

Representation of journalists in Samuel Fuller's newspaper films: *Park Row* (1952), *Shock Corridor* (1963) and *The Madonna and the Dragon* (1990)

Representación del periodista en las newspaper films de Samuel Fuller: La voz de la primera plana (1952), *Corredor sin retorno* (1963) y *Tinikling ou 'La madonne et le dragon'* (1990)



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Abstract:

The representation of journalism on the big screen, the origins of which are to be found in the very birth of cinema, has evolved along with the medium itself, giving rise to very different portrayals of journalists both in those films that give an indisputable centrality to journalism and in others where journalists' work figures merely as a backdrop. Regarding the former, termed 'newspaper films,' these are movies which, despite their relationship with other genres, allow a closer and supposedly detailed look at the journalistic genre. This paper examines

Resumen:

La representación del periodismo en la gran pantalla, cuyos orígenes se hallan en el propio nacimiento del cinematógrafo, ha ido evolucionando con el propio medio, dando lugar a muy distintos retratos de los periodistas fílmicos tanto en películas que otorgan una centralidad indiscutible a lo periodístico como en aquellas otras que lo utilizan como telón de fondo. Respecto a las primeras, denominadas newspaper films, se trata de obras que, a pesar de su puesta en relación con otros géneros, permiten una mirada más próxima y pretendidamente minuciosa al

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the three films about journalism that, in the extensive filmography of the American filmmaker Samuel Fuller, have the fourth estate and its practitioners at the heart of their plots: *Park Row* (1952), *Shock Corridor* (1963), and *The Madonna and the Dragon* (1990). Starting from the hypothesis that there is a heterogeneous representation of the journalists who embody the lead roles, the aim is to analyse the journalistic profiles represented therein, as well as the values, anti-values and ethical codes which determine these profiles.

Keywords:

Cinema; journalism; newspaper films; Samuel Fuller; content analysis.

propio género periodístico. El presente artículo examina las tres películas periodísticas que, en la extensa filmografía del cineasta estadounidense Samuel Fuller, han convertido el cuarto poder y a quienes lo ejercen en indiscutibles protagonistas de sus tramas: La voz de la primera plana (Park Row, 1952), Corredor sin retorno (Shock Corridor, 1963) y Tinikling ou 'La madonne et le dragon' (The Madonna and the Dragon, 1990). Partiendo de la hipótesis de que existe una representación heterogénea de los periodistas que encarnan sus personajes protagonistas, se persigue analizar los perfiles periodísticos representados en ellas, así como los valores, contravalores y códigos éticos que los determinan.

Palabras clave:

Cine; periodismo; newspaper films; Samuel Fuller; análisis de contenido.

1. Introduction

Cinema and journalism have not only co-existed since the very first days of cinema but forged a lasting relationship in the medium of film even before cinema was cinema. The first representation of a news professional in a medium based on the projection of images using a magic lantern occurred in the so-called pre-cinema, specifically with the 1894 picture play¹ *Miss Jerry* (Novoa-Jaso et al., 2019; Osorio, 2009), in which a woman begins a career as a journalist to help her father financially and ends up forming a romantic relationship with the editor of the newspaper where she works. This first manifestation of the world of the press would be followed, as cinematographic works and not creations for the magic lantern prior to the Lumière brothers' invention, by the journalism-themed short films *War Correspondents* (William Paley, 1898) and *The Flight of Reporters: The Dreyfus Affair* (Georges Méliès, 1899).

After the initial impulse that these short films supposed, an enormous diversity of film productions has built up a great *corpus* of works in which journalists have a leading role –the so-called ‘newspaper films’ (Langman, 1998)– or, failing that, where journalism serves as the background for stories belonging to genres as diverse as film noir, war or drama (McNair, 2010). This is a universe made up of films ranging from the silent short film *Terrible Teddy, The Grizzly King* (Edwin S. Porter, 1901), the *Fantômas* film series (Louis Feuillade, 1913-14) or the Buster Keaton comedy *The Cameraman* (Edward Sedgwick, 1928), to others such as *The Front Page* (Lewis Milestone, 1931), *Foreign Correspondent* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1940), *The Big Carnival* (Billy Wilder, 1951), *Advise and Consent* (Otto Preminger, 1962), *The Parallax View* (Alan J. Pakula, 1974), *Missing* (Constantin Costa-Gavras, 1982), *The Bonfire of the Vanities* (Brian De Palma, 1990), *Zodiac* (David Fincher, 2007), *The Post* (Steven Spielberg, 2017), or *She Said* (Maria Schrader, 2022).

1 Picture play, the invention of pre-cinema pioneer Alexander Black, allowed photographic slides, accompanied by live narration, to be projected on a screen with the illusion of movement, making it possible to follow the story the images were telling (Remshardt, 2004).

The multiplicity of creations of this nature has allowed very disparate perspectives on journalism to coexist in the history of cinema and, as a consequence, very heterogeneous representations of journalists, since “while there are plots in which reporters are impeccable professionals, many others show news people who are far from exemplary” (Tello Díaz, 2016: 10). These issues have been addressed in the academic field, paying attention to both the portrayals and projections of journalism on the big screen (Bunoyl, 2017; De Felipe & Sánchez Navarro, 2000; Santillán-Arruz, 2018; Ness, 2020; San José-De la Rosa & Gil-Torres, 2022; Serrano-Martín, 2022), as well as the construction of journalists’ profiles in audiovisual fiction (Ehrlich & Saltzman, 2015; Bezunartea et al., 2008; Tello Díaz, 2011; San José-De la Rosa, 2019; San José-De la Rosa et al., 2020; San José-De la Rosa et al., 2022) and journalistic ethics in the cinematographic field (Good, 2007; Bezunartea et al., 2007a; Good & Dillon, 2002; Serrano-Martín et al., 2022).

Regardless of whether the profession has been represented as something primary or secondary in each film, these varied approaches show that, when talking about newspaper films, “journalism is unquestionably the subject of the work; the source of the dramatic tensions and narrative structures which fuel the plot; the focus of the dilemmas and challenges driving the characters” (McNair, 2010: 23). From the representation of journalists in the first silent films as a kind of independent detective, to their definition in more recent films as a cog in the media machinery (Saltzman, 2002; Bezunartea et al., 2007a), big screen news professionals have had to “assume the enormous responsibility that comes with the dissemination of information in the delicate relationship between society-government-power groups” (Santillán-Arruz, 2018: 96). Consequently, the reporter is an interesting profile in cinematographic fiction, since it allows the confrontation between good and evil to be represented, generating meaning through contrasts or dualities, in stories in which citizens’ rights are at stake (San José-De la Rosa, 2019; Ehrlich, 2006).

When proposing the conception of journalism films as a genre (Langman, 1998; Good, 2007; Osorio, 2009; De Felipe & Sánchez Navarro, 2000; Arts, 2022), some of their advocates recognise that, while it is true that they cannot strictly be limited to a pure genre, there is a close relationship between them all, offering “a range of narrative options which is far more vigorous and flexible than any other” (Rossell, 1975: 14). It is precisely this versatility and ability to deal with universal themes from different generic conceptions that has allowed it, through its various stages, to address the contradictions apparent both at the heart of journalism and in culture, favouring a better chance for “starting a dialogue about ethics than finishing it” (Good, 2007: 5).

1.1. Profiles of journalists on the big screen

The diversity of big screen representations of professional journalists mentioned above is especially interesting to the extent that many of them start out from a real event to then fictionalise similar situations and, consequently, film journalists end up sharing many traits with their flesh and blood peers (Mera-Fernández, 2008; Bezunartea et al., 2007b). Influenced by the commercial policy of the medium they work for, which conditions their ethics and freedom of action, the characters often put their professional career and personal integrity on the line (Serrano-Martín et al., 2022; Bezunartea et al., 2010), which gives rise to a great diversity of profiles that, far from being limited to the hero-villain dichotomy (McNair, 2010; Ehrlich & Saltzman, 2015), frequently offers complex portrayals of those responsible for exercising the power of the fourth estate.

When classifying big screen profiles of journalists, the taxonomy employed by Novoa-Jaso et al. (2019) is particularly relevant, grouping them in a complex typology constructed upon previous cataloguing carried out by some of the subject's chief scholars (Barris, 1976; Langman, 1998; Saltzman, 2002; McNair, 2010). The types of journalists that they establish, based on the synthesis of the various prior approaches, are the following:

- the newshound, or aggressive crime buster, who performs detective work, sometimes resorting to the use of force;
- the journalist as a human being, defined by internal conflicts related to social causes;
- the sob sister or news hen, a female journalist who, despite a lack of support, champions social causes, frequently with positive results;
- the journalist as crusader, normally embodied by an idealistic editor or editor-in-chief, acting in the defence of democracy;
- the reporter as a foreign or war correspondent, who gets involved in other people's realities to end up making them his/her own and trying to solve conflicts;
- the editor with great journalistic instincts, typified as a chain-smoking, moody veteran;
- the media owner, defined as a villain who makes self-interested use of corporations;
- the scandalmonger, who is interested in spreading rumours;
- the anonymous reporter, who moves among the masses and takes advantage of the tools of his/her trade to mould public opinion;
- the journalist as watchdog, who watches over the powers and the powerful;
- the first-hand witness, who is present at the events and has information that may be threatening;
- the journalist as an artist, personified in novelists or writers;
- other villains of the profession, such as rogue, con man, or king-maker, who allies himself with the powerful

All these profiles are defined by a series of values and anti-values that condition their consideration as characters leaning towards the heroic or the villainous. They can be classified based on a series of features that, following Quirós (2015), are of special importance in the construction of the journalist's profile. Thus, the following can be identified as values:

- professional integrity (independence, freedom, and honesty);
- defence of freedom of information;
- service of the common good;

- professional dignity and loyalty to the profession;
- intellectual responsibility, tolerance, and moderation in controversies;
- social and professional responsibility / respect for institutions (democratic, judicial, and journalistic)

In contrast, the following stand out as anti-values:

- disloyalty / lack of solidarity;
- lack of professional and personal dignity;
- corruption;
- blackmail;
- lying / manipulation / lack of rigour / sensationalism

Lastly, in close relation to these values, it is vital to pay attention to the ethical codes that define journalists' best *praxis*, the work of Banning (2020) being important here for its concision and for offering the option of extrapolation to an international context, listing the following:

- responsibility;
- press freedom;
- independence;
- sincerity, truthfulness, and accuracy;
- impartiality;
- fair play;
- decency

These different categorisations can be considered to be enduring as they correspond both to archetypal and universal ethical and moral traits, fundamental for the configuration of the methodological apparatus explained below, they make it possible to approach profiles of journalists both in films of the past and the future. Consequently, they also form an extremely useful theoretical *corpus* to address the works of a filmmaker as singular as Samuel Fuller, on whom the following section focuses.

1.2. Samuel Fuller: from reporter to filmmaker

The figure of the American filmmaker Samuel Fuller is both complex and controversial, since he is a creator who defined his films as front-page material, thus alluding to his taste for images that embrace the “forcefulness and urgency of newspaper headlines”, and to their being charged with “a spirit of synthesis, extreme stylisation and a graphic aggressiveness typical of

comics" (Guarner, 1993: 6). Truly prolific, he left a legacy of 23 feature films and a dozen television films as a director, a score of scripts and plots –be they credited or uncredited–, twelve novels and over twenty appearances as an actor (Casas, 2001), these traits define the majority of his works as a screenwriter, novelist, director and occasional actor.

However, before becoming a fundamental figure in the history of the seventh art, he started out in the fourth estate, as he began as a newspaper seller and copy-boy for the *New York Journal* at the age of thirteen and, just four years later, was a crime reporter for the *New York Evening Graphic*. He worked as a freelance investigative journalist covering the worst aspects of Depression-era America and gained something of a reputation as a writer of pulp novels (Billington, 2018; Polan, 2000). His first novel *Burn, Baby Burn* was published in 1937, a year after writing his first script for the film *Hats Off*, directed by Boris Petroff. However, it was not long before he was called up, having to go, in the words of MacKay (2022), from the front page to the front line, fighting in the Second World War with the First Infantry Division, called the "Big Red One," and being decorated with a Bronze Star, a Silver Star and a Purple Heart (Sanjek, 1994; Narboni, 2022).

Upon his return, he began directing films in Hollywood, making his debut in 1949 with the western *I Shot Jesse James*, going on to make more than twenty films for the big screen that address all types of film genres and among which are titles as renowned as the *film noir* movies *Underworld USA* (1961) or *Pickup on South Street* (1953); the dramas *The Naked Kiss* (1964) and *White Dog* (1982); the westerns *Forty Guns* (1957) and *Yuma* (1957); the war movies *Fixed Bayonets!* (1951) and *The Steel Helmet* (1951); and the newspaper films *Park Row* (1952) and *Shock Corridor* (1963). Nonetheless, it should be noted that, as Latorre (1975: 21) indicates, "if Fuller's films are part of genre cinema, they deviate from it [...] because they openly elude its imagery and conventions, they do not allow themselves to be neutralized and do not sit well with mythification".

Fuller applied the narrator's art to his cinema work, merging his journalistic, novelistic and scriptwriting facets (Narboni, 2022), demonstrating that he was "capable of dreaming up ideas from any material, no matter how demeaned it may be, to create a personal universe of reluctant classicism but, at the same time, attentive to the turbulent changes of the times" (Casas, 1990: 64). His training as a journalist and the great devotion he felt for the profession led him to apply strategies and adopt perspectives in his film production that were typical of journalism, whilst making countless statements throughout his career in which he recognised the connections between the two disciplines. Deeming that "every journalist is a potential filmmaker who only has to transfer real emotion to reel emotion and sprinkle it with imagination," he conceived of the camera as a typewriter and considered that "a headline has the impact of a headshot [and that] a news lead is the opening of a film" (Fuller, 1975: 20-22). This is reflected in most of his films' opening scenes, and in the titles that accompany them, which, like tabloid headlines, state their themes as eagerly as any witness-reporter (Sanjek, 1994; Casas, 2001; Faroult, 2018).

Connecting his films with journalism, he found "his drama in the quotidian and the sensational, the everyday event made remarkable" (Stanfield, 2011: 116). However, while many of the films he directed during his sixty years behind the camera include visual and verbal references to newspapers, only *Park Row* (1952) and *Shock Corridor* (1963) explicitly address issues of journalistic truthfulness (Capp, 2007). Added to these is a third work, the television feature film *The Madonna and the Dragon* (1990), Fuller's last film as a director. In this movie, as a testament, he played an editor-in-chief, a position that he

would surely have liked to occupy, had he risen in the profession which, as he himself said, provided him with the greatest and most unrepeatable emotion he felt in his life: seeing his by-line in a newspaper (Fuller in Schickel, 2002).

1.3. Objectives and hypotheses

Regarding the evolution of big screen representations of journalists, this study has set the three Samuel Fuller films mentioned above as its object of study –these being *Park Row* (1952), *Shock Corridor* (1963) and *The Madonna and the Dragon* (1990)–, the only ones in his entire filmography that belong to the genre termed ‘newspaper films’. Although the third is clearly far later than the previous ones, and is a made-for-television movie, it is considered perfectly relevant to include it here as, despite its different nature, it was filmed utilising eminently cinematographic means and processes, being the American director’s final film. Based on the hypothesis that highly heterogeneous archetypes of news professionals appear in these three films, the aim is to analyse the different journalistic profiles represented in the characters portrayed. As secondary objectives, though associated with this main objective, this study aims to elucidate the values and anti-values that define these characters, to verify to what degree they comply, when going about their professional business, with the ethical codes that mark the deontology of news professionals, and the way in which the themes, generic conventions and characteristic stylistic features of the director influence the mise-en-scène of the futures of these men and women of the press.

2. Method

To achieve the aforementioned purposes, two different methods have been utilised: firstly, a bibliographic review of previous approaches to the representation of journalism and journalists in cinema, considering both academic papers and books referring to the issue; secondly, and based on the above method, an analysis of the three movies that make up the object of study using the three tables below as a tool.

The first (Table 1), following the classification employed by Novoa-Jaso et al. (2019), is intended to record the profiles of the journalists personified in the feature films, offering the possibility that several profiles coincide in the same character, providing it with dramatic development and, making use of archetypes, managing to add complexity to the narrative in which the journalist finds himself/herself involved.

Table 1. Personalised profiles of journalists

JOURNALIST PROFILES	<i>Park Row</i>	<i>Shock Corridor</i>	<i>The Madonna and the Dragon</i>
Newshound / Aggressive crime buster			
Reporter as a human being			
Sob sister or news hen			
Journalist as crusader			
Foreigner / Foreign correspondent / War correspondent			
Editor			
Media Owner [Villain]			
Scandalmonger [Villain]			
Anonymous Reporter [Villain]			
Watchdog			
First-hand witness			
Journalist as artist			
Bad guy of the profession: rogue, con man, or king-maker			

Source: created by the author based on Novoa-Jaso et al. (2019)

The second table (Table 2), addresses the categorisation of the values and anti-values of the journalists represented on screen carried out by Quirós (2015), allowing for the gathering together of both the positive and negative traits that define the journalistic profiles embodied by the characters. There is also the possibility that the same character may display traits of both types during the story, thus marking their development and function in the plot.

Table 2. Values and anti-values represented

VALUES AND ANTI-VALUES		<i>Park Row</i>	<i>Shock Corridor</i>	<i>The Madonna and the Dragon</i>
Values	Professional integrity (independence, freedom, and honesty)			
	Defence of freedom of information			
	Serve the common good			
	Professional dignity and loyalty to the profession			
	Intellectual responsibility, tolerance, and moderation in controversies			
	Social and professional responsibility / Respect for institutions (democratic, judicial, and journalistic)			
Anti-values	Disloyalty / Lack of solidarity			
	Lack of professional and personal dignity			
	Corruption			
	Blackmail			
	Lying / Manipulation / Lack of rigour / Sensationalism			

Source: created by the author based on Quirós (2015)

The third and final table (Table 3), gathers the ethical codes that define journalistic deontology according to Banning (2020), thus seeking to make it possible that, together with the values and anti-values, one may examine the degree to which said codes are respected by the journalists portrayed in relation to the roles they play in the story. It is therefore possible to identify the way in which they affect the progress of the plot, and the different messages and meanings that emerge regarding the doings of the fourth estate.

Table 3. Symbolised ethical codes

ETHICAL CODES	<i>Park Row</i>	<i>Shock Corridor</i>	<i>The Madonna and the Dragon</i>
Responsibility			
Freedom of the press			
Independence			
Sincerity, truthfulness, and accuracy			
Impartiality			
Fair play			
Decency			

Source: created by the author based on Banning (2020)

3. Results

The results obtained from the analysis of the different aspects that make up the methodological tool are presented below, broken down by the three films, first offering a brief synopsis of each of the movies for better understanding.

3.1. *Park Row* (1952)

Phineas Mitchell (Gene Evans), a journalist with ideals, is fired from *The Star* newspaper for his overzealous ethics, the paper is run by the ruthless editor-in-chief Charity Hackett (Mary Welch). While Phineas ponders his future in his usual bar surrounded by colleagues, the chance presents itself of starting his own newspaper and changing the predominant style of sensationalist journalism. With a new team of professionals, he founds *The Globe*, and a fierce battle begins between the two publications, *The Star* playing dirty to get rid of this new, threatening upstart. (TCM, n.d.)

The profiles of journalists represented can be inferred from the conflict between Phineas Mitchell and Charity Hackett, who play two newspaper owners and editors with very different motivations and *modus operandi*. Phineas is defined combining several profiles: 'editor', showing great journalistic instinct and an enormous ability to make the medium evolve; 'crusader', defending democracy and the right to information from his position as editor; 'human being', converting his professional activity into a means to fight against social injustice; and 'first-hand witness', since he is a direct victim of some of the news events that affect his own business project and those who form part of it. Despite becoming the owner of a media outlet, he cannot be conceived as a villain, as his intentions in founding *The Globe*, and the way he manages it, are completely legitimate and well-intentioned.

On the contrary, Charity does adopt the role of villain from the profile of media owner, since she acts deplorably to prevent the loss of the privileged position held by her newspaper *The Star*. However, she cannot be considered a 'villain of the profession' in any of the terms used in the classification, since the only thing that would lead to such disqualification would be a violent attack on *The Globe's* press stands and the destruction of the editorial office, but these acts are carried out by her henchmen without her knowledge or consent. Furthermore, she ultimately redeems herself and ends up becoming a positive profile who agrees to work together with Phineas, helping to establish some of the fundamentals of a new form of journalism.

Regarding the values and anti-values that the main characters embody, Phineas complies with the values of professional integrity, championing independence, freedom and honesty; defence of freedom of information, this being his main reason for founding the newspaper; professional dignity and loyalty to the profession, showing noble devotion to journalism; and social and professional responsibility, although with nuances, since he carries out some questionable acts, such as inciting Steve Brodie to jump off the Brooklyn Bridge in order to get the story he wanted. Charity, on the other hand, represents the anti-values of lack of solidarity, trying by all means available to finish off Phineas's company; lack of professional dignity, since she goes too far in the service of her newspaper; and manipulation, as he tries to discredit *The Globe* by nefarious means.

Finally, in terms of ethical codes, Phineas respects those of responsibility, freedom of the press, independence, sincerity, fair play, and decency, although he is not completely impartial when defending his newspaper's interests. Charity, on the other hand, breaches all the rules, but ends up giving fair play and decency a chance by agreeing to the merger of the two papers.

3.2. *Shock Corridor* (1963)

Ambitious journalist Jo'Yny Barrett aims to win the Pulitzer Prize. His plan is to enter a psychiatric hospital, posing as a patient, in order to investigate a murder committed at the centre. With the help of his girlfriend Cathy and Dr. Fong, he manages to deceive the doctors, who order his detention. Once in hospital, he tries to gain information from the only three witnesses to the crime: three inmates whom neither the police nor the hospital's doctors have been able to get to talk. (Filmaffinity, 2023)

The character of Jo'Yny Barrett is presented as a journalist who combines the profiles of 'newshound/aggressive crime buster' and 'first-hand witness', as he infiltrates the sanatorium to carry out an investigation that ends up discovering the murderer's identity; but also that of 'con man', since he passes himself off as a patient to get admitted and thus be able to carry out his plan with the aspiration of winning the Pulitzer. This makes him a character who wants to embody heroism, but who acts in a way that dehumanises him and affects his professionalism, crossing the line into villainy. The same thing happens with his boss, who, wanting to achieve success for his newspaper, helps orchestrate the fraud and endangers his employee's professional and personal integrity, finally driving him mad.

As regards values and anti-values, the protagonist does not embody any values because, although his discovery of the murderer could lead to the common good, he puts his own success first. Therefore, he only embodies the anti-values of lack of professional and personal dignity, as he not only deceives as a journalist, and involves his girlfriend, despite her continued reluctance; but also lies and manipulates, by failing to respect the truth and best practices. Consequently, as for ethical codes, none are embodied in the person of Jo'Yny Barrett.

The absence of journalistic values and codes in the main character could lead one to think of him as a villain, someone who acts with the intention of causing harm to society or, at the very least, uses twisted strategies to enrich himself in an unfair and immoral way. But this is not the case, far from such motivations and means, JoŶny Barrett embodies these anti-values due to narcissism and the desire to become famous, utilising illicit means towards a legitimate end: the solving of a crime. However, vanity wins out over altruism, which hardly shows him in a heroic light, since he not only compromises his girlfriend but gradually his own person and profession as well.

JoŶny Barrett is in some ways a victim; not only of the situation that he himself has created and which ends up destroying him, but of the very system that the film criticises. Samuel Fuller went as far as to say that he wanted to portray America as a madhouse on the verge of self-destruction, so he had his protagonist confront the ills of contemporary American society: the consequences of the war, racism, and the arms race (Fuller, 2002). It was a world that he knew well since he started out chronicling crime and police reports, and he had reported on the enforced confinement of mentally ill people and executions in the electric chair. This perhaps makes *Shock Corridor's* portrayal of someone trapped with no hope of escape more understandable and devastating. Even if JoŶny did get out, he would only end up faced in the outside world by the same evils that the sanatorium presents in miniature.

3.3. *The Madonna and the Dragon* (1990)

Two photojournalists who were once a couple, Patty Meredith (Jennifer Beals) and Simon Leterre (Luc Merenda) are covering the elections in the Philippines, which could end the harsh Marcos regime. They take a photo of a soldier executing a civilian. Both the government and the rebels want the photo. (IMDb, 2023)

As happens in *Park Row*, opposition can be perceived between the profiles represented by the characters of Patty Meredith and Simon LeTerre, two 'war correspondent' profiles with apparently very different motivations. The character of Patty Meredith embodies, above all, the profiles of 'reporter as a human being' and 'sob sister', since her initial motivation is to raise awareness of the difficult living conditions of the Filipino population by taking photographs of a landfill for the American magazine *Newsworld*. Her intentions connect with a social responsibility that, despite her tenacity and conviction, is not fully understood by either her colleagues or her boss. Furthermore, when she finds herself involved in a political plot, even finding her life in danger on several occasions, she champions a cause that she believes is just and necessary, fighting against power and corruption, which elevates her to the category of 'journalist as crusader', and, given her testimony of the ins and outs of a corrupt system, also a 'first-hand witness'. Simon, however, is initially presented as a character who profits from contraband and rubs shoulders with people of dubious morality, embodying the profile of a 'rogue' and, to a certain extent, a 'con man'. However, in the first conversation he has with one of his contacts, it is clear that he is not such a bad person and that he is probably using his network of contacts for the greater good. This is why, when he later finds himself immersed in the plot, he begins to seem more like a 'journalist as a human being' profile; especially due to his close relationship with the Philippine boy who accompanies them and helps them in their exploits. And, obviously, he is a 'first-hand witness' and 'crusader' who is willing to do anything to achieve success in this mission against tyranny.

Regarding the values and anti-values that the main characters embody, Patty complies with all the values: professional integrity, remaining firm in her posture against her editor-in-chief concerning the need to document poverty and injustice; defence of freedom of information, heading a crusade in pursuit of the truth; professional dignity and loyalty to the profession, risking her life to obtain and reveal information; and finally, social and professional responsibility, guided at all times by the desire to use her professional position to seek justice. Simon, on the other hand, begins as a character brimming with anti-values, among which disloyalty, corruption, blackmail, and manipulation stand out, but he ends up using all these stratagems which had previously put him on the side of the villains, in a positive and almost heroic way.

Finally, regarding ethical codes, Patty is guided by responsibility and, from the margins allowed by her subordination to a news outlet, by freedom of the press and independence, seeking at all times to achieve truth and impartiality by means of fair play and decency. However, when she has to face corruption and her subsequent persecution, although she remains steadfast in defence of those primary codes, she begins to act in a way that, although justified in the context, does involve certain controversy. Simon, for his part, begins by showing no respect for all these ethical codes, exhibiting only freedom of the press and independence, and even these in a way that was probably not that intended by *Paris Press*, the medium he works for. However, he finally ends up assuming great responsibility for the Philippine cause and manages to achieve success that benefits, more than himself, the population of that country and Patty, whom he manages to help professionally and personally.

4. Discussion and conclusions

The image of the professional journalist offered by the three feature films is quite heterogeneous, since, although it is true that in all three cases these professionals are given a heroic aura –even when their means of reaching the truth may be questionable–, these are well differentiated profiles that reflect different ways of conceiving professional practices.

In the case of *Park Row*, the figure of the self-made journalist is placed on a pedestal through its protagonist Phineas Mitchell, and his particular way of participating in the creation of a printed medium is contrasted with that of his counterpart, Charity Hackett, a woman who possesses all the technical and human resources necessary but lacks the vision and ethics that characterise the former. Phineas's tireless fight to establish a newspaper of which he can be proud leads him to risk everything, including his life and the lives of those who accompany him on his mission. It is not surprising therefore that the portraits that line the walls of *The Globe's* editorial office are those of some of the editors that Samuel Fuller admired so much, and which represent examples for Phineas to emulate. It is significant that the character of the young copy-boy can be interpreted as a tribute to Fuller's beginnings at the *New York Journal* and the editor can be thought of as someone Fuller would have wanted to be like had he stayed and prospered in the newspaper business. In a retrospective of his films at the 1969 Edinburgh Film Festival he admitted that he would have liked to own and edit his own newspaper (Hardy, 1970).

Shock Corridor raises a question as fundamental for journalists' ethics as that of whether the end justifies the means. The protagonist's motivations are more related to the desire to achieve fame and celebrity than to unravelling the crime committed in the sanatorium which he infiltrates pretending to be a patient. The fact that he ends up falling victim to his own trap reflects the serious consequences that absolute involvement in the events to be covered and investigated can have; a failure that was

signposted in the opening scene where JoŶny Barrett meets with his boss Swanson and Dr. Fong. While they rehearse the deception of the sanatorium's evaluator, the psychiatrist's diploma hangs crookedly on the wall and he straightens it, which suggests perhaps, on the one hand, that this possibility of correcting any possible deviation in the plan can only happen in the rehearsal, and, on the other hand, that the professionalism of those gathered there is being questioned and put in danger.

The lead roles in *The Madonna and the Dragon*, Patty Meredith and Simon LeTerre, show the circumstances of two war reporters who have been integrated in very different ways into a kind of threatening microcosm dominated by the will to survive. Although it is true that they begin from contrasting ethical and moral profiles, later, guided by their determination to obtain photographs that can change the state of crisis in the country, they align not only their ends but their means as well. She becomes involved in a plot of political corruption and takes up "the arms" that she previously intended to avoid at all costs, while he continues to use those illegal and immoral tools, no longer for his own benefit but rather for that of the country he intends to help. It is interesting to note the fact that the office walls of the media correspondents in Manila feature photos of real Philippine life, thus showing that the journalists are no longer inspired by big-name editors, as in *Park Row*, but by the people –be they influential or ordinary– of the country.

The three movies are notably defined by the features that characterise Samuel Fuller's style and give a good example of his particular conception of journalism. His romantic vision of the profession, both through the figure of the journalist, as well as the editor and the war reporter, resides fundamentally in the construction of his characters, who embody a combative, adventurous spirit endowed with a darker side that serves to humanise characters that function as archetypes more typical of a fable. The end of all three films, the characters having gone through a whole series of adventures that have tested them personally, professionally, and privately, offers a lesson in the purest *Fullerian* style, consisting of confronting the viewer with the consequences of the characters' actions.

Despite the fact that they are cinematographic fictions focused on journalistic practices and could be classified within the newspaper films genre, the analysis reveals that the three pieces undoubtedly belong, due to both content and form, in other genres already covered by Fuller. The three movies are closely related to drama, as well as, in the case of *Park Row*, to *noir*; to prison drama in *Shock Corridor*; and to war, social and political cinema in *The Madonna and the Dragon*.

By virtue of all these different formal features concerning content, Fuller builds in all three cases a reflection on the United States; in the first two films, from a more domestic point of view, while, in the case of the third, through its presence and relationship with other nations. Adopting a critical vision which stems from his training as a journalist, his films reflect an American quest that "undercuts its personal purity by finding strength in a malevolent violence [...] or in political corruption" (Polan, 2000: 363-364), which gives greater importance to his defence of press freedom and its responsible use for the benefit of a country that, with all its good points and bad, he portrays from a critical vision not exempt of a certain idealism.

In short, Samuel Fuller's newspaper films manage to materialize the type of approach to journalism that he always wanted to achieve, a desire that he expressed thusly:

All the news that was unfit to print, all the scenes that were unfit to shoot, would make one hell of a newspaper film. It would have facts, legitimate characters, humor, shock, action. It would entertain and reveal. It would have the language of newspaper type spoken with flesh. It would show the passion of the printed word take on instant intimacy on film. It would go beyond the Bible, the newspaper, the stage. It would make words jump to life in shocking closeups. From Gutenberg to Griffith, it would transfer from type to screen an accurate, shattering emotion of movement seen with eyes, heard with ears, and never forgotten with the brain. [...] To make such a newspaper film I would give my right Linotype. Perhaps one day... soon. (Fuller, 1975: 24)

However, just as he refused in many cases to put the words ‘The End’ when concluding his films, inviting the viewer to continue with the story (Narboni, 2022), he did not feel he had achieved that definitive film about journalism, which once again demonstrates his tireless romantic ambition to strengthen –even more than he already had– the link between cinema and journalism.

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6. Conflict of interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest contained in this article.

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