The Hopkins-De La Hoya fight was further proof that following boxing these days is really a yearning to return to the past. It is no different to that Bob Dylan line, “I was born in the wrong time.” Hopkins wearing that pinstriped 30s suit afterwards was announcing the same thing. “I am not of today.” His whole ethic, admirable though it is, aspires to the past. He wistfully said it was a shame Hagler was not still fighting. He was most pleased when Duran described him as being “Like one of the older style fighters.”

So are the rest of us. Calling back to memories of Hagler, Benitez, Duran, Hearns. Forgetting that modern boxing is a Twentieth Century invention that was bound to become appropriated and made mutant by its owners. Imagining a fight like Hopkins-De La Hoya to be a return to the old days. And going back further, past Ali, to when Madison Square Garden was the Mecca of boxing, back in the 30s and 40s and 50s, the Golden Era, when we could have been there, round the corner from Gleason's Gym or the Harding Hotel, perhaps sharing a drink with Damon Runyon or A.J. Liebling before the evening paper's final edition.

Those imaginings of the early days are of course themselves a chimera. Apartheid was existent unless you sold yourself several times over and in the 50s the Mob controlled almost everything in the form of Frankie Carbo and Blinkie Palermo, under the aegis of James J Norris, a rich boy who ran the Garden and had an infantile fascination with gangsters. The true story was brilliantly told in a book by the late boxing writer Barney Nagler called ***James J. Norris and the Decline of Boxing*** .

Based on the governmental enquiry that became the Kefauver report, it detailed how Carbo and Palermo used the front of a supposed union, called the Manager’s Guild, to extort money. The legendary trainer Ray Arcel, later of course to handle Duran, was coshed over the head with a lead pipe when he refused to pay up. The book also cast severe doubts over fights such as Marciano v Walcott II, when Walcott took the count on one knee. Such events were brushed under the carpet and Nagler’s book ignored within boxing. Palermo continued to run fighters, including Sonny Liston, from his jail cell.

I happened to be in Vegas soon after Nagler died and watched as boxing’s great and good rose solemnly to salute him as a 10-count was tolled before a title bout. Hypocrisy won by KO that day.

I have no doubt that were something similar to pertain today there would be a similar whitewash from boxing’s monied denizens. That automatically excludes most boxers, naturally. The only difference is that today no one would be surprised. I am not comparing my own limited experience with those of Nagler and Arcel, but I did once persuade a TV company to bankroll a programme investigating aspects of the boxing business and it was not long before the threats and warnings began. A researcher and I were attacked as we left the production office and the researcher had acid thrown in his face. No one was apprehended. Coincidence perhaps.

An interesting sideline to Kefauver was that it sparked the employment of a young lawyer named Bob Arum by the then attorney general Bobby Kennedy. Tasked with investigating boxing, Arum ended up all but taking it over. Talk about stealing the office contacts book! There seems little to recommend Arum, the promoter of Hopkins-De La Hoya. I once saw him in an Atlantic City bar shortly after Michael Olajide had survived 12-rounds with Hearns. Olajide came in and approached Arum. Arum blanked him. Olajide's time was up. At least Don King started with nothing.

Where does this leave us? With Bernard Hopkins' pinstripe suit and our attempts to reconcile rancid elements of the present with an idealised view of the past. True, you may have been born in the wrong time. But as any wizened cornerman will tell you: "So, kid, what else is new?"