boulevard

Within the particular newsrooms staffed by journalists in Wilder films, Hedda Hopper is incorporated as one of the most unusual cases, since in *Sunset Boulevard* the actress and columnist plays herself in a very brief cameo of 10 seconds in which she has time to appear as a determined journalist whose aggressive ways and commanding tone are reminiscent of Chuck Tatum in *Ace in the Hole*.

Hopper's presence in the film joins the cast of celebrity cameos who play themselves throughout the film, but above all she serves to characterize the powerful gossip and celebrity journalism of the time.⁷² Along with Louella Parsons, Hopper was known as the "Queen of Hollywood," and her columns and comments stood out for the bitterness and occasional sadism with which she treated stars. Her appearance portrays media that forget their old idols, but fall fiercely upon their prey whenever it gets involved in sticky situations.⁷³ She represents journalism, in short, that was sensationalistic, aggressive, and a lover of scandals, and that was made for the public that *Sunset Boulevard* protagonist Joe Gillis called "the heartless so-and-sos."

Wilder and Brackett were well aware of this image and tried to reflect it even more crudely on screen. Hopper's collaboration in *Sunset Boulevard* had real star appeal, which according to Sam Staggs, "reveals the terrible power that the gossip gargoyles [Hopper and Parsons] had in Hollywood."⁷⁴

E. Lansing Ray (Maurice Manson) – The Spirit of St. Louis

In what ended up being the least personal work among his films, Wilder

transferred the transatlantic flight of Charles Lindbergh to the screen, faithfully following the autobiography *The Spirit of St. Louis*, for which the aviator won the Pulitzer Prize in non-fiction in 1954.⁷⁵

As revealed in the book, from the very beginning of his project to cross the Atlantic alone, Charles Lindbergh thought he would need the cooperation of the press. He said that the first company he contacted to promote his adventure was the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*.⁷⁶ Its editor-in-chief was not impressed by the promotional value of adventure and did not want to be associated with such a risky venture: “The *Post-Dispatch* [as Lindbergh recounted the answer he received] wouldn’t think of taking part in such a hazardous flight. To fly across the Ocean with one pilot and a single-engine plane! We have our reputation to consider. We couldn’t possibly be associated with such a venture.”⁷⁷

The refusals he received did not discourage the aviator, who finally managed to gain the support of a group of businessmen in the city for his project, including the owner of the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, E. Lansing Ray. In *The Spirit of St. Louis*, Wilder recreates the meeting between Lindbergh and sponsors for the trip, in which the protagonist trades a few brief lines with the journalist. Interestingly, the script puts the same words in the mouth of E. Lansing Ray that his competitor, the *Post-Dispatch*, used to reject the project: “You must understand, Mr. Lindbergh, that before we help you in the press, you have to be sure that we are not financing a suicide.”

The opinion of Ray reaffirms the position of the press when faced with events that they use to heat up the passions of their readers, who always have to have a happy ending that does not disappoint expectations. In this sense, the owner of the *Globe-Democrat* endorsed the reasoning of Chuck Tatum when Tatum was faced with the imminent death of Leo Minosa in *Ace in the Hole*: “When you get people steamed up

like this, don't ever make suckers out of them. I don't want to hand them a dead man." In the brief appearance of the editor-in-chief of the *Globe-Democrat*, no other journalistic trait is shown.

Untermeier (Til Kiwe) – One, Two, Three

In *One, Two, Three*, Wilder adapted the spirited play by Ferenc Molnar to the big screen 35 years after having seen it in the Josefstadt Theatre starring the famous comic actor Max Pallenberg.⁷⁸ The Viennese director shifts the action to the offices at Coca-Cola in the West Berlin of the Cold War, where the daughter of one of the company executives has secretly married a communist from the East, and C.R. MacNamara (James Cagney) tries to remedy the situation by passing the communist off as the noble son of a count who works at the company's plant in Berlin.

In the midst of preparations, when C. R. MacNamara wildly shoots off a whirlwind of orders, a reporter shows up on the scene, Untermeier from the *Tageblatt*, whom the executive tries to bribe to not publish the information. The hurt reporter rejects the offer: "Maybe in America your journalists are for sale, but here in Germany...".

But all journalists seem to have a price, and a chance meeting reveals the journalist's past as an officer in the SS, which causes him to fold quickly and publish information in the exact terms that interest MacNamara. The lack of ethics is undoubtedly one of the characteristic attributes of the journalists in Wilder's screenplays. Their behavior can be labeled in three out of four cases as hardly or not at all ethical.

With the name of the fictional newspaper Untermeier works for, Wilder most likely pays homage to the former *Berliner Tageblatt* or *BT*. The newspaper, created by the Jewish publisher and philanthropist Rudolf Mosse in 1871 and one of the main liberal newspapers in Germany, was recognized in the 1920s and early 1930s for its

hostility to National Socialism.

Harry Hinkle (Jack Lemmon) – The Fortune Cookie

In the film *The Fortune Cookie*, Harry Hinkle (Jack Lemmon) works as a CBS television cameraman, though the plot quickly departs from the field of media to focus on Harry's brother-in-law's plots concerning doctors and an insurance company and on Harry's relationship with a football player who had accidentally knocked him over on the sideline during a game.⁷⁹

The beginning of *The Fortune Cookie* shows the technical deployment of a television broadcast in great detail, a description of the media production process that Wilder himself would revisit years later for the start of *The Front Page*. Wilder, meanwhile, did not miss the opportunity offered by the film to launch a small but vitriolic depth charge against the TV medium. When the player runs over the wretched cameraman, the game is interrupted, but the announcer encourages viewers to stay tuned: "I hope it isn't anything serious. And now, while there's a time-out in the field, let's take a look at the accident again on the CBS exclusive stop-action camera."

Victor and Celia Clooney (Jack Lemmon and Paula Prentiss) – Buddy Buddy

For what ended up being his last film—"If I had known, I wouldn't have directed it," he later admitted⁸⁰—Wilder adapted the 1973 French film comedy *L'émmerdeur*, which had been directed by Edouard Molinaro and written by Francis Veber and which had starred Lino Ventura and Jacques Brel.

With Jack Lemmon and Walter Matthau as main characters, the American adaptation of the film chronicles the chance meeting between insecure and affable Victor Clooney (Lemmon), who tries to get his wife back, and Trabucco (Matthau), a stone-cold hit man whom the Mafia has hired to assassinate a trial witness.

Jacques Brel plays a shirt salesman in the original work, while in the Wilder

version the Clooney couple work at CBS, with the husband in the legal department—“what you might call censorship”—and the wife in the research department for *60 Minutes* with Mike Wallace. The couple had been happy until one day she begins to investigate Dr. Hugo Zuckerbrot and his Institute for Sexual Fulfillment, and suddenly she abandons everything. The female journalist—no matter how strong, capable and independent she is—exits the profession after falling for her exclusive story. When Victor visits to beg her to come back, she is shown fully engrossed in her life at an institute that is more like a comic cult. The only journalist in Wilder’s screenplays with specifically research tasks leaves everything for a charlatan. In stereotypes present in his work, journalism for Wilder is, of course, a man’s game.

Conclusion

Taking into account leading, secondary, and minor characters, the 27 most relevant journalist characters in Billy Wilder’s screenplays show the worst aspects of film stereotypes about the profession. Journalists are portrayed as uneducated men with drinking problems. They live alone, engrossed by the demands of their work and beset by a lack of money. False camaraderie governs behavior among colleagues, and their aggression and cynicism are reflected in their impudence, which sometimes even escalates into physical violence.

Wilder’s films portray with special attention the uses and techniques of tabloids and the sensationalistic press, where the prevailing unethical behavior of professionals and their tendency to manipulate information and increase readership at all costs become the essential motivations for journalists. This potentially may reinforce negative public perceptions of the press.

However, this analysis of Wilder’s films also shows that the depicted situations

and characters are not purely fictional, since close links to actual journalists and historical events can be found. The director's own career as a journalist in Vienna and Berlin—and also Hecht and MacArthur's journalistic careers in Chicago—were full of situations analogous to those Wilder later reflected on the big screen. Thus, nostalgia for his former profession finds its way into Billy Wilder's cinema through an obsessive vision. No matter how crude the terms are in which the press is shown, a latent romantic view couches Wilder's portrayal of journalists.

Not coincidentally, Wilder's films about journalism are also where he most harshly criticizes the venality and corruption of the police and political power. In this context, the corruption of political power elevates the journalistic profession. Despite the satirical tone that the representation of journalists takes on in much of Wilder's work, all their sins are purged when in their relentless task of monitoring power they are able to expose the abuses of the authorities.

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- ⁴¹ Hutter and Kamolz, *Billie Wilder*, 117.
- ⁴² This is according to the 1951 *Broadcasting/Telecasting Yearbook* (Washington, DC: Broadcasting Publications, 1951), 206.
- ⁴³ Wilder, Samuels, and Newman, *Ace in the Hole*, 85.
- ⁴⁴ Pauline Kael, "Raising Kane," in *The Citizen Kane Book*, by Pauline Kael, Herman J. Mankiewicz, and Orson Welles (New York: Limelight, 1984), 25. See also Matthew C. Ehrlich, *Journalism in the Movies* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 20-44.
- ⁴⁵ Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur, *The Front Page* (New York: Covici-Friede, 1928), 187-188.

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- ⁴⁶ Doug Fetherling, *The Five Lives of Ben Hecht* (Toronto: Lester and Orpen, 1977), 71-72.
- ⁴⁷ George W. Hilton, *The Front Page: From Theater to Reality* (Hanover, NH: Smith and Kraus, 2002).
- ⁴⁸ Ben Hecht, *Charlie. The Improbable Life and Times of Charles MacArthur* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), 49.
- ⁴⁹ Hilton, *The Front Page: From Theater to Reality*, 44-45.
- ⁵⁰ Billy Wilder and I.A.L. Diamond, *The Front Page* [revised final screenplay], 1974, 11.
- ⁵¹ Simón Peña-Fernández, *Caballeros de la prensa: El periodismo en el cine de Billy Wilder* (Leioa: University of the Basque Country), 321.
- ⁵² Wilder and Diamond, *The Front Page*, 99.
- ⁵³ Hecht and MacArthur, *The Front Page*, 144-145.
- ⁵⁴ For a study about journalists' clothing in film, see Norma Fay Green, "Press Dress: The Beige Brigade of Movie Journalists Outdoors," in *Beyond the Stars: The Material World in American Popular Film*, by Paul Loukides and Linda K. Fuller (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1993), 65-76.
- ⁵⁵ Hecht, *Charlie*, 49.
- ⁵⁶ Hilton, *The Front Page: From Theater to Reality*, 46.
- ⁵⁷ Colpart, *Billy Wilder*, 110.
- ⁵⁸ Simón Peña-Fernández, "Primera plana de Billy Wilder: La nostalgia de los periodistas en el exilio," *Estudios sobre el mensaje periodístico* 18.2 (2012): 917-918.
- ⁵⁹ Hilton, *The Front Page: From Theater to Reality*, 40-41.
- ⁶⁰ Hecht and MacArthur, *The Front Page*, 5.
- ⁶¹ Ben Hecht, *A Child of the Century* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), 130-131.
- ⁶² "Mr. Murphy Defends His Good Name," *Chicago Journal*, November 27, 1927.
- ⁶³ George Murray, *The Madhouse on Madison Street* (Chicago: Follett, 1965), 23.
- ⁶⁴ Norma Lee Browning, "Mr. Front Page Is Alive and Well," *Chicago Tribune*, August 7, 1974.
- ⁶⁵ Wilder and Diamond, *The Front Page*, 5.
- ⁶⁶ Ben Hecht, *Gaily, Gaily* (New York: Doubleday, 1963), 189.

⁶⁷ Hilton, *The Front Page: From Theater to Reality*, 39.

⁶⁸ Hecht and MacArthur, *The Front Page*, 6.

⁶⁹ After the debut, Cornell begged Hecht and MacArthur to change the character's name because of the celebrity status caused by his mentions in the play. In fact, in the performances in Chicago, they used another surname to refer to the character: "They are now addressing the unseen character heretofore called Duffy Cornell by another name; and Mr. Cornell, who might have been a second Mrs. Feitelbaum, is by the change returned to what he regards as the equivalent of private life." See "Theater," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 4, 1928, 43. (The original name was never completely removed from *The Front Page* and was given to another character in the adaptations of Hawks and Wilder.)

⁷⁰ Hilton, *The Front Page: From Theater to Reality*, 129.

⁷¹ Murray, *The Madhouse on Madison Street*, 43.

⁷² Bonnie Brennen, "Malice in Wonderland: Hedda Hopper and Louella Parsons in Hollywood," *The Image of Journalist in Popular Culture*, 2005, online at <http://www.ijpc.org/uploads/files/Hedda%20Hopper%20and%20Louella%20Parsons%20--%20Gossip%20Columnists.pdf>

⁷³ Jennifer Frost, *Hedda Hopper's Hollywood: Celebrity Gossip and American Conservatism* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 1.

⁷⁴ Sam Staggs, *Close-up on Sunset Boulevard: Billy Wilder, Norma Desmond and the Dark Hollywood Dream* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2002), 328. Wilder would make another reference to the queens of gossip and their power in *Fedora* (1978), a film with many similarities to *Sunset Boulevard*.

⁷⁵ Charles A. Lindbergh, *The Spirit of St. Louis* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953).

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 23, 109.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁷⁸ Hutter and Kamolz, *Billie Wilder*, 9.

⁷⁹ Harry's wife, Sandy (Judy West), who had left him but returns when she thinks she can make a fortune off the insurance resulting from the accident, shares a background with the neighbor in Wilder's movie *The Seven Year Itch* as a model for TV commercials.

⁸⁰ Chandler, *Nobody's Perfect*, 301.