



Policing the World on Screen

American Mythologies and
Hollywood's Rogue Crimefighters

Marilyn Yaquinto

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*To my father, Sylvester Anthony Lingeman, Jr., the cop I most love
and admire.*

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1

Introduction

When President Ronald Reagan wanted to thwart Congress' resistance to his plan to drastically cut taxes in the 1980s, he invoked a shorthand he knew most Americans at the time could relate to: he quoted "Dirty" Harry Callahan's famous taunt to "make my day" and invite his opponents to a showdown. Rather than rely on Constitutional measures to referee executive-level disputes with the nation's two other branches of government, Reagan preferred a cultural weapon that leveraged public pressure on Congress to submit to his will; he effectively equated his tough stance with that of the popular screen enforcer intent on street justice. Reagan's invocation not only testifies to the off-screen clout of such a character, but also lends the character political credibility and wider application. In this manner, such a character is performative, using Judith Butler's encapsulation of gender, but which is true of any performance of identity, being both cause and effect—the performance having the "reiterate power ... to produce the phenomena that it [also] regulates and constrains."¹

This book is about the interplay between popular culture and politics—not politics of a partisan nature, but as the tactics and strategies

associated with power and authority and their ties to cultural norms and social control. Both realms are interested in trafficking in myths for their ideological utility, but the “stars” of this book are the myths themselves as well as who performs them, especially as they “dance” together. Reagan did so not only with Dirty Harry, but also with the fictional Cold War hero, Jack Ryan, whom one reviewer even dubbed a “Reaganite hero.” Jack Bauer, described as “the first post-9/11 action hero,” represents another manufactured hero available for political cover, giving conservative media gurus like Rush Limbaugh talking points to defend the CIA’s use of torture in the War on Terror. Such a symbiotic relationship between popular culture and politics creates a fun-house mirror effect, as the “fake” and the “real” play hide and seek—even to engage what Jean Baudrillard terms the “hyperreal,” noting that once the “real” has been intertwined with fantasy, the “hyperreal” emerges, effacing contradictions between what is real and what is imaginary, as “unreality no longer resides in the dream or fantasy ... but in the real’s hallucinatory resemblance to itself.”² In the current environment of “fake” news and “alternative facts,” it is often difficult to spot the difference, let alone ponder the consequences of such confusion.

This book argues that the fallout from relying on such myths is dangerously real. Joseph Campbell describes myths as “public dreams,” and not without roots in reality, but with facts fudged to create narratives that best match dominating agendas. If perhaps there was a “dream” to achieve white supremacy, then race as a biological fact falls far short; but race as defined by what Émile Durkheim describes as a “social fact”³ delivered the justification for centuries for chattel slavery and its crippling legacy of racism. Durkheim and Campbell forward a similar point: myths and social facts (regardless of how far adrift from a knowable truth) are consequential as they are capable of underwriting cultural norms and informing social structures. Myths that underpin the crimefighter hero in Hollywood stories have deep roots in American history and politics. Whether a western lawman, a lone urban detective, or a clandestine CIA agent, his mission is to embody what is normative and to “police” the Other—real and imagined, at home and abroad.

American Exceptionalism and Stories of Ascendancy

Among the most profound American myths in play, including the above examples, is that of American “exceptionalism,”⁴ although many observers believe the term has been rendered meaningless by overuse and oversimplification. Space is limited here to provide a comprehensive history of the term’s genealogy or its many contradictory uses, but a recap of its broadest strokes is instructional for its fluidity and availability for makeovers. The term was reportedly in use among communist leaders to describe US resistance to socialism as “exceptional,”⁵ given its rise in other industrialized nations (Joseph Stalin is often given credit for coining the term, which is far more intriguing, but its credulity suspect). Its next incarnation was by historian Richard Hofstadter who offered the term as a theory to help explain why the nation had avoided war on its home soil during the wars of the twentieth century. Finally, the term was rebooted as a patriotic celebration of American accomplishments, often attributed to Reagan era conservatives but just as enthusiastically forwarded by President Obama in one of several speeches, including a State of the Union address.⁶

American exceptionalism is among those attempts to explain the nation’s rapid ascension from a former British colony to global behemoth within a few centuries, especially when compared to the longevity and evolutions of other nation-states in Europe and Asia. Two world wars in the twentieth century acutely strained the resources of both the British and French empires, which in a weakened state, invited contentious and often bloody liberation struggles in many of their colonial possessions in Asia and Africa. At the same time the United States emerged by mid-century in a unique position of wealth and influence, in part by converting its auto factories into profitable war machines for much of World War II.⁷ Its further elevation to “superpower” status accompanied its deployment of nuclear weapons, soon matched by the Soviet Union’s similar capabilities. For the next half century, conflict and competition between the two nations rested on the concept of mutually assured destruction, ultimately producing a more prolonged Cold War—so called for its lack

of traditional firefights. In this type of war, ideology and culture products are often a more effective and available weapon (including popular culture products as a means of disseminating ideology).

As scholars began to study the nation's rapid ascendancy, several theories emerged—one attributed a formula for success to the Pilgrims' pioneering spirit and their adaptation of Enlightenment ideas to the "undeveloped" New World.⁸ Others analyzed the Puritans, whose "errand in the wilderness" to establish a biblically inspired "city upon a hill" evolved into a radical democratization of ideas that produced a new society.⁹ Yet another approach cites the vast environmental riches—America as the New Eden and this former European as the American Adam charged with transforming "virgin land" into civilized settlements that could process tangible commodities. This supposed New World was quickly overrun by pioneers heading West to occupy the expanding nation and to fulfill a Manifest Destiny, along with immigrants pouring into the urban centers of the East to facilitate its rapid industrial growth.¹⁰ Other historical narratives rely on the biographies and accomplishments of "a few good men," including founding "fathers," inventors, military heroes, and titans of industry (also routinely described by the less-flattering term of robber barons) as most responsible for the young nation's remarkable rise. None of the above narratives are untrue nor are they singularly able to explain such complex and interdependent phenomena.

Whatever the origins, most writers converge on the idea that this new nation was utterly transformed by its interactions with the supposed untapped and untamed wilderness, which created related myths about a reliance on rugged individualism. It was enough to prompt the French diplomat and historian, Alexis de Tocqueville, who visited the United States starting in 1831, to warn about its overdetermined embrace of individual autonomy at the expense of collectivist behavior, aside from "ad hoc" responses to emergency circumstances. By the eighteenth century, American popular culture featured a steady stream of rugged frontiersmen, determined underdogs, and lone "rangers" who preferred to be the "last man standing"; the American Adam was expressly embraced by writers such as Walt Whitman and Ralph Waldo Emerson.¹¹ This book utilizes such a figure as it traces the revamped Adam archetype to his

incorporation into Hollywood storytelling, first occupying the untamed frontier as a mythic cowboy then migrating to the uncivilized urban landscape as a redeemable rogue crimefighter—each evolution retaining key attributes of that early, quintessential American. The archetype also includes a particular performance of masculinity, an ever-adaptive nod to white supremacy, and the obfuscation of class membership; emerging as the white, male “everyman” able to prosper in uncharted lands, survive challenges by the Other, and rely on his own discretion to distinguish law from disorder—his gender, race, and denial of class all woven into his foundational construction.

The Frontier Thesis and the Gunfighter

The concept of a frontier and its associated mythmaking also informs the development of the nation and its reflection in the screen character at the heart of this book. As a theory, the frontier was initially used by scholars to narrate (and re-imagine) the post-revolutionary push West that first transformed a nation and its people. The concept’s importance to the American psyche was cemented the moment historian Frederick Jackson Turner dramatically announced at the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair that the frontier had, in effect, disappeared. Gone with it was its real and perceived value as a “safety valve” for white communities escaping the increasingly crowded cities of “foreign-born” peoples and “the dangerous classes.”¹² He also detailed a critical frontier edge—a meeting point between “savagery” and civilization—as having been eclipsed through settlement and abuse of wilderness resources. Lost with the frontier was its profound ability to provide Americans with the confidence to “scorn” older societies and to create a new one rooted in “individualism, democracy, and nationalism.”¹³

Although initially thought canonical, later scholars criticized Turner’s singular explanation for American development, in part, because it required “the observer stand in the East and look to the West.”¹⁴ His perspective also ignored other watershed moments and influences, including the South’s complex history and slave-based system that had no place in his model, but which was arguably as significant to the nation’s formation.

Patricia Limerick interrogated Turner's conclusions while also re-mapping the West as a place encompassing diverse environments, cultural histories, and peoples "who considered their homelands to be the center, not the edge" of civilization.¹⁵ Moreover, Limerick's approach enables Western American history to be viewed "as one chapter in the global story of Europe's expansion" and the ever-changing frontier as a project of Western white patriarchy.¹⁶ "Conquest forms the historical bedrock of the whole nation ... the American West is a preeminent case study in conquest and its consequences," she asserts.¹⁷ Despite revisions to Turner's thesis, the frontier as a useful rallying cry for new adventures, whether voiced by President Kennedy or *Star Trek* captains, endures. "He would be a rash prophet who should assert that the expansive character of American life has now entirely ceased" with the frontier's close, Turner prophetically noted, adding, "Movement has been its dominant fact, and, unless this training has no effect upon a people, the American energy will continually demand a wider field for its exercise."¹⁸ In Tocqueville visits to the country decades earlier, he had already articulated that for many Americans the frontier was less about physical space but a "frontier of the mind and senses."¹⁹ The frontier has remained an ever-elastic concept in the American imagination, remaining as mythic as it is real, and usually "over there" or "out there."

It is not merely an oversight that the frontier myth omits or diminishes the crucial contributions of the black slave and the non-white (or contingently white) immigrant, who did the lion's share of the backbreaking labor to transform this fabled New Eden into an industrial giant. Even the yeoman farmer that Thomas Jefferson imagined settling the frontier is forsaken for a figure that is synonymous with its violent conquest: the gunfighter, already a darker rendition of the all-purpose cowboy who had descended from the frontiersmen of earlier popular fictions. Such a figure is essential to the development of the rogue crimefighter as he shares a penchant for "frontier justice" considered necessary when law and order is non-existent, first being established, or broken down. The works of Richard Slotkin are invaluable for this book's ability to pull a thread down through history from the gunfighter's frontier origins to the character's rebirth in the "savage" urban centers in the wake of the turbulent 1960s. As Slotkin notes, the frontier myth became an explanation for the

“redemption of the American spirit ... achieved by playing through a scenario of separation, temporary regression to a more primitive or ‘natural’ state, and regeneration through violence.”²⁰ Consider the phrase, “circling the wagons,” a simple phrase familiar to most Americans or to anyone who has ever watched a Hollywood western, is one with its roots firmly planted in the exceptional circumstances of the frontier thesis, and its justification for particular behaviors. The phrase envisions frightened white settlers fighting for their lives from within a confined space, configured by placing their wagons in a defensive circle, and with savages attacking (presumably unprovoked) from the wide-open spaces of the ever-expanding and perennially lawless frontier.²¹ Violence in such instances is considered “defensive,” even though the nation’s push westward is now understood as acts of aggression against native peoples who for centuries had already occupied the space. When described as a frontier, however, the meaning shifts back to an interpretation of such space as open land in need of civilizing and that required the removal of Native Americans. Far from being a bloody and contested terrain that the nation takes by force, the frontier mantle engages the myth of American exceptionalism, as well as the supremacy of whiteness, the demonization of the Other, and nation’s rogue behavior framed as noble and righteous—and its gunfighter heroes accepted as the troubling but essential actors to help secure such a version of American history. This frontier mindset endures in the gunfighter’s many offspring, including the rogue crimefighter—no less a construction of American mythologies and that carries forward the New Adam’s sense of entitlement and noble purpose with this added frontier-bred taste for regenerative violence.

Policing the World, On and Off Screen

Often dubbed “policeman of the world,” US foreign policies and behaviors offer create the very disorder the nation claims it must clean up.²² Part of its frontier mentality requires that American warriors and “enforcers” identify and self-select “freedom fighters” in one locale while targeting others as “communists” or “terrorists” in another part of the world, especially Latin America, located in the nation’s “backyard.” Such

“policing” of global hot spots as threats to national security have resulted in profound consequences for the reputation of the United States as the supposed benevolent enforcer on the world’s behalf. As Ziauddin Sardar and Merryl Wyn Davies point out, the nation’s politicians and populace often fail to grasp “how intimidating this accumulation of power appears to other people” around the world.²³ Such actions also sow the seeds of more threats in need of vanquishing, whether the “cold” variety or included in the War on Drugs and the War on Terror.

Although soldiers have comprised many popular cultures heroes who similarly perform American myths, this book asserts that the global influence of films featuring crimefighters such as *Die Hard*’s John McClane or *Homeland*’s Carrie Mathison better capture American ambition, and cloak the hegemonic impact that surpasses any “it’s just entertainment” defense.²⁴ Such cultural products have the ability to disarm critical analysis and nurture acceptance of their underlying myths as a reflection of reality. Moreover, McClane, as an off-duty cop, becomes a hero by accident rather than a bully looking for a fight—the reluctant hero already a familiar trope in American popular culture. McClane is later transformed into a one-man army and his unilateralism reminiscent of the nation he represents and performs. Moreover, his cowboy swagger sends no less potent a message than a soldier’s,²⁵ being this humble everyman with a badge perhaps better able to influence hearts and minds.²⁶ Such a character is able to embody what Michael Billig describes as “banal nationalism,” in which the imagined nation is absorbed into everyday routines so much so that they go unnoticed, including within ubiquitous entertainment products.²⁷

American popular culture is often credited with helping the nation reach its global positioning, which some describe as a potent type of soft power or cultural imperialism.²⁸ As Soviet leader Vladimir Lenin noted decades earlier, “Of all the arts, the cinema for us is the most important,” as he fully grasped the power of popular culture when used as an ideological tool during the Russian Revolution.²⁹ Although Hollywood is not an official propaganda wing of the United States government, often accused of being “liberal” and at odds with many administrations, as a business that needs to be profitable, it generally and voluntarily replicates a mainstream orientation that draws from a similar pool of viewers as mainstream

voters.³⁰ Alternative perspectives may be the preference of individual actors, but such views do not play well at the box office and, in the end, the decisive factor of what Hollywood stories get produced as opposed to reflecting a purported “liberal” bias.

If the goal of the nation’s “grand experiment” is greater inclusion and perpetual reinvention, perhaps these influential popular culture characters examined in this book will not only provide clues about why the white male rogue stays in power, but also glimpse the possibility of how to contest his dominion and match (or even surpass) his performance of nation.

Not All Crimefighters are Created Equal

The term “rogue” is defined in this book as a crimefighter who breaks the law but *only* to enforce a higher moral order—to seek justice when other avenues fail or are considered inadequate—and which triggers the use of ugly (violent or extralegal) means. Even if reluctant to transgress a border, violate an international law, or ignore the sovereignty of another nation-state, as an agent of the nation (and its need to preserve and advance its dominion), he becomes as rogue as America needs him to be. By custom and definition, a rogue acts unilaterally and at *his* discretion, innately understanding what is expected of him, but producing profound contradictions that lie in his mandate to violate the rule of law that he also exists to defend.

A vigilante, however, is not acceptable as a rogue in this study, as he is untethered from official service to the larger community or nation; his actions are too rooted in the realm of the personal and his motivations too steeped in revenge. A renegade is also exempt as a character who runs amok of the system but whose mayhem is rarely connected to duty. Any crimefighter who is corrupt in traditional ways, taking bribes or cheating the system to advance his personal fortune or professional standing, is also excluded. Although some rogues technically become criminals, if their actions are on behalf of the nation’s goals, or in its defense—and is *convincingly* serving the greater good—then they qualify as acceptable rogues. A “criminal” cop is most often available for redemption if he does

the right thing in the end or had done the wrong thing for the right reasons. Given that the rogue must rely on his discretion to determine right from wrong, his determination of the greater good to be served must align with what the prevailing mainstream deems normative or righteous, lest he risk being rejected as a hero figure.

The crimefighter heroes in this book most often appear in “plain clothes,” as in this manner they are better able to represent the “imagined” *nation*, to use Benedict Anderson’s constructs,³¹ and to sidestep any links to the official *state*—often framed as a repugnant concept in an American context. At the same time, if a “blue” uniform can be easily discarded or ignored, enabling the nation to be effectively mapped onto the character, then a normative white male in a (police) uniform may qualify as a crimefighter hero. In contrast, for females and males of color, the uniform often provides a cloak of authority that is able to override any biases or limitations posed by their “difference.” Private detectives of all stripes, though, are generally omitted from this study as they are usually employed by individual clients and disconnected from the broader mandate to serve the greater community or nation. Undercover cops too can have diminished links to a more comprehensive sense of duty if too much of the story has him (or her) posing in other occupations that seriously disrupt the performance of nation or broader service to society.

More than anything, the crimefighter is a figure of action, and in some cases an “action hero,” with action defined here as a character’s proactive ability to engage in assertive behavior—to have agency—as well as to possess the ability to exert a degree of control over a story’s conflicts and outcomes.

To Police and “Eat the Other”

The white male crimefighter also exists to “police” those who threaten the normative order—to contain the challenges of the Other who might agitate for greater inclusion in American society. The Other in a domestic setting includes women, people of color, transgendered individuals, recent immigrants, and “foreign” nationals, among others. Given how hegemony works—never a *fait accompli* but a continual negotiation with

challengers to maintain dominance—the rogue crimefighter must adapt by, as bell hooks phrases it, “eating the other” and appropriating aspects of the Other’s challenge. Such cultural theft or appropriation also silences the challenger whose alternative art or ideas become absorbed into the mainstream, whether in politics, popular culture, or, more specifically, Hollywood storytelling.³² This process impacts ownership, issues of authenticity, and who profits from innovation and experimentation, as the commodification of the Other’s contributions flow back into the mainstream rather than provide uplift or lessen the Other’s marginalization. A prime example occurred with Hollywood’s ability to co-opt so-called “race” films that existed in the 1920s and 1930s, which were produced by black entrepreneurs (e.g., Oscar Micheaux) who subsequently lost their separate (and profitable) “niche” industry once black actors were lured away by Hollywood to work as supporting players in largely white- or mainstream-themed products (discussed in Chap. 4).

Beyond US borders, though, as later chapters discuss, with the expanded enemies list of “foreign” threats to vanquish, the Other is given the opportunity to join the fight “over there,” where he or she can be more clearly interpreted as American, without the homegrown “difference” as baggage. This was especially true in the wake of 9/11, which profoundly shifted what constitutes American urgency, fostering a rebooted rogue who is further unshackled from ordinary rules of engagement (e.g., Bauer), but who remains framed as a defensive player on behalf of national security, no matter how aggressive he becomes.

This book acknowledges and extends the body of work by those writers who have examined the meaningful progress of the Other in pioneering roles that demonstrated greater inclusion in Hollywood. Several chapters investigate experiments among crimefighters as portrayed by females and males of color, who in some manner, challenge the supremacy of the white male archetype. Unfortunately, such performances often serve to make clear why *he* remains dominant. It remains problematic for an African American, Latino, or Middle Eastern crimefighter to perform the nation when too often defined as the very source of criminality or threat that the archetypal rogue exists to vanquish. Similarly, any female crimefighter’s demonstrated violence is often viewed as contrary to her supposed innate need to nurture. In other words, the particular masculine

performance, whiteness and other aspects of the archetype have become so encoded into the character at the time of *his* invention that it is challenging to dislodge the factors of his privilege.

Moreover, the Other as crimefighter is set apart as a “female” agent or “black” cop, drawing attention to their difference when compared to a synopsis of a white male crimefighter, simply described as an FBI agent or a CIA operative without the modifier. In this way the white male crimefighter’s privilege hides in plain sight. As Richard Dyer notes of race, “As long as race is something only applied to non-white people ... [and] white people are not racially seen and named, [they] function as a human norm.”³³ As a result, while his privilege is rendered invisible, the Other’s difference is salient enough to impede his or her ability to represent the nation at large. At best the male or female Other seems badly miscast, and at worst appears to be a dangerous interloper that mainstream audiences are urged to reject, even if they are unaware of why they are doing so.

Interdisciplinary Threads and Border Breaches

The above discussions about identity formations and the intersections of gender, race/ethnicity, class, and the concept of the nation-state (how it is created and defended), are informed by an immense body of work. Scholarship from fields of study expressly focused on race/ethnicity, gender, whiteness, and the construction of group belonging and/or national sovereignty are amply utilized in this book. Most engage the interplay that results in the manufacture of privilege that is also responsible for the Other’s “matrix of oppression,” to use Patricia Hill Collins’s descriptor.³⁴

Most of these fields of study are inherently interdisciplinary, cited throughout the book where most appropriate and with the goal of their further synthesis to provide as comprehensive an understanding of their interlocking causes and effects. By traversing schools of thought and transgressing academic boundaries, the goal is to provide enough depth and as coherent a road map as possible of the several logical threads that are utilized, and which can identify patterns and discover meanings among the breadth of characters and Hollywood products under review.

Such an effort also utilizes the lessons of long-standing approaches derived from history, political philosophy, and culture studies, along with more recent scholarship emerging from border studies and the proliferating sub-fields grappling with how best to study film, television, and emerging platforms amid the revolutions occurring in media products and practices. As Paul Smith notes about film, but which can apply to any Hollywood text: it “will of necessity be bound up in a system of cultural and political formations; a film intervenes in those formations even as it emerges from a relation with and among them.” It is these mutually constitutive systems that best inform this book’s approach and its aims, which finds additional inspiration in Clifford Geertz’s concept of “deep play” that prizes rigorous inquiry, but also allows room for identifying plausible correlations within and among such sprawling and related realms.

To accomplish this orchestration of approaches and fusion of methodologies, several organizational tools are at work—with some overlap and some modifications to accommodate the book’s diverse source material and case studies. The first tool is the concept of genre as a means to create related characterizations. As Steve Neale explains, the difference between genres is not a “question of particular and exclusive elements, however defined, but of particular *combinations* and *articulations* of elements ... and particular weight given in any one genre to elements which in fact it shares with other genres” [italics his].³⁵ Another consideration is how genres are interpreted differently by various producers and filmmakers, which is especially pertinent when crimefighter characters included may have begun in one decade in a TV show and are later rebooted in a film—or the reverse has occurred. The differences in feature-length films versus multiple seasons in which to develop or alter a character also impacts its generic fit, along with its timing in connection with particular historical moments. From its inception, Hollywood borrowed its genre classification from other forms of popular culture (with a proven track record), and although it is useful to identify why and how texts cluster together, it is equally as vital to consider why a particular text is able to transgress a genre’s borders or to find meaning in the liminal space between *and* across the borders of recognizable genres.³⁶

Although most scholars consider “crime” too broad a description to qualify as a genre, being more of an umbrella term that encompasses

several genres or subgenres, Thomas Leitch argues for crime to be considered a suitable category for analysis if one looks at the essential structure of such a story: “the continual breakdown and reestablishment of the borders among criminals, crime solvers, and victims.”³⁷ Leitch suggests that what matters is the ability of any tool of analysis to prompt novel inquiries, and to move beyond whether a text belongs to a given genre to consider what patterns emerge across texts that tackle—however broadly—a central focus on law and order. That could mean its disturbance or maintenance, but more importantly, who should be included on either side of the so-called thin blue line between criminals and crimefighters. For those reasons outlined above, this book utilizes the generic classification of the crime story while remaining mindful of how difficult it is to distinguish between the crimefighters versus criminals, along with what separates heroes from anti-heroes in Hollywood storytelling. How and why such blending occurs forms one of the vital threads of this book as it attempts to examine and grasp the significance of border transgressions related to the thin blue line, among other boundary breaches in an American context, on and offscreen.

Another organizing tool is to cluster characters and programs by common theme or subject matter, in some cases, while in others to focus on a chronology that situates screen crimefighters along a historical continuum to better account for their ancestry and prior (or subsequent) influences. Such characters may also have horizontal connections—not only in relationship to each other, but also within their specific cultural contexts, which results in clustering productions to directly compare and contrast them with each other. For example, in Chap. 8, three productions from the 2000s that tackle the 1990s LAPD’s Rampart Scandal—the films *Dark Blue* and *Training Day*, plus the TV show, *The Shield*—are grouped together, as a comparative analysis of their common inspiration is the best way to uncover what is affirmed or rejected in these otherwise similar constructions. In other instances, clustering material by the same character over time proves a more efficient way to uncover meaningful patterns. Any application of a particular organizational tool (or in combination) is not indicative of any random sampling or haphazard inclusion, but a purposeful effort to utilize the most helpful tools available to accomplish this book’s ambitious goals. In this way, genre may overlap

with considerations of *auteur* along with their relationship to historical moments as linked to political events and/or particular American presidents—especially those who aptly embody or signal shifts in the nation’s attitudes about itself or the Other—at home and abroad.

A further determining factor is to limit the characterizations under review to those that have earned mainstream notice, and which are usually included in the most financially and/or critically acclaimed Hollywood productions. That coincidence is extended by those Hollywood offerings that usually earn significant media and cultural attention via journalism, political rhetoric, and/or other forms of social commentary. The term Hollywood is being used here to describe those films and programming not necessarily related to a California locale, but which represents the business model whose goal is to create products and programming that satisfy mainstream impulses (in order to maximize profitability). Along with other criteria mentioned, Hollywood is most in tune with what films and TV shows capture mainstream endorsement as measured by box office receipts, ratings, DVD rentals/purchases, livestream orders, or downloads. Whether intended for the local cineplex, Netflix, or PBS, such productions draw from a common pool of paid professionals who belong to the same guilds/unions, that must compensate directors and actors based on their reputations and “star” power, and which audiences repeatedly self-select despite the fog of mass media convergence. No doubt the ever-evolving Hollywood system of production and exhibition, along with the consolidation of media companies, have complicated consumption practices. However, it also remains the business of Hollywood to continually gauge what draws the widest swath of viewership, whether intended for small screen broadcasts or wide screen distribution.

Relatedly, Hollywood producers and filmmakers must persistently consider reinvented platforms and shifting exhibition and/or delivery systems (from livestreaming to binge-watching) when creating content. Recent research also attests to how viewers (as fans) of a particular genre—or who are drawn to a specific director or actor’s career—will use a variety of criteria in making renting/purchase decisions, often tapping into multiple platforms to satisfy their needs, whether about cost and convenience, but also influenced by other social factors (to watch *Captain Marvel* with friends as a communal event or livestream it alone once the film is available on Amazon Prime).

Such media revolutions have left scholars grappling as well with disintegrating labels once used to neatly describe content as a “film” or “TV show,” some terms now being rendered obsolete in a post-broadcast and/or post-network marketplace.³⁸ Other complicating factors have viewers increasingly consuming content on computers or tablet screens, perhaps considering the original medium or format irrelevant; or the practice of viewers “pulling” content from intended platforms and repurposing it for uses not intended (or “pushed”) by its original creators.³⁹ For its part, Hollywood is trying to respond by experimenting with the release of entire seasons in one batch of new programming, as well as to consider the effects of binge-watching on production, having learned that complicated “cliffhangers” do not translate well to viewing back-to-back episodes, among other commercial devices intended to ensure contract renewal or singular “trending” barometers.⁴⁰ The point is that Hollywood, as an industry, is still the most galvanizing force with the largest concentration of creative talent and specialists trained and intensely interested in sustaining viewership; it remains the best measure of what matches the mood, fears, politics, and prevailing zeitgeist, especially among mainstream Americans whose perspectives continue to dictate what stories are “green-lighted.” For the reasons outlined above, this book utilizes the term Hollywood and Hollywood storytelling to be as inclusive as possible rather than meant to minimize or ignore any of the above trajectories.

Hollywood was once described as the “dream factory” has, over time, steadily transformed into a mega corporate environment whose business it is to create culture, especially familiar, tried-and-true content that aligns with what is mainstream (and normative) in order to sustain the most stable financial rewards.⁴¹ In that scenario, the recurring (white, male) American crimefighter is no accident but a testament to the clout of mainstream privilege—one that demands to see its own reflection accompanied by related mythologies—endorsed anew and continually refreshed in this ever-looping process of cultural reproduction.

Hollywood as a determining factor include incorporation of what products and characterizations earn major awards, especially the high-profile Oscars and Emmys. Such information along with vital data related to box office or ratings systems is included in analyses to further confirm Hollywood and/or audience approval. Mainstream reviews are also con-

sidered as well as popular sites such as rottentomatoes.com that provide a “score” by critics (or tomatometer) along with a score among audiences. Although hardly a scientific or empirical measure, in an era of “crowd-sourcing” and popular polling that Hollywood and audiences use alike to make decisions, such sources provide yet another supplemental standard to help explain how and why Hollywood products are embraced (or rejected) by viewers and the larger society.

Although historically situated screen crimefighters such as Dirty Harry have generated ample scholarship, more recent films and programs have generated scant formal research. In such cases, other measures have been leveraged, including journalistic accounts, appropriate secondary source, and social media, as they too can attest to a Hollywood story’s ability to circulate among key social and political influencers. In what used to be called the “water cooler effect,”⁴² such public pronouncements often affirm a type of “national fever chart,” as one reviewer noted of the 1967 film, *Bonnie and Clyde*, which generated a steady stream of essays and political rhetoric that was illuminating as a snapshot of a nation at war with itself at the time. My aim is to uncover similar evidence of past and current examples in which a particular screen crimefighter struck a nerve, so to speak, and resonated or disturbed the prevailing zeitgeist, indicating a Hollywood character or product’s influence beyond any initial screening or subsequent download.

This book cannot provide comprehensive insights into all of the industry and market forces outlined above, nor can it prove what all the connections identify or definitive meanings they may represent. The collaborative nature of Hollywood’s creative processes along with how viewers negotiate meanings all serve to make this book’s endeavor quite challenging. But, as this book painstakingly lays out, correlations do exist between the rogue crimefighter and his circulated influence within political and cultural contexts; and it is a worthwhile examination to undertake even if the direction and clarity of causality of influence is and will most likely remain elusive. Despite such a disclaimer, any insights gleaned will hopefully be of value, especially if they help grasp how hegemonic constructs maintain their advantage through the production of culture and what some scholars describe as the “manufacture of consent.”⁴³

Chapter Previews

Chapter 2 traces the deployment of the frontier myth by Teddy Roosevelt to reinvigorate American masculinity and to borrow the frontiersman's wilderness skills to imagine expanded borders and a global design for the nation. With the dawn of the film industry, the frontiersman is transformed into the screen cowboy and the western elevates the gunfighter to a violent but effective tool of conquest. The classical Hollywood western, *The Searchers*, is explored along with more contemporary "revisionist" westerns such as *Dances with Wolves* and *The Hateful Eight*—the latter portraying the frontier as intensely violent, even dystopic. The chapter concludes with the rise of the crime film with darker stories about lawless urban landscapes and the pliable morality of frustrated G-men and noir detectives.

Chapter 3 explores the emergence of the contemporary crimefighter, especially its rogue variant, *Dirty Harry*, as a response to social unrest of the late 1960s. Clint Eastwood serves as a pivotal figure who transfers his cowboy persona befitting the mythic nineteenth century West to the streets of San Francisco, where a counterculture was challenging the status quo. As the Vietnam War gave way to Reagan's "morning in America," the hyper-masculine "hard bodies" emerge to dominate in the *Die Hard* and *Lethal Weapon* franchises. Such films often showcase the Other as sidekicks and "buddies" to their white partners—still the star attraction. Finally, films such as *Fort Apache the Bronx* and TV's *Hill Street Blues* establish precinct life as a microcosm of the larger, troubled society.

Chapter 4's focus is on African American crimefighters from Sidney Poitier's iconic Mr. Tibbs, *In The Heat of the Night*, to the hip hop stars of the "hood" films of the 1990s such as *New Jack City*, along with Denzel Washington's more than dozen crimefighter roles. Given Hollywood's history of black representations dominated by criminality—the very target the white rogue exists to police—it remains difficult for a black crimefighter to replicate the archetype's performance of nation. Also explored are the mega-hit cop films by Eddie Murphy, *Beverly Hills Cop* and its sequels, although the comic premise undermines any serious challenge to the white crimefighter's dominion. Other films include *Gang in Blue*, *The Glass Shield*, *Deep Cover*, and several films featuring Wesley Snipes.

Chapter 5 looks at female cops and crimefighters (in and out of uniform), who still face obstacles in the hyper-masculine environment of law enforcement. Films under review include *Betrayed*, *Impulse*, and *The Long Kiss Goodnight*, along with pioneering TV roles that allowed experimentation, including the groundbreaking *Cagney & Lacey*. More complex roles followed in shows such as *Third Watch*, along with TV shows that featured a female lead, including *SVU*, still in production. The chapter ends with a profile of the 2017 TV mini-series, *Shots Fired*, with two African American crimefighters exploring the shooting of a white youth by a black cop in a small, southern town. Sanaa Lathan plays a conflicted and competent investigator although her character is still hamstrung by the stereotypical troubled mom trope.

Chapter 6 analyzes the ethnic Other, still acutely underrepresented in Hollywood. A brief look at the legacy of Asian American and Jewish cops, including John Munch from *Homicide: Life on the Street*, along with the alternative policing style of a young Navajo cop. The most egregious absence involves Latinos, who dominate portraits of gang members but rarely portray lead crimefighters. The exception is Jennifer Lopez, who has portrayed a plethora of cops and federal agents, with the chapter including a profile of her recent TV series, *Shades of Blue*, in which she is part of an effective but rogue unit that is eventually brought to justice. The series also includes two notable African American male detectives who try to reconcile being both black and blue.

Chapter 7 has American crimefighters crossing the border, with films such as *Black Rain* about exported rogue behavior made worse by culture clashes. The chapter also explores border breaches with Mexico—often treated as another frontier awaiting American intervention. The Netflix series, *Narcos*, features agents at the start of the War on Drugs and the shift after Reagan became convinced communists were involved. Also included is *Sicario* and its sequel, which examine the contemporary context of the drug war and attempts to link it to the War on Terror, also inviting CIA participation. Finally, a comparative analysis of *Traffic*—the film and a subsequent TV series—both contrasted with the original British series that reveal national differences along with a post-9/11 mindset.

Chapter 8 pivots on the aftermath of the events of 9/11 and its reinvigoration of a white male rogue as embodied by Jack Bauer. He became the embodiment of the American response to the War on Terror, sparking intense political and cultural disputes over the show's depiction of torture—the ends justifying almost any degree of brutality in its routine use of “ticking time bomb” plots. The chapter also profiles three productions that engage the LAPD's Rampart scandal, including *Training Day*, *Dark Blue*, and the TV show, *The Shield*. Each finds closure for its rogue in telling ways, but only Washington's Oscar-winning character is shown as unredeemable and in need of killing, suggesting that blackness as threat remains part of the equation.

Chapter 9 is about enlisting the female and multicultural Other in the global War on Terror, including Vin Diesel's *XXX* sagas that transform his former criminality into a patriotic rogue who vanquishes international threats. The remainder of the chapter examines two female CIA agents, the first is Maya in *Zero Dark Thirty*, and the second is Carrie Mathison in *Homeland*. Their representations often engage comparisons with Bauer's hypermasculinity, underscoring how their “difference” plays out in matters of national security. While Maya is devoid of a personal life, Mathison is plagued by mental illness, troubling links to motherhood, and issues with trust and intimacy. Both are effective agents who are often able to perform the nation, offering more progressive representations than most previous iterations, despite the customary gender-based limitations.

Chapter 10 features an analysis of the current Other as crimefighter, a Muslim or Middle Eastern character, with a profile of the 2018 Hulu series, *The Looming Tower*, about the turf war between the CIA and FBI prior to 9/11 and the key role of Agent Ali Soufan. The chapter also looks at the slew of films and TV shows that still showcase the white male, including more *Die Hard* sequels, Tom Cruise films, and a reboot of the Tom Clancy hero, Jack Ryan. The chapter ends with a closer look at Captain America, the American everyman transformed into a superhero and the nation's defender since the 1940s, also made over to be relevant to modern times, including going rogue in the 2016 film, *Captain America: Civil War*.

Notes

1. Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 236.
2. Jean Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1976), 92.
3. Robert Alun Jones, "The Rules of Sociological Method," in *Émile Durkheim: An Introduction to Four Major Works* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1986), 60–81. Available online at durkheim.uchicago.edu.
4. Seymour Martin Lipset, *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997).
5. Ben Zimmer, "Did Stalin Really Coin 'American Exceptionalism'?" *Slate*, September 27, 2013.
6. Greg Jaffe, "Obama's New Patriotism," *The Washington Post*, June 3, 2015 and also see Zachary Stepp, "President Obama's Reclaiming of American Exceptionalism," *Huffington Post*, January 11, 2017. Available online.
7. Mark Harrison, *The Economics of World War II: Six Great Powers in International Comparisons (Studies in Macroeconomic History)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Also see Charles K. Hyde, *Arsenal of Democracy: The American Automobile Industry in World War II (Great Lakes Books Series)* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2013).
8. See Vernon Louis Parrington, *Main Currents of American Thought, Volume One* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987).
9. See Perry Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996).
10. See David M. Potter, *People of Plenty: Economic Abundance and the American Character* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966).
11. For a description of the American Adam as described by Whitman, Thoreau, Emerson, and others and See R.W.B. Lewis, *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy, and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955).
12. Howard Husock, "Uplifting the 'Dangerous Classes,'" *City Journal* (Manhattan Institute, 2007). Available online.
13. Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962), 35. Turner based his conclusion on

- the 1890 Census report that noted two people had come to occupy every square mile of non-public lands (the basis for calling an area settled).
14. Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: Norton, 1987), 26.
 15. Limerick, 26.
 16. *Ibid.*, 26. Limerick belongs to the 1960s academic ruptures that challenge consensus approaches and critique grand theories as monocausal, uncritical, and blind to alternatives. In light of my interdisciplinary training, I see these approaches *not* as mutually exclusive nor singularly reliable as models, but which collectively contribute insights worth revisiting. See also Gregory H. Nobles, *American Frontiers: Cultural Encounters and Continental Conquest* (HarperCollins Canada, 1997).
 17. *Ibid.*, 27–28.
 18. Turner, *Frontier*, 37.
 19. As quoted in Bliss Perry, *The American Mind* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1912). Available online at gutenberg.org.
 20. Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in the Twentieth-Century America* (Norman: Oklahoma University Press, 1998), 12.
 21. See Tom Englehardt, “Racism in the Media,” *Bulletin of Concerned Scholars*, 3, no. 1 (1971).
 22. Robert J. Bresler, *Us vs. Them: American Political and Cultural Conflict from WWII to Watergate* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2000).
 23. Ziauddin Sardar and Merryl Wyn Davies, *American Terminator: Myths, Movies and Global Power* (New York: Disinformation, 2004), 252.
 24. Naomi R. Rockler, “‘It’s Just Entertainment’ Perspective by Incongruity as Strategy for Media Literacy,” *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 30, no. 1 (April 2, 2010).
 25. The Rambo character, although another favorite character whom Reagan was fond of quoting, shares more in common with Hollywood’s rogue cops than he does with military characters, as, first, he is an ex-soldier, and second, because he acts alone and becomes the reluctant hero and defender of fellow soldiers (and MIAs left behind in Vietnam) rather than to serve out specific military orders issued by the government.
 26. Much of my understanding of the interplay between official state proclamations and popular culture—and their interdependence—is derived from Louis Althusser’s concept of the Repressive State Apparatus, consisting of the state’s coercive measures versus the Ideological State Apparatus, in which ideology is encoded into cultural products and

practices that are often more user friendly to the nation and which do not advertise their agenda. See Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” in *Reading Popular Narrative: A Source Book*, ed. Bob Ashley (London: Leicester University Press, 1997).

27. Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995).
28. Bethany Bemis, “How Disney Came to Define What Constitutes the American Experience,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, January 3, 2017. Available online. Matthew Fraser, *Weapons of Mass Distraction: Soft Power and American Empire* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2014).
29. Lenin, as quoted at <http://soviethistory.msu.edu/1924-2/socialist-cinema/socialist-cinema-texts/lenin-on-the-most-important-of-the-arts/>.
30. Hollywood history as a whole testifies to its reluctance to seriously critique the system in more significant ways, starting with its adoption of the Production Code to avoid government interference or the blacklisting during the McCarthy—even the naked patriotism of films and documentaries during World War II (e.g., *Why We Fight?* films), among other examples, run counter to assumptions about Hollywood liberalism. Also see Mary McNamara, “The Notion of a Liberal Agenda in Hollywood is Absurd,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 5, 2017.
31. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991).
32. James O. Young and Conrad G. Brunk, eds., *The Ethics of Cultural Appropriation* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), Kindle.
33. Richard Dyer, *White* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 1.
34. For further reading on the concept of whiteness and its impact on class, see David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*. New York: Verso, 1991. Roediger builds on W.E.B. Du Bois’s description of a privilege or “wage” accorded white workers following Reconstruction, which Roediger asserts firmly rooted their developing class consciousness in racism and that blinded them to the possibility of joining forces with black laborers to collectively agitate for better wages and conditions for all workers.
35. Stephen Neale, *Genre* (London: British Film Institute, 1980), 19.
36. *Ibid.*, 22–23. Also see Stuart M. Kaminsky, *American Film Genres* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1985), 8.
37. Thomas Leitch, *Crime Films* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 15–17.

38. Graeme Turner and Jinna Tay, eds., *Television Studies After TV: Understanding Television in the Post-broadcast Era* (New York: Routledge, 2009).
39. “Push and Pull: Hollywood, Netflix and the Future of the Entertainment Business,” November 8, 2017, Martin J. Whitman School of Management, Syracuse University. Available online at onlinebusiness.syr.edu.
40. Mareike Jenner, *Netflix and the Reinvention of Television* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).
41. See James Warren, “How Mega-Media Deals Further Erode the Myth of a ‘Liberal’ Media,” The Poynter Institute, November 20, 2017.
42. Nicholas DiFonso, *The Watercooler Effect: An Indispensable Guide to Understanding and Harnessing the Power of Rumors* (New York: Avery, 2008).
43. Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2002).



2

Frontier Ambitions and Cowboy Narratives

We [Americans] have it in our power to begin the world all over again.

Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*, 1776

I don't feel we did wrong in taking this great country away from them. There were great numbers of people who needed new land, and the Indians were selfishly trying to keep it for themselves.

John Wayne, Interview in *Playboy*, 1971

Written histories of the nation's founding "fathers" are often a blend of fact and fiction that better reconcile their biographies and accomplishments with the prevailing myths about America as a land of destiny or a shining city on a hill. American presidents have long extended those myths, adding elements from the popular culture of their day meant to supplement their political rhetoric and to affirm or contest what was being written by journalists and opposing parties. Each president added new layers to the myths, whether to recall humble beginnings in a log cabin, battles with Indians to "win" the West, or adventures overseas to advance a nation clearly on the rise.

Theodore Roosevelt was among the first politicians (later president) to fully utilize the media of his time, tapping into themes and language

commonly used in the popular frontier literature of his day, including the description of a “rough rider.” It was a term he borrowed and applied to himself and his men who charged up San Juan Hill in Cuba as part of the Spanish American War—a war many charged was not in the nation’s defense but more about ambition to acquire land beyond the limits of US borders at the time.¹ Although Roosevelt did not invent the blending of fact with fiction, he made clear the benefits of doing so. He understood that the cultural references that better resonated with average Americans and helped them better support his actions in Cuba needed to be framed as akin to a frontier adventure rather than actions resembling an imperialist’s land grab. Although Turner’s characterization of the frontier may be more famous, notes Slotkin, it is Roosevelt’s deployment of it as the ideological frame to support global ambitions that has had the most far-reaching consequences,² frequently resurrected by presidents after him to justify efforts to police the world.

Roosevelt went beyond merely borrowing frontier tales to make over his political reputation. Having been born into considerable privilege, he moved west and discovered a “vigorous manliness,” which he now urged men of his class (and race) to emulate, especially the frontier’s reliance on rugged physicality. Many writers suggest that the late nineteenth century was a moment of an acute crisis for American identities, long before Turner announced a closed frontier, and with industrialization blamed for fomenting an “unmanly” urban subculture, including the demands of middle class, white women for suffrage.³ The centers of the urbanized East also experienced more immediately the effects of recurring cycles of economic boom and bust, which further agitated social conditions among the have-nots growing more desperate with deplorable living and working conditions. The frontier, in reality, was far from closed at this juncture, as those already flush with capital continued buying western lands and developing them for a variety of industries. As a result, their wealth was substantially increased, positioning America’s capitalist class for even greater participation in the unfolding and complex international marketplace of the next century.

To that end, the already mythic frontier was deployed anew and served as the cover story for this development strategy. The myth, then, effectively blurred the present and future with the past by stressing the concept

of destiny and the moral clarity of the “civilizing” process. This enabled a generation of investors to claim to be pioneers steering the nation to a greater glory rather than engaging in an unprecedented accumulation of wealth at the expense of the vast majority of Americans—not to mention the impact on native peoples affected by such expansion. The more recognizable threat to the patrician class, to which Roosevelt belonged, was from below, in the form of a “large and alien-born proletariat,” including the immigrant Irish, the “Oriental,” and the South’s “former Africans.”⁴

Whiteness (as defined by a northern European or WASP standard at the time) was vital to Roosevelt’s concept of manhood, and here again, frontier mythology proved useful, as the so-called Indian wars enabled several generations of white males to master the art of “wilderness” skills that would prove useful in ambitious ventures ahead. At the time, adopting those skills did not mean mixing blood lines with Native Americans or African American slaves as that was thought to constitute “race suicide” for whites.⁵ Like his Rough Riders, Roosevelt envisioned a band of white, re-masculinized warriors who could restore and fulfill America’s promise through specific military campaigns. Roosevelt’s writings reveal a future president who foresees a transnational white brotherhood engaged in a global war with racial inferiors, which would no doubt be violent but essential for preserving the supremacy of Western civilization. “The most ultimately righteous of all wars is a war with savages, though it is apt to be also the most terrible and inhuman,” Roosevelt wrote, adding that the “fierce settler who drives the savage from the land lays all civilized mankind under a debt to him.”⁶ These match-ups required horrific violence but were deemed necessary showdowns for Western civilization to prosper once these inferiors were vanquished.⁷ Americans, in Roosevelt’s view, were the vanguard of this global struggle, having out-savaged the savage on the frontier, thus deserving to be the stewards of Western civilization in the name of a new “American race.”

By Roosevelt’s time, whiteness had evolved from the uncomplicated description enshrined in the 1790 naturalization law (limiting citizenship to “free white persons,” which at the time included only white men), to a more complex view—in part a reaction to the large influx of non-WASP immigrants coming to America.⁸ More than any other, a Scotch-Irishness emerged as the proper pedigree for the American everyman, and

to differentiate this pivotal figure in political rhetoric and popular culture from the Irish Catholic, who was considered a dangerous conflation of race, class, and religion⁹; the Irish Catholic was unable to “earn” white status until the next century.¹⁰ This Scotch-Irish everyman, whom Roosevelt knew to be the foot soldier of the future, stood in stark contrast to the Englishman, given his role as the former colonial master, and rejected for being what Michael Kimmel describes as an “aristocratic gentleman of privilege, often conflated with feminine attributes.”¹¹

The frontier then enables Roosevelt to minimize his own apparent privilege by wrapping himself in the trappings of mythic frontier egalitarianism, and aspire to embody this new everyman—another lesson future presidents will emulate.¹² By the turn of the last century, this New Adam, having absorbed the pioneering frontiersman, was now ready to devote himself to moving his nation (and Western civilization) forward by crossing US borders and participating in transnational versions of the frontier myth (e.g., the Philippine-American War). Such endeavors were infused with a missionary’s sense of higher purpose rather than as a design to covet land or wealth—benefits which accrued nonetheless. The nation, having already completed its divinely inspired Manifest Destiny, absorbed or expanded control of territories that extended to Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, and the US Virgin Islands, along with retaining considerable influence over Cuba and the Philippines for decades to come.

The American Adam as Western Cowboy

The frontier heroes that so inspired Roosevelt and much of the American public were largely white characters from a Northeastern perspective, with native peoples targeted as the collective obstacle to the nation’s formational destiny. In such a frame, these so-called Indians are depicted either as ignoble savages who represent the devil’s fortitude or noble savages that symbolize an unspoiled wilderness, which, however virtuous, is wasteful if not made more productive (and profitable). The frontier’s white folk hero is contrasted with (and constructed in opposition to) this Indian—first encountered by New England settlers, then by frontiersmen and pioneers pushing west. Roy Harvey Pearce explains that white

America had “hoped to bring [the Indian] to civilization but saw that civilization would kill him,” or at least destroy his natural “gifts”; however troubled the American conscience was at the death of the individual, “it could make sense of his death only when it understood it as the death of a symbol.”¹³ This process of dehumanizing the Other also effectively effaces the crime associated with his/her killing at the hands of American warriors, such thinking finding echoes in rhetoric linked to America’s later “frontier” conflicts both at home and abroad.

This frontiersman of literature was adapted for the budding film industry that developed in the early twentieth century, and which represented the newest form of popular culture to seize the nation’s attention. More specifically, it is the cowboy, especially when armed and skilled as a gunfighter, who carries on the spirit of the western frontier as adapted for the “moving pictures.” The functions and characteristics that define the western as a genre, besides being situated in the nineteenth century frontier, also include a focus on the line between law and lawlessness, order and chaos, and civilization and nature. More often than not, in its first iterations, the western and its cowboy/gunfighter hero represent the positive resolution of these conflicts, affirming the idea of American optimism and the progression of the West, and by extension, Western civilization. The western espouses “no less than a national world-view ... the genre’s celebration of America, of the contrasting images of Garden and Desert, as national myth.”¹⁴

As noted above, this myth centers on a particular performance of masculinity—one specifically defined by toughness and epitomized by the gunfighter, a professionally violent man prized for his frontier battles and unchecked autonomy, with the ability to deploy his special skills when he deems it necessary. This character’s *toughness*—whether a performance or an internalized quality—is difficult to define, although Rupert Wilkinson finds that most tough guys in popular culture celebrate action and are not afraid to “face down rivals and aggressors,” imagining nearly everyone as “a potential adversary.”¹⁵ Toughness as a virtue and violence as one of its expressions is largely reserved for white men in westerns; violence by Native Americans is viewed as proof of their savagery rather than framed as a defensive response. Such ideas were already omnipresent in nineteenth century frontier literature, Wild West shows, tabloid journalism,

and political rhetoric, which Hollywood tapped and reworked for the classical western. The novels of James Fenimore Cooper, for example, showcase the white man's superiority; Fenimore wrote that although "God made us all," he gave "each race its gifts," and the "white man's gifts are Christianized, while a redskin's are more for the wilderness."¹⁶

Within decades, the Motion Picture Production Code was instituted in 1934 to control the depiction of violence, mostly within crime films (discussed below), while western violence got a pass because of its links to "evil usages of a bygone age" and "not subject to the same critical examination as modern ways and customs," further noting that "historic and older classical subjects possess a certain quality of distance and unreality."¹⁷ Violence as a methodology (or as spectacle) is not restricted to American society and its cultural products. However, what is distinctively American, notes Slotkin, is the "mythic significance" Americans have given in amount and variance, along with "forms of symbolic violence we imagine or invent, and the political uses to which we put that symbolism."¹⁸ Thus, as a mythical and highly stylized realm, the western—and its code of violence—is performative in its ability to supplant history as well as to influence what constitutes the West in the American imagination, along with its related heroes and villains. The disconnect with historical reality is well-documented, as the cinematic West is rarely an accurate geographical location and "instead an ideological terrain reinvented with each generation of fears and hopes."¹⁹

It is also logical to assume that the Native American, as the frontier's Other, would figure prominently in the western, yet there are few native characters as "individuals with a personal history and a point of view."²⁰ Adding insult to injury, if a speaking role for a native character did exist in a traditional western, it was often played by a white actor in "redface." Although the landscape of the western is vital to its appeal, taking place at Turner's "frontier line," it is the story about the individual cowboy's transformation within such an environment that makes it such an allegory for the nation. The individual's fate (rather than the community's) is on display, with the hero riding off into the sunset—ceaselessly heading west—and with urban life, capitalist development, and a taming domesticity following close behind. For the forty years of the western's peak popularity, Will Wright suggests the marked changes to its hero say more

about his representation of an evolving nation over the course of the twentieth century than to any notion of historical accuracy.

The hero of the “classical” western is typically depicted as a “lone stranger who rides into a troubled town and cleans it up, winning the respect of the townsfolk and the love of the schoolmarm,” with variations from film to film.²¹ There are also basic “oppositions” or binaries in play, among them, “good versus bad” and “inside versus outside,” contrasting an unsettled existence with a domesticated life; another is “weak versus strong,” with the gunfighter viewed as the strongest member of the society as compared to those who “seldom carry guns and have no fighting skill.”²²

Finally, there is the opposition between wilderness and civilization, with the East largely “associated with weakness, cowardice, selfishness, or arrogance.”²³ Most important to the classical plot is the need for the hero to isolate himself as an autonomous individual as a way to achieve respect; Wright concludes that this trait mimics the skills needed to succeed in a market economy as well. Given the post-war disillusionment about manhood in an increasingly corporatized society (the image of men in gray flannel suits), the 1950s western hero began to define himself in *opposition* to society.

In such a “transitional” western as *High Noon* (1952), the cowboy hero in the end throws his badge in the dirt “to let the town know he has won, they haven’t.”²⁴ More tellingly, the town is not shown to be particularly corrupt but typical, implying the system itself is flawed, an early indicator of the idealized lawman as not a representative of state authority but one who stands “outside” it—even in opposition to the larger society he serves. This is a much more stinging critique than found in earlier westerns; it also hints of a dangerous conflict that will be encoded into the later rogue crimefighter. He will retain the western hero’s sense of purpose (like that of the nation he personifies), yet, once an entity is revealed to be inept or corrupt, only the rogue will know what is best for the community at large. By celebrating the isolated wisdom of a lone enforcer, as in *High Noon* and the plethora of later films and television programs under review, the focus on the individual helps mask the system’s flaws and any inherent hypocrisy; instead, it points to an American preference

for dispatching a benevolent rogue as the quintessential American loner hero to both embrace *and* to blame.

Another much studied example of a similarly conflicted and revelatory western is *The Searchers* (1956), whose central character, Ethan Edwards (John Wayne), struggles to fit into a changing society. His hatred of Native Americans, even assimilated “half breeds,” is so nakedly racist that it renders him a symbol of intense moral confusion and the chief obstacle to the racial healing necessary for the nation to move forward—referring to both the film’s post-Civil War period and the twentieth century timing of the film’s premier. In the end, Edwards “does the right thing,” choosing not to kill his niece, whom he has rescued—and despite having spent most of the story doggedly pursuing her and her captors, vowing to kill her for the sake of her honor and for failing to no longer be white after living with savages. In one scene, after searching among rescued white women for Debbie, one of Edwards’s companions is shocked at their appearance and apparent madness in the wake of their captivity, noting how hard it is to believe they are white, prompting a disgusted Edwards to note, “not anymore,” confirming in his view their racial pollution after contact with such savages.

As Julia Leyda argues, the film addresses the era’s domestic angst over dismantling the previous system of racial segregation, but also the “better dead than Red” associations with communism. Considering both tensions in tandem provides a more complete picture of the film’s cultural relevance, especially for a society still relying on men like Edwards—a “warrior patrolling the periphery”—as a means to preserve white hegemony, while also begrudgingly offering space (however limited) in American society to the Other.²⁵ The film’s ideological complexity is also the result of its heavy investment in frontier mythology already laden with politicized codes that move well beyond simply advocating a racist or anti-racist view or to be so consciously linked to any one contemporary issue. The mythology proves to be far more flexible, enabling such films to espouse both progressive and conservative impulses—able to transcend historical specificity while also linking select historical moments to a larger continuum—the latter steeped in frontier mythology and its related ideologies. In this way, *The Searchers* can symbolize “progress” as Edwards returns home with Debbie despite her exposure to “savages,” yet



Fig. 2.1 John Wayne as Ethan Edwards in *The Searchers*. Screen shot from the official 1956 trailer

also remain conservative, investing in normative gendered and racialized factors that comprise its troubled hero. The story's interest center remains a conflicted white male reacting to new challenges and evolving, however painfully, in order to remain in control of the larger picture (Fig. 2.1).

The Searchers ends with Edwards no longer at ease in a “civilized” and integrated frontier, but which could not have prospered without a gunfighter like him—and by extension, without an “uncivilized” frontier to tame, he cannot survive either. Yet, he adapts enough to sustain the focus and moral conflict at the heart of the story; like the hero in *High Noon*, Edwards remains the enduring mythical and sustainable outsider. The final scene shows him unable to join the family indoors, standing outside the doorway, captured in silhouette and backlit by the Western vista, where as a rogue he is doomed to roam—being both out of place and disturbingly at home. As a director and an actor who helped define the genre, director John Ford and John Wayne were well versed in the western's mythological embrace, especially its ability to transcend the politics of the moment. Rather than consciously attempt to celebrate (or disturb) the frontier myth, they aggressively deployed it, including its inherent

duplicity: the need to be a savage to defeat savagery, which also runs the risk of becoming the savage. It is a conflict intrinsic to the myth—and the nation that hides behind it—and that haunts the rogue crimefighter to this day.

The Classical Western's Last Stand

For a post-war America, the Hollywood western was “well-suited to convey important ideological rationales ... including the inevitability of American expansion and the strategies for hegemony.”²⁶ By the 1960s, the western became overstressed trying to accommodate increasingly troubled heroes and being situated in a bygone era no longer able to speak to contemporary concerns.

The Wild Bunch (1969), which Michael Coyne calls a Richard Nixon western²⁷ and Steve Neale labels a “Vietnam Western,” presents a sharp departure from the usual depiction of the frontier, now framed as a depleted terrain with gunfighters adrift and searching for purpose. Leonard Quart and Albert Auster note that director Sam Peckinpah’s “orgiastic massacre” reflected the mood of many films of the era, which used the liberal license of the post-Code period to evoke “a portrait of a world gone awry.”²⁸ The film remains a disturbing portrait of gunfighters severed from the myths that once sanctioned their actions, presenting their participation in the Mexican Revolution, if not a justifiable excuse, then an explanation for their violent behavior. The film aptly captures the era’s conflict over the Vietnam War, which increasingly forced the nation to configure political justifications for continuing to dispatch warriors to the Southeast Asian frontier.

As a relevant mode of expression the western did not entirely fade away after the 1960s, but never again matched its former prominence. Meanwhile, the era also celebrated films that framed outlaws as folk heroes (e.g., *Bonnie and Clyde*) and epic tales of gangsters that challenged the portrait of America as an immigrant’s promised land (e.g., *The Godfather*).²⁹

Television westerns until the late 1960s utilized most of the tried-and-true formulas of their film counterparts, except to differ in key ways.

First, given the restraints imposed on broadcast television at the time, any violence depicted had to be somewhat sanitized and made as family friendly as possible. Second, shows such as *The Rifleman*, *Bonanza*, and *Gunsmoke*, to name just a few of the era's dozens of similar programs, supposedly took place during the same nineteenth century era and locales, but differ from films by depicting the frontier as more or less stripped of its most menacing elements. That left most plots and scripted conflicts to include disputes over land, cattle rustling, and the occasional unsavory stranger who wanders into town to start trouble. These conflicts also enabled white heroes to battle mostly white villains, with Native Americans rendered as symbolic reminders of a bygone era rather than a terrifying threat that still justified their removal or eradication. Finally, unlike film westerns, the heroes with guns who populate these TV shows are rarely depicted as ambiguous about their roles. *The Rifleman* (1958–1963) featured a homesteader with a deadly aim but who only uses those skills when he absolutely must defend what is good and right. *Bonanza* (1959–1973) featured another widowed father, this time with three grown sons who first and foremost protect their sprawling ranch then settle other townspeople's problems, especially given the family patriarch's innate sense of justice. *Gunsmoke* (1955–1975), which defied the disappearance of other westerns in a post-1960s television landscape, rarely experimented with moral ambiguity, which perhaps accounts for its unusually long run.³⁰ While films such as *The Searchers* may have absorbed the era's uneasiness about how the West was "won," *Gunsmoke* steadily relied on its winning formula of a sure-shot Marshal Matt Dillon who preferred restraint over showmanship, presenting a sharp contrast with his brethren in films.

Although the classical Hollywood western never regained its previous dominance after the cultural and political ruptures of the 1960s, it resurfaces in what are now called "revisionist" westerns (still holding the originals as the benchmark, with these newcomers considered "alternative" narratives). Several have won acclaim for their more realistic depictions of nineteenth century hardships, being darker and less celebratory about the fabled West. *The Unforgiven* (1992) tells the tale of a former gunfighter, portrayed by Clint Eastwood, who is enlisted to help a lawman but whose talents, once unleashed, cannot be contained until vengeance is served.³¹

There are several remakes of classical westerns that take advantage of a contemporary tolerance for dialed-up violence, while leaving the tropes about manhood and gunplay intact (e.g., *Young Guns*). In the 2016 remake of the 1960 film, *The Magnificent Seven*, one character even remarks about the diverse crew of hired guns being assembled, “What a merry band we are. Me a gray, Chisolm a blue, Billy, a mysterious man of the Orient, a drunk Irishman, a Texican, a female and her gentleman caller.”³²

Still other neo-Westerns showcase the Other as a key character in an attempt to showcase perspectives suppressed during the classical era, including *Dances with Wolves* (1990) and *Hostiles* (2017), which both include Native American perspectives although remaining largely concerned with the white man’s ordeal. *The Quick and the Dead* (1987) offers the rare glimpse of a female gunslinger who avenges the murder of her marshal father, and *Brokeback Mountain* (2005), which explores the consequences of a homosexual relationship between two Wyoming ranchers over a twenty-year period starting in 1963. The film was as critically acclaimed as it was controversial and several scholars suggest it marks a turning point for gay-themed stories in Hollywood.³³

Two westerns from Quentin Tarantino, *Django Unchained* (2012) and *The Hateful Eight* (2015), make an investment in prominent black characters, especially in the former, as Django, a former slave, sets out to rescue his wife from an abusive plantation owner. Both Tarantino films also rely on his signature use of graphic violence, most notably in *The Hateful Eight*, which discards the western’s usual morality play, whether classically optimistic or contemporarily bleak. Like Eastwood’s neo-western, *The Hateful Eight* also utilizes the gunfighter’s acumen for revenge rather than justice, but with Tarantino portraying the West as a dystopic wasteland with little use for any type of law and order.

Contemporary television, especially with the expansion of cable and streaming services, has offered some further experiments using many enduring western motifs, including the popular 1989 mini-series, *Lonesome Dove*, based on the novels by Larry McMurtry, which tracks the adventures of two former Texas rangers—the series lauded as both a throwback to the classical western but also contemporary in its presentation of complex motivations and richer characterizations. Others largely

reproduce the same revisionist and violent tendencies discussed above, including the critically acclaimed HBO series, *Deadwood* (2004–2006), named after the infamous nineteenth century frontier town; a feature-length film by the same creators is due out in 2019.

Justified (2010–2015) was a successful FX Network show that showcased a cowboy-like federal marshal with a “lightning-fast draw [and] John Wayne-like strut” working in modern-day Kentucky to take on “white supremacists, corrupt cops, moonshiners, the Dixie mafia and [a] cunning backwoods con man.”³⁴ Finally, Netflix launched the original mini-series *Godless* in 2017, which earned rave reviews for exposing “the dark mythology embedded in the Western genre.”³⁵ For the most part, though, the above programs, despite their contemporary timing, merely perpetuate rather than alter Turner’s frame of the frontier as the line between civilization and savagery, with some challenges presented by the Other but largely still the domain of white male (and straight) gunfighters and lawmen still trying their best to civilize the Wild West.

Lawlessness and the Crime Film

The crime film is as old as the western and equally as revelatory about American myths although usually from a much darker perspective. While the western focuses on the hero and how America ought to be, the crime film more often portrays the dark side of American society and what it fears it might be. Those crime stories richest in cultural clues are those in which the characters crisscross the line, whether to pursue the uplift necessary for redemption, or to descend from being a knight of the mean streets to another of society’s predators. Here again, the display of violence is an integral part of a crime film’s mode of expression, but functions in more complex ways than in most westerns, capable of representing both the criminal’s pathology as well as the crimefighter’s sense of restorative justice—and, on occasion, provocatively depicting the dire consequences when the two are dangerously intertwined. Moreover, crime stories, on the whole, are usually understood as purposefully mired in the contemporary world and especially proliferate during times of intense social strain.

The Depression provided such a setting and produced a rash of folk heroes who, despite their criminality, captured the nation's attention. Historical echoes that linked such Depression-era bank robbers as "Pretty Boy" Floyd, Bonnie and Clyde, and John Dillinger to nineteenth century frontier outlaws had already permeated journalism accounts of their exploits. *The New York Times* specifically described Dillinger as being "true to the old frontier types" such as Jesse James.³⁶ For those who watched as banks repossessed their homesteads, such outlaw bank robbers may have appeared as daring "avengers of injustice."³⁷ Press stories from the era even noted their thoughtfulness in burning mortgages while fleeing bank robberies,³⁸ in keeping with mythology that likens them to one of history's most celebrated outlaws: Robin Hood.

The era's stories and films about gangsters, though, insinuate the taint of foreignness by accentuating the gangster's ethnicity or contingent whiteness, as well as focusing on his unsavory membership in gangs, mobs, and organized crime syndicates—certainly antithetical to the "lone" status of the Dillinger-type (and mostly rural) outlaws. The most popular screen gangsters are shown overcoming these "collective" handicaps by demonstrating their individual ambition and pursuit of the American dream, even if through criminal means.

Regardless of whether the criminal was an outlaw or a gangster, the crimefighters charged with taming or arresting them too often appeared one-dimensional and ineffectual by comparison. Before *Dirty Harry* few crime films featured a law enforcement figure that could match the criminal's charisma and audacity—that is, without having the crimefighter break the rules and go rogue.

One example is the famous G-man, Elliot Ness, who has been featured in numerous films and TV shows since the real Ness's Prohibition era context. One of the more notable reincarnations was the 1987 film, *The Untouchables*, which shows Ness catching Al Capone using rogue tactics, including shoving the uncooperative Capone henchman, Frank Nitti, off a rooftop to his death³⁹—acts that never actually happened. In another memorable scene, veteran cowboy cop Jimmy Malone (Sean Connery) offers Ness advice on how to beat Capone, instructing, "He pulls knife, you pull a gun. He sends one of yours to the hospital, you send one of his to the morgue. That's the Chicago way." Although such a rogue mentality

is in keeping with prevailing myths, the real Ness prosecuted Capone for tax evasion, with the story ending in a courtroom rather than in a violent street fight, which certainly short-circuits the usual mythic (and cathartic) showdown required between Hollywood lawmen and the lawless.

No matter in what guise, though, most crime stories that focus on crimefighters are also hampered by having to represent the state's interests. Rather than resembling the self-reliant American Adam, their allegiance to serve as government functionaries somewhat diminishes their ability to embody lone heroes. Moreover, if the crimefighter is presented as a district attorney, his occupation also reeks of class privilege as a college-educated professional, and if someone with political ambitions, further distances him from representing an everyman type of hero.

Law enforcement characters in crime films and in television programs most often work in an urban milieu that also seems better suited to the criminal's survival skills, as they are born to an environment in which law and order is deteriorating. This stands in stark contrast to the realm of the western hero, who is in charge of creating law and order in a new land not yet sullied or compromised by the realities of twentieth century life. This urban quality, until well past mid-twentieth century, also ran counter to the idealized image of America as a spacious place rooted in rural landscapes and small town ideals; even during the post-World War II period, the newly emerging suburbs fed off the image of open land, where reinvention was possible and plenty of space existed to reenact a revamped version of the frontier—one Kenneth Jackson dubs the "Crabgrass Frontier."⁴⁰ In contrast, the imagery of the American city is often inextricably linked to poverty and deterioration, serving as a rude reminder for mainstream white America that the nation also includes the non-white, the non-privileged, the non-native born, and perhaps the unpatriotic who wish to challenge the status quo.

Moreover, unlike the defeat of disorder and/or criminality at the heart of a western, a crime film exploits the criminal's potential to unravel society rather than society's ability to eliminate the conditions that produced him. The Production Code was put in play in 1934 above all to curtail the excesses of the era's widely popular crime films such as *Little Caesar* and *Scarface*. The code specifies that "revenge in modern times shall not be justified," which, as mentioned earlier, left westerns unscathed because

of their historical context; the code also warned that the “police must not be presented as incompetent, corrupt, cruel or ridiculous.”⁴¹

After the code took effect, Hollywood’s need to create audacious crimefighters was accomplished in one noteworthy case by casting James Cagney in the role of a government agent. In “*G Men* (1935), Cagney’s character relies heavily on Cagney’s existing persona and box office appeal largely earned playing some of the era’s most memorable screen gangsters. In effect, notes one reviewer, Cagney’s FBI agent, Brick Davis, is “fairly indistinguishable from Tom Powers,” referring to the pugnacious gangster in *Public Enemy* (1931) that first made Cagney a star. In “*G Men*, Davis is an underutilized attorney who joins the FBI after gangsters kill his friend, also an agent. Having been born to the streets, Davis uses his urban skills to hunt down his friend’s killers—such “street” smarts becoming an essential feature of the later rogue crimefighter. The film also includes the FBI’s appeals to Washington at the time to carry guns like the criminals the Bureau was fighting. One character’s rousing speech to a Congressional committee reveals a logic that also gets absorbed into the later rogue when he urges, “Arm your agents . . . give your special agents machine guns, shotguns, tear gas, everything else. This is war.”⁴²

The film finds closure using two plot devices. The first is Davis’ impending marriage to a colleague’s sister, signaling his full incorporation into society and his switch from consorting with compromised women like his former moll—a domestication that will be roundly rejected by the modern rogue. The other plot device infuses the story with the necessary degree of violent spectacle, which provided a justification that satisfied the censors at the time, but also taps into an essential ingredient of the frontier myth: to end the criminals’ reign of terror Davis must behave violently, out-savaging the urban savages to restore law and order. The badge serves as a moral shield that empowers Davis to use a greater degree of ferocity than his previous gangster characters were permitted. “*G Men*’s ending features one of the most protracted shoot-outs to that point in film history; yet, it not only received the seal of approval from the Hays Office, but also “the semiofficial blessing of J. Edgar Hoover in a prologue” for its 1949 re-release.⁴³

Many similarly violent pro-police films followed in the mid 1930s, in which Hollywood rewrote history again, as law enforcement’s culpability

during Prohibition is well-documented as often being paid partners in the burgeoning bootlegging industry. Although the rural outlaws and public enemies of the era had been spectacularly gunned down, the government was impotent in curbing the rising crime syndicates that emerged in the post-Prohibition period, as profits from bootlegging were successfully invested in more complex criminal operations that controlled the American underworld for decades to come. By the early 1950s, Hoover and his FBI were still denying the existence of organized crime, focusing instead on suspected communists as the most dangerous threat to American society.⁴⁴

The Pessimism and Critical Promise of *Film Noir*

Many of the 1940s American crime films, later identified as *film noir* (or dark cinema) by French film scholars, were lauded for their haunting depiction of crime and thriving on the very elements that Hoover and others were trying to chill. Noir's stylistic features, which arguably describe a mood or attitude in filmmaking more than a specific genre classification, include a particular *mise en scène* (oblique angles, stark and meaningful lighting, irregular characters). It also sends "a sense of people trapped ... in webs of paranoia and fear, unable to tell guilt from innocence, true identity from false ... and the survival of good remains troubled and ambiguous."⁴⁵

What is pertinent to this study is how noir—and its morally conflicted detective—challenged the codes embedded in most conventional Hollywood narratives at the time, which opened up space for the rogue cop archetype to later inhabit and further exploit. Like the western, noir stories relied on popular literature for inspiration, transforming the "hard-boiled" detective heroes in novels by Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett into screen heroes.⁴⁶ Thus, the noir detective carried forward a thread of the western hero's need for individual reckoning and a sense of duty that involves what Frank Krutnik calls noir's "battered concept of integrity and professionalism."⁴⁷ Also echoing the frontier struggle of the western hero, the noir detective "seeks to prove his masculine professionalism by outwitting his criminal adversaries."⁴⁸ Such a white male hero

also demands a “paradoxical” combination of rights: “to be completely detached from society *and* ... be allowed total access to every part of it ... He holds himself external to and above specific class, domestic and institutional relations in order not to be marked by any specificity ... [and] affirms the right of the Democratic Everyman to go anywhere as a matter of principle.”⁴⁹ The noir detective is then another portrait of a self-directed man who enjoys considerable autonomy, which however jeopardized, is his to lose.

A combination of factors explains noir’s short life amid the chilly climate of a Cold War America—one that perhaps lacked a tolerance for noir’s obscuring the difference between good and evil, enabling its cops, criminals, and victims to share the same pliable morality.⁵⁰ The stylistic features that gave noir its uniqueness also undermined its ability to resonate with larger audiences.⁵¹ At the same time, its frequent abstraction of violence, preferring “compositional tension” over “physical action,”⁵² disqualifies its use of violence as a form of regeneration—so vital to the frontier myth in Slotkin’s view. The noir detective is also frequently privately employed, which as discussed in the introduction makes his use of deadly force an intimate act and incongruous as a manner of public catharsis.

Although many recent films embrace noir’s elements of style (e.g., *L.A. Confidential*), noir’s essential frame has proven too murky a view of American society to be acceptable as a national allegory by mainstream audiences. For a nation that thrives on looking forward and taking definitive action—even at the expense of learning from an interrogated past—noir proved far too pessimistic during its original run and to the present day to have mass appeal or to successfully tap into the mainstream psyche. Still, as much as the western cowboy, the noir detective produced a legacy of self-reliance, obsession, moral pliability, and a taste for violence that complicated Hollywood’s portrait of an American hero, and which the rogue crimefighter will later inherit and redeploy, earning more widespread acceptance from mainstream audiences.

Notes

1. Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, 79.
2. *Ibid.*, 30–32; see also 54–62.

3. See Rebecca Edwards, *Angeles in the Machinery: Gender in American Party Politics from the Civil War to the Progressive Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).
4. Charles Francis Adams, quoted in Richard Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800–1890* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), 299.
5. See chapter 5, Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880–1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).
6. Theodore Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West, Volume 3/The Founding of the Trans-Alleghany Commonwealths, 1784–1790* (Kindle Locations 503–505).
7. As characterized by Robert Jewett and John Sheldon Lawrence, *The Myth of the Superhero* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 58.
8. Matthew Frye Jacobson, “Becoming Caucasian: Vicissitudes of Whiteness in American Politics and Culture,” *Identities*, 8 (2001), 89–90.
9. Carl Wittke, *The Irish in America* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1956), vi–vii.
10. Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995).
11. Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: The Free Press, 1996).
12. Roosevelt (Kindle Location 503).
13. Roy Harvey Pearce, *Savagism and Civilization: A Study of the Indian and the American Mind* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 73.
14. Jim Kitses, *Horizons West: Directing the Western from John Ford to Clint Eastwood*, 2nd ed. (British Film Institute, 2007), 12 and 14.
15. Rupert Wilkinson, *American Tough: The Tough-Guy Tradition and American Character* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1984), 8.
16. See Pearce, *Savagism*, 206.
17. Joseph Breen, Referring to distinctions being incorporated into the Code, quoted in Raymond Moley, *The Hays Office* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1945), 100.
18. Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, 13.
19. Lee Clark Mitchell, *Westerns: Making the Man in Fiction and Film* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1960), 6.
20. Jane Tompkins, *West of Everything: The Inner Life of Westerns* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 8.

21. Will Wright, *Six Guns and Society: A Structural Study of the Western* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 32.
22. *Ibid.*, 40–59.
23. *Ibid.*, 57.
24. *Ibid.*, 77.
25. Julia Leyda, “Home on the Range: Space, Nation, and Mobility in John Ford’s *The Searchers*,” *The Japanese Journal of American Studies*, 13 (2002), 102.
26. Stanley Corkin, “Cowboys and Free Markets: Post-World War II Westerns and U.S. Hegemony,” *Cinema Journal*, 39, no. 3 (Spring 2000), 66.
27. Also see Michael Coyne’s discussion of this film in chapter 9 of *The Crowded Prairie: American National Identity in the Hollywood Western* (New York: I.B. Taurus, 1998), 142–165.
28. Leonard Quart and Albert Auster, *American Film and Society since 1945* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), 95.
29. See Marilyn Yaquinto, *Pump ‘Em Full of Lead: A Look at Gangsters on Film* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1998).
30. *Guns Smoke*, which ran from 1955 through 1975, had the distinction of being the longest-running, primetime, live-action TV series until *The Simpsons* surpassed it in 2018.
31. The film earned an Oscar for Best Picture as well one for Eastwood as director.
32. *The Magnificent Seven*, directed by Antoine Fuqua (MGM, 2016).
33. See Steven Paul Davies, *Out at the Movies: A History of Gay Cinema* (Harpending, UK: Oldcastle Books, 2008). Among its major awards, *Brokeback Mountain* earned an Academy Award for director Ang Lee.
34. David Fear, “Marshall Law: Timothy Olyphant on Ending ‘Justified,’” *Rolling Stone*, January 19, 2015.
35. Sophie Gilbert, “What *Godless* Says about America,” *The Atlantic*, November 27, 2017. Available online.
36. Quoted in Paul Kooistra, *Criminals as Heroes: Structure, Power, and Identity* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1989), 128–129.
37. *Ibid.*, 156.
38. James Robert Parish and Michael R. Pitts, *The Great Gangster Pictures* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1981), 317.
39. Ronald Kozial and Edward Baumann, “How Frank Nitti Met His Fate,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 29, 1987.

40. See Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).
41. By 1934, the decade-long effort of Will Hays to work from inside Hollywood to curb what was deemed the crime film's potential harm was deemed a failure, as the industry faced the threat of boycotts and possible government interference, prompting the invention and vigorous enforcement of the Motion Picture Production Code. Raymond Moley, *Hays Office* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1945), 103.
42. "G" Men, DVD, directed by William Keighley (Turner Home Entertainment, 2000).
43. Thomas Leitch, *Crime Films* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 27.
44. Lorraine Boissoneault, "A 1957 Meeting Forced the FBI to Recognize the Mafia—And Changed the Justice System Forever," November 14, 2017. Available online at smithsonian.com.
45. Robert Sklar, *Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies* (New York: Random, 1976), 253; see also R. Barton Palmer, *Hollywood's Dark Cinema* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994), 39.
46. David Bordwell, "The Case of *Film Noir*," in *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960*, eds. David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 76.
47. Frank Krutnik, *In a Lonely Street: Film Noir, Genre, Masculinity* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 85–87.
48. *Ibid.*, 42.
49. Dean MacCanell, "Democracy's Turn: On Homeless *Noir*," in *Shades of Noir: A Reader*, ed. Joan Copjec (New York: Verso, 1993), 287.
50. Carlos Clarens, *Crime Movies* (London: W. W. Norton, 1980), 192.
51. As B movies, they were also relegated to a lower exhibition profile, only becoming the focus of critique and praise after scholarly attention prompted their "secondary commercialization" in the decades that follow. Keith Reader, *Cultures on Celluloid* (London: Quartet Books, 1981), 4.
52. Paul Schrader, "Notes on *Film Noir*," in *Film Noir Reader*, eds. Alain Silver and James Ursini (New York: Limelight, 1999), 55.



3

Dirty Harry and the Urban Frontier

[Mayor said] high priority was run these hoods out of San Francisco.

“Dirty” Harry Callahan

I didn’t expect you to use violence!

Capt. McKay

What did you expect me to do—yell trick or treat at them?

“Dirty” Harry Callahan

Much as Roosevelt did in the nineteenth century, President John F. Kennedy tapped into another crisis of identity in the mid-nineteenth century. In his 1960 speech he refutes the idea that all “horizons have been won, that there is no longer an American frontier ... the New Frontier of which I speak ... is a set of challenges... uncharted areas of science and space, unsolved problems of peace and war, unconquered pockets of poverty and prejudice.”¹ Much of Kennedy’s point about unconquered social ills has faded in order to embrace the mythical frontier that persistently seduces the American imagination. Rather than heed Kennedy’s nuanced plea to curb the poverty that destroys cities, America has increasingly blamed the victims of poverty and racism for their own

failure to realize the American Dream. In other words, the myths are not flawed, only those who criticize them and the social order they represent.

Like other crossroads in history, multiple forces were challenging American society, although the profound consequences did not seem irreversible until the late 1960s. By then an array of social and cultural ruptures accompanied growing opposition to the Vietnam War, helping to galvanize disparate groups toward a fateful choice: to merely question authority or to advocate counterrevolution. Intense struggles were underway concerning black power, gay and lesbian rights, the women's movement, the plight of Native Americans, the environment, experiments in Eastern religions, and the New Left's reinvestment in Marxism as a means to envision radical changes to the system—or its overthrow. President Richard Nixon moved to check the reach of such movements, describing a “silent majority” being terrorized by potent challengers to “establishment” America. Even Americans sympathetic to the anti-war crusade or other social movements grew increasingly concerned about the escalating violence. By the end of the tumultuous 1960s, the frontier metaphor was less about hope and more about aggression in reaction to the many inner cities and college campuses now appearing as lawless as a fabled Deadwood, and in dire need of a gunfighter-type hero to restore law and order.

Beginning in the supposed “summer of love”—the same summer urban ghettos burned—several films were released that signaled a shift in Hollywood as well. In particular, the crime film *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967) touched off a cultural brawl, using the crime story's best conventions and a tale from the 1930s to comment on the growing tumult, portraying the infamous couple as more folk heroes than criminal bank robbers. The film also features Texas ranger Frank Hamer, who far from heroic, is depicted as their unrelenting tormenter; he eventually orders his agents to ambush the couple, their massacre serving as the film's ultra-violent finale, at least for its time.² Hamer resembles real G-man Melvin Purvis, who had pursued such Depression era outlaws as Floyd (dubbed the “sage brush” Robin Hood), and whose methods prompted even fellow lawmen to accuse him of shooting first and asking questions later.³

One critic at the time, building on Siegfried Kracauer's view that cinema often engages a “national fever chart,” noted, “In the thirties in

Germany, the disease was authoritarianism; in the sixties in America, it is anarchy.” Charles Thomas Samuels accuses *Bonnie and Clyde* of further encouraging that outcome, adding, “Those who riot against conditions in the Negro ghetto or the war in Vietnam can claim precisely the moral validation for their acts which the Barrow Gang so conspicuously lacks.”⁴ Within a year of *Bonnie and Clyde*, real life violence overshadowed the Hollywood version. An “apocalyptic year of a momentous decade,” 1968 chronicled the sharp escalation of the Vietnam conflict, with the anti-war movement reaching a theatrical pitch in response.⁵ The year also included the assassinations of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, as well as the melee outside the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, which the government’s Walker report later concluded was more of a “police riot.” As urban disorder grew more acute, Hollywood realigned its focus to reflect those threats in its storytelling, which would not only involve a new cast of Others to fear, but also a crimefighting hero who could match their potential for mayhem.

Dirty Harry: A Wild West Cure for Urban Savagery

Much has been written about *Dirty Harry* (1971) and its title character, but it is vital to recap those key elements that continue the patterns introduced in Chap. 2 and which provide the foundations of contemporary crimefighters such as Jack Bauer who extend such a character’s influence and utility. The film features homicide detective Harry Callahan (Clint Eastwood) and his rogue approach to pursuing criminals, specifically, the sociopathic sniper, Scorpio (Andy Robinson), who intends to continue killing innocent people until the city meets his ransom demands.

Callahan is shown having to work around a spineless mayor’s office and a police department obliged to follow the law. After being suspended for, among other things, torturing Scorpio, Callahan ends Scorpio’s reign of terror by acting alone, matching the criminal’s intensity and creating his own rules to see justice served. In the original film and four sequels spanning seventeen years, Callahan faces two types of real but also sym-

bolic enemies. The first includes criminals who represent an array of radical types befitting the era, with Scorpio and his peace sign belt buckle hardly masking the Charles Manson figure he clearly resembles. Harry's other nemesis is the amalgam of social and political pressures embattling the system, which seems strained trying to accommodate such aggressive demands for change.

Perhaps reacting to some critics' complaints that *Dirty Harry* had fascist overtones, the next film, *Magnum Force* (1973), "cleans up Harry's own act."⁶ In this film, Callahan ends the killing spree of four rookie traffic cops who—with the help of a corrupt police official—wage a war on society's undesirables the system has failed to prosecute. This time Callahan explains how he may hate the weakened system, "but until someone comes along with some changes that make sense, I'll stick with it." Here, faced with anarchy, Callahan makes clear the only choice left is an imperfect but enduring American justice system. He also insinuates that these cops' tactics are un-American, resembling more the Brazilian "death squads" operating in the 1970s as auxiliaries to the legal police.

In the next sequel, *The Enforcer* (1976), Callahan stops a terrorist organization comprised of disgruntled Vietnam veterans and their accomplices—their reasons for attacking the government left unexplored, as are the objectives of black militants, whom the police harass for crimes actually committed by white radicals. Next, in *Sudden Impact* (1983), which Eastwood directed, Callahan is banished to a small California town for his most recent excesses but becomes involved in the hunt for a serial killer: a rape victim exacting her revenge. In the final sequel, *The Dead Pool* (1988), Callahan solves a mystery related to several murder victims, whose names appear on a list meant to be a game. Added to his enemies list in the film is an insatiable media, a trope that will be enthusiastically embraced by future rogues.

Much scholarship has examined how these films reflect key social and political clashes, many of which remain unsettled. One conflict relates to procedures that first grew out of the Supreme Court's 1966 ruling in the Miranda case that altered the way police make arrests.⁷ Controversy over the Miranda rules has been included in numerous crime films ever since, often depicted as shortchanging the goal of restorative justice, even though such rules honor the letter of the law. In *Dirty Harry*, Scorpio is

savvy enough to exploit the new technicalities of arrest, smugly informing Callahan, “I want a lawyer.”⁸ After Callahan violates Scorpio’s rights, Scorpio is released to kill again, leaving Callahan to complain that “the law is crazy” for being able to trump the rights of the victim who was “raped and left to die.”⁹

Callahan not only serves as an urbanized Ethan Edwards for a changing nation, but also for reflecting identity factors that reaffirm him as an American hero. His masculinity is constructed in opposition to the Other, including what is deemed feminine. In keeping with the ancestry of loner heroes, Callahan is introduced as a widower with no further need for intimacy, even close male friends; like knights of old, he is focused only on his mission. Against this masculine norm, *Sudden Impact* includes a vicious portrait of a “deviant”: a “dyke” named Ray (Audrie J. Neenan), who helps deliver the female victims to her male friends and watches (and laughs) while the rapes occur. The story’s plot is also about Callahan’s control over Jennifer, whom he eventually sets free (overturning his earlier oath to remain loyal to the system, right or wrong). She expresses her gratitude, telling Callahan he is “an endangered species” as a traditional American male who follows his own instincts, and whose approach brought her “justice”—in contrast to the overtaxed system of the 1970s that failed her.¹⁰

Callahan’s masculinity is further tested when assigned a female partner, Kate Moore (Tyne Daly), in *The Enforcer*. It reflects another of the era’s conflicts: the push to integrate women into the ranks of police, discussed in a later chapter. After an altercation with a school-marmish figure from the mayor’s office (whom Harry refuses to call “Ms” as she requests), Callahan is introduced to candidate Moore, whom he aggressively rebukes for lacking street experience that he says will jeopardize the lives of her male partners (although, by that logic, male rookies pose the same threat). “That’s a hell of a price to pay for being stylish,”¹¹ he remarks, intimating that hiring women is about keeping up appearances rather than responding to changing gender roles. Callahan comes to admire Moore’s knowledge of the criminal code as well as her pluck, although still limited by the era’s gendered politics that traffic in a few well-worn stereotypes. Moore comes to support Callahan, especially after being shot, urging him to pursue her assailant, which he does, blasting him off the edge of



Fig. 3.1 “Dirty” Harry Callahan (Clint Eastwood) wielding his 44 Magnum at a “punk.” Screenshot from official 1971 trailer for *Dirty Harry*, Warner Bros

Alcatraz with a bazooka-like weapon. One constant throughout the franchise is Callahan’s less-than-subtle 44 Magnum, with its long barrel and reputation as “the most powerful handgun in the world.” His mastery of this phallic symbol is contested in *Magnum Force*, pitting Harry against four rookies who were former soldiers, representing a new crop of Hollywood crimefighters who served in Vietnam (Fig. 3.1).

Dirty Harry is not a presentation of unchanging masculinity, as each film reveals a subtle shift in his performance of gender. Like his enemies and storylines, Callahan is continually refreshed, learning to adjust to each new “challenger.” Similarly, his approach to race evolves; rather than seem patently racist, Callahan is shown negotiating with each person of color on a one-to-one basis. This approach, in keeping with the nation’s penchant for individuated responses, manages to subdue any systemic examination that would reveal enduring, large-scale inequities based on race. Having Callahan direct his politically incorrect labels at anyone who is not a WASP gives the impression that he is not so much a racist as an individual taking care to avoid singling out anyone in particular for prejudicial treatment. Given this spin, Callahan is not the problem, these thin-skinned “others” are, being so easily wounded by mere words. Callahan, as the Scotch-Irish everyman, is inoculated against similarly abusive epithets (outside of being called a “pig” as a cop), and accounts for his inability to relate to this type of injury. Thus, Callahan’s disdain for minorities’ “special” requests to adjust the American system, includ-

ing its language, is seen *not* in defense of whiteness, but in defense of a system that is assumed to be color-blind. The only characters conscious of color are those demanding “affirmative action” (to reverse centuries of unacknowledged affirmative action accorded most whites). Meanwhile, as one character notes, Callahan appropriately bleeds “PD blue.”

To complicate the race card being played, multiple versions of blackness are included. In the original film’s most famous scene, Callahan hovers over a wounded black man lying on the street, asking, “do you feel lucky, punk?”¹² He challenges the man to grab for the gun near him on the street, the “punk” declines to gamble on how many bullets have been fired. As Callahan starts to walk away, the man calls out, “I gots to know.”¹³ Callahan then turns around, points the gun in the man’s face and pulls the trigger, revealing that no bullets are left. Later a black doctor appears to patch up Callahan’s gunshot wound, revealing a congeniality with Callahan that suggests the men are indifferent to color even when the film is not. Race, among other prejudices, is also used as a frequent plotting device, including having Scorpio vow to include “a priest or a nigger” among his next victims (later targeting a gay man as well). Albert Popwell, who portrays the original film’s “punk,” appears in *The Enforcer*, this time as the compromised black militant, Big Ed Mustapha, whom Callahan blackmails into becoming an informant. It also goes unremarked when black militants are falsely arrested as “terrorists,” an injustice that outrages Callahan only because it ruins his deal with Mustapha. Popwell makes his third appearance in *Sudden Impact*, portraying Callahan’s sympathetic and friendly colleague, Horace King, who like previous Others attached to Callahan, winds up dead.

Callahan and his multicultural partners also help to introduce the loosely defined, interracial “buddy” film. What has now become a cliché was viewed at the time as novel, if not progressive, by some observers.¹⁴ Callahan’s first non-white partner is a college-educated Latino named Chico Gonzales (Reni Santoni), whom Harry initially calls “spic” and “college boy,” but whose sociology degree, warns Callahan, will not keep him safe on the street. After being shot, Gonzales admits he lacks the mettle to be a cop (like Moore, he becomes ill at the sight of dead bodies). He resigns to become a college instructor, which further emasculates him, betraying Hollywood’s code about masculinity being defined in

terms of action not sitting behind a desk. In *Magnum Force*, Callahan is paired with a black male, “Early” Smith (Felton Perry), whose best quality is loyalty but disappears from the story after being blown up by a mailbox bomb. Smith also cannot handle the uglier aspects of the job, unable to eat after seeing a dead body, compared to Callahan who casually finishes his hotdog while shooting suspects on a crowded street. In *Sudden Impact*, the franchise’s final film, Callahan is assigned the Asian American Al Quan (Evan Kim), who is skilled in the martial arts (a nod to the era’s popular martial arts films, especially those starring Bruce Lee); but Quan proves no match for Callahan, who continues to vanquish his enemies with little physical effort, outside of pulling the trigger.

The *Dirty Harry* franchise, rather than present a portrait of stable white masculinity, is illuminating for how he adjusts in reaction to these Others, demonstrating how the norm is able to absorb challenges. Others are allowed space in the story, but key myths about normative gender and race are largely reiterated and reinforced, while their demands are investigated and ultimately contained, failing to alter Callahan’s superior status. Like hegemony itself, Callahan is not the simple reflection of a fixed system of domination, but the continual renegotiation of the parameters of power.¹⁵ By enabling women and people of color to participate, Callahan, and the power structure he represents, also dictate the extent of their participation.

Callahan’s lack of class consciousness is also vital to his identity construction. Although he clashes with superiors, the conflict is based on their complicity with the corrupted system and not any class position above him. As Peter Lehman and William Luhr note, “mainstream movies tend to presume an invisible norm of middle-class life and values,” including working hard (not simply for the money) as a reflection of moral strength. Moreover, “[u]pper-class people are often portrayed as exotic, crazy, corrupt, immoral, selfish, and unhappy; lower-class people as desperate, dangerous, and also immoral.”¹⁶ At one point Callahan gripes about how a raise would be helpful, but which says more about his autonomy to complain than an interest in money as reward for his labor.

Moreover, although Callahan is a city employee with bosses, he seems an autonomous being, even contemptuous of authority, making him a type of self-made man who transcends the historical moment to link him

to this venerable American ideal. Another predecessor of Callahan's, Steve McQueen's hip detective Clancy in *Bullitt* (1968), arguably not the rogue Callahan becomes, is similarly positioned in contrast to the upper-class politician Chalmers. As Thomas Leitch notes, Clancy displays just enough "proletarian markers to establish him as a working stiff doing his job"; more importantly, he is "both emphatically middle-class and essentially classless." Like Callahan, Clancy represents "a uniquely pansocial figure who alone can mediate between the untrustworthy world of political power Chalmers represents and the equally treacherous lowlife world" of the criminals both men are pursuing.¹⁷

Dirty Harry was no doubt controversial when released, but rather than merely reflect a specific political agenda of the day, it embodied long-standing cinematic traditions, which as discussed earlier, are already steeped in myths and related ideologies. In that way Callahan reflects a deceptively complex set of social and political sensibilities that are not so easy to label. Although the film at times makes a particular argument, as Dennis Bingham notes, "it needs to do what Hollywood narratives have always done: make the political personal and hence disavow it."¹⁸ Eastwood explains that Harry adheres to a "higher morality," and in part is a response to the "big sixties concern with the rights of the accused,"¹⁹ but cautions that "Harry is a fantasy character" and more telling about the process of making entertaining movies that please mainstream audiences. Like *The Searchers*, *Dirty Harry's* central core is built on the bedrock of long-standing American mythologies, which it contemporizes with the politics and social concerns of its particular historical moment.

Eastwood, at this stage of his career, knew well the rewards of the cowboy's enduring mystique, having appeared on television in *Rawhide* (1959–1965) before earning international fame in the mid-1960s "spaghetti" Westerns by Italian filmmaker Sergio Leone. Moreover, an earlier collaboration with director Don Siegel, *Coogan's Bluff* (1968), had already transitioned the cowboy from the mythic West to the modern cityscape, positioning Eastwood as the appropriate bridge between a nineteenth century cowboy and his twentieth century urban counterpart.²⁰ As Nicole Rafter notes, part of *Dirty Harry's* success is Eastwood's existing persona as a "gunslinger"; and "[w]ithout missing a beat, the Siegel-Eastwood team rescued the superannuated but still compelling hero of Westerns

from genre decay by transferring him laterally, character intact, into the cop flick.”²¹ Even one of Callahan’s bosses tells him his approach is more like a “wild west show.”²²

Dirty Harry also represents the next step along a continuum of rogue heroes that started with the frontiersman, morphed into a fabled gun-slinging cowboy, and now appears in what Robert B. Ray dubs a “disguised Western.” *Dirty Harry* also reprises the Western sheriff’s disgust in *High Noon* by similarly throwing his badge away at the end. His numerous resignations and his department’s frequent attempts to suspend him fail because he represents something bigger than one man. Callahan serves as the system’s agent of containment—and its convenient fall guy—his gender, race, and class all called into the service of the nation to progress at any cost. *Dirty Harry*, while affirming the myth that gives him life, also glimpses the inherent conflicts that accompany deploying such a troubling figure.

Like its usefulness during previous epochs of social and cultural realignment, the frontier myth adapted again, this time to the vagaries of city life. A police detective became the new urban cowboy who could clean up the streets of San Francisco—ground zero for the era’s counterculture—and out-savage the savage to restore law and order. *Dirty Harry* also kicked off what Stuart M. Kaminsky dubs the era of “white-hot violence,” along with launching a new subgenre, best described as vigilante films. However, films such as *Death Wish*, with Charles Bronson’s architect on a rampage after his family is brutalized, lack the legal authority that Callahan so deftly exploits.

The French Connection, also released in 1971, although featuring what seems like another rogue, differs in key ways. Unlike the dramatic circumstances that pepper Callahan’s typical work day, Det. “Popeye” Doyle (Gene Hackman) endures a daily grind of routine tasks, including the tedious paperwork necessary for warrants followed by hours of lonely surveillance. There is also Doyle’s reliance on a partner who together track a major drug deal (inspired by a real case with customary Hollywood embellishment). Other crime film staples are on display, including the rivalry between local and federal authorities, along with a *Bullitt*-style muscle car speeding through the city streets, replacing the cowboy’s chase of Indians on horseback.

As another everyman, though, Doyle is similarly constructed in contrast to criminal Others—Italian and Jewish mobsters, black street punks, and foreign traffickers. What prevents Doyle from matching the mythical status of Callahan as a hero of the urban frontier, though, is that Doyle's enemies are mere criminals focused on greed, while Callahan's foes threaten more profound social mayhem and political unrest. Doyle's motivation is also shown to be intensely personal rather than in pursuit of a larger sense of restorative justice, lacking Callahan's moral high ground. Rather than a knight on a mission, Doyle remains a foot soldier in a street war. Finally, Doyle's battle also ends in tragedy: when he thinks his French "connection" has escaped, he kills a federal agent in his zealousness to capture his target—an act about which he seems indifferent, even scornful. Such an "error" not only diminishes Doyle's performance of an American hero, but also disqualifies him as a figure of national efficiency.

The Reagan Era and the Global Frontier

The mid 1970s marked the end of the Vietnam War, but so often framed as a "loss," compounded its already debilitating effects. This sense of defeat also gave rise to a neoconservatism that attempted to reinvest in American exceptionalism and reestablish "traditional" values.²³ As Wilkinson characterizes the period and Ronald Reagan's election to the presidency, it came at a moment when Americans were unsure of what role they wanted for their country in world affairs. "In crises affecting sensitive national honor, many Americans wanted their president to get tough yet realized the past costs and current limits of such toughness."²⁴

Reagan is credited with fostering a recuperative image of a bolder America at a key juncture in the nation's history. Many observers had dismissed President Jimmy Carter as a "softer" male, and "not 'man enough' to run a superpower" that created a "crisis that only a return of the ... father could resolve."²⁵ Reagan, who turned 70 shortly after his inauguration, fit the paternal role, embodying "both national and individual images of manliness" reminiscent of Roosevelt's "rough-rider image."²⁶ Reagan recouped the nation's swagger in large measure by

applying the frontier mythology to foreign policy initiatives, which testified to America's renewed interest in "policing the world." Moreover, as a successful film star before entering politics, Reagan understood the communicative power of Hollywood storytelling (for performers as well as texts), and, in particular, the value of impersonating a western cowboy. Besides often dressing like one, Reagan's speeches frequently referenced such cowboy-like characters as Dirty Harry, even Rambo—the controversial rogue character introduced in *First Blood* (1982), appearing again in two sequels in the 1980s. Susan Jeffords considers films such as *Rambo* one way that 1980s cinema "re-masculinizes" America and rehabilitates its warrior heroes by re-imagining the Vietnam conflict.²⁷ Reagan borrowed the cultural and political capital of such macho characters, applying them to both domestic and foreign contexts to better reflect his own crossover appeal. Before becoming president, Reagan had been governor of California, where he had tried to blunt the anti-war movement and dampen the state's perceived "permissive" environment, one that mainstream America still considers a breeding ground for its persistent culture wars.

Another way to re-direct the Vietnam memory was to have veterans become cop characters, now turning their military training loose on the urban jungles. By doing so, ongoing challenges to patriarchy, although unable to be completely negated, were renegotiated. Within films focused on war (either at home or abroad), and largely absent of women, white masculinity contrasted itself with masculine Others. Vietnam had reinvigorated the enduring disdain for "Oriental" males, which now added drug traffickers and gangsters to existing stereotypes already fixated on so-called Asian cruelty and duplicity. One notable example of a veteran-turned-cop who takes his learned hatred of Asians back home appears in *Year of the Dragon* (1985), which prompted protests by Chinese Americans for the film's use of prevailing stereotypes.²⁸

Given the history of race relations, the persistent Other in the American imagination above all remains whatever (and whoever) is black. During what Donald Bogle calls the "era of tan,"²⁹ the 1980s featured integrated casts that expanded many cop films' box office appeal, increasing the visibility of black males who were "promoted" from screen criminals to the partners, sidekicks, and "buddies"³⁰ of the white male lead—ever evolving

but remaining at center stage. Many of these match-ups were constructed through the lens of comedy, which sidesteps a more serious challenge to the white lead's dominion. Noteworthy examples include the set of *48 Hours* films (1982 and 1990), with Nick Nolte as a disgruntled white cop paired with Eddie Murphy, his black prisoner-turned-buddy. The film also features the era's penchant for "action" cinema, which, like noir, applies new elements to established genres. One of action cinema's chief features is to emphasize a "hard," muscular body, which "redefines already existing cinematic and cultural discourses of race, class and sexuality."³¹

More importantly, action cinema features "spectacle *as* narrative,"³² further complicating the messages such films convey. The motives and identities of characters—although now conveyed in spectacularly visual and visceral terms—are still constructed within a mythological framework. Ironically, the era's new screen "muscleman"³³ combines traditionally masculine qualities with new "feminine" tendencies in being able to display more sensitivity or emotionalism; or as bell hooks would call "eating the other," this updated white male was able to devour elements of those vigorously challenging the "unified national body."³⁴

White Heroes as Lethal Weapons

Lethal Weapon and *Die Hard*, along with their many sequels, represent the next step on the continuum of rogue crimefighters after Callahan. First, their success as franchises attest to the public's endorsement of their representations, along with again being the subject of much scholarship. Besides harking back to the western, these action films feature the intense male camaraderie of a war film, with Los Angeles and New York as their battlefields. They also move beyond Callahan's short-lived multicultural partners to demonstrate the lasting bonds that are possible between white heroes and their "buddies," providing more space for black males, but also limiting their progress.

Lethal Weapon (1987) features the travails of white cop Martin Riggs (Mel Gibson) and his new black partner, Roger Murtaugh (Danny Glover), a senior detective and family man. Riggs, though, *is* the lethal weapon, not only for his Special Forces training, but also for his suicidal

grief over the death of his young wife. His state of mind prompts his early clashes with Murtaugh, also a veteran, but who, being on the verge of retirement, demonstrates far more restraint.³⁵ During their first homicide case, they face a war with former mercenaries (trained like Riggs) now trafficking heroin, and by the end of their ordeal, Murtaugh and his family have helped Riggs regain his stability. *Lethal Weapon 2* (1989) puts Riggs and Murtaugh at war with a white South African diplomat smuggling drugs into the country and who was responsible for the “accidental” death of Riggs’s wife. *Lethal Weapon 3* (1992) has the duo face-off with a renegade cop selling drugs and weaponry; in this version Riggs also finds love with an Internal Affairs investigator, Lorna Cole (Rene Russo). Finally, *Lethal Weapon 4* (1998) has Riggs and Murtaugh hunting Asian gangsters smuggling Chinese laborers into the country, with subplots involving the pregnancies of Cole and Murtaugh’s daughter. Cole is a new type of screen female: a fellow cop skilled in the martial arts; her ability to keep pace with the action, though, is arrested after being shot in the third film and pregnant by the fourth. While Murtaugh is a more multifaceted character than most black co-stars to that time, he is still in what Ed Guerrero called the “protective custody” of the white hero.³⁶

The film notices race even though the two principal characters fail to address it directly. When Murtaugh questions a black youth about what he witnessed, the boy stumps Murtaugh, asking, “My mama says police shoot black people—is that true?”³⁷ The boy is able to see beyond Murtaugh’s blackness to the “blue” cop underneath. In other cases, Murtaugh’s race is his most salient feature, while Riggs is afforded the privilege of his whiteness going unremarked. Like Callahan, Riggs is shown negotiating race on an individual basis, leaving it to Murtaugh to make larger connections, especial about apartheid, with Murtaugh expressing the desire to go to South Africa to stop the horror. In another scene, Murtaugh asks a gang member if he knows what the word “genocide” means, in this case referring to the devastating effect of black-on-black crime in America (what others might frame as the mass incarceration of black males versus “white” collar crime frequently left intact). Having Murtaugh alone bring up race isolates it from its larger social context, having to carry “the banner of civil rights for blacks and other minorities ... [and who] sees Asian refugees as being like black slaves on board a

slave ship.”³⁸ The sight of Chinese stowaways inspires Murtaugh to take a family home with him, noting, “It’s my chance to do something about slavery. I’m freeing slaves like no one did for my ancestors.”³⁹ The later sequels are even more vocal about racism, but their more blatant comic set-ups softens any intended critique of the racial order.⁴⁰

As one reviewer notes, *Lethal Weapon*’s ambitions as a war film has the pair foiling “international evil, acting more as global policemen, or agents of American foreign policy, than as LAPD cops.” In the second *Lethal Weapon* film, foreign threats are represented by an “Oriental” torture specialist who works for a corrupt military commander, practicing his specialty on Riggs and reminding Riggs (and viewers) of what soldiers endured in Vietnam; at the same time it presents a “stereotypical Asian who inflicts pain on good white people.”⁴¹ The wayward commander also presents a portrait of a Vietnam veteran as a villain, although that approach already appeared in the third *Dirty Harry* film, which presented a veteran as damaged goods and a traitor with designs on overthrowing his government. While Murtaugh is a veteran who successfully reintegrated into civilian life, Riggs is haunted by his past, perhaps for sharing the same murky résumé as the ex-soldiers he is hounding as a cop in one of the films. More than anything, taking his cue from Callahan, Riggs plays by his own rules, and as “long as the ‘larger good’ is served ... [his] ‘smaller violations of law are excusable.’”⁴²

Die Hard Cowboys

Another immensely popular cop hero was also launched during the 1980s (and still in play) is John McClane (Bruce Willis), who first appeared in *Die Hard* (1988). Los Angeles again serves as the site of conflict, but in a vertical space within the urban frontier, which, by being owned by a Japanese company, also serves as a symbol of foreign intrusions on American soil. This time the rogue hero, another Scotch Irish everyman, is an off-duty cop from New York, as McClane has come to spend Christmas with his estranged wife, Holly (Bonnie Bedelia), now an executive for the Nakatomi Corporation. Their already testy reunion is interrupted, though, when she, her boss, and an office party full of employees are taken hostage by a crew

of foreign thieves led by Hans Gruber (Alan Rickman). They pretend to be terrorists to draw in the FBI, which obligingly cuts off power to the building, enabling the group to disarm the company's vault and steal its convertible bonds. McClane destroys their plans and kills most of them single-handedly, helped only by a pudgy black police sergeant, Al Powell (Reginald Veljohnson), who keeps in contact with McClane through radio communication. A subplot tracks a smarmy TV reporter who exploits the dangerous situation to advance his own career, another nod to *Dirty Harry's* legacy of presenting the news media as a more destabilizing than venerable force in American society (Fig. 3.2).

Die Hard 2: Die Harder (1990) puts McClane in the nation's capital for another Christmas reunion with Holly, but whose plane is low on fuel and circling an airport seized by commandos loyal to a Latin American general—once a recipient of American support when he fought communists but now vilified as a dangerous drug lord. In this installment, McClane is a lone hero steeped in “an all-out war” (as the DVD cover promises), battling inept police and military commanders. His loner status, though, is modified in *Die Hard: With a Vengeance* (1995), when McClane, after his Callahan-like suspension is revoked, is buddied with an unlikely partner: a black civilian from Harlem named Zeus (Samuel L. Jackson). Zeus distrusts whites but comes to befriend McClane after they team up to defeat Hans's brother, Simon (Jeremy Irons). Again, using terrorism as a cover, Simon actually intends to steal the gold housed at the Federal Reserve in lower Manhattan.



Fig. 3.2 Off duty and a long way from the NYPD, Det. John McClane (Bruce Willis) on the job in LA. Screenshot from *Die Hard*, 20th Century Fox

McClane represents another “hard body” of the era, whether as “the individual warrior or the nation itself.”⁴³ Unlike Riggs, though, McClane’s masculinity is not derived from military training or wartime experience—even though he is engaged in a pitched battle over changing gender roles; after all, as Jeffords notes, it is feminism that puts McClane in harm’s way in the first place.⁴⁴ He has come to Los Angeles to get his family back after Holly moves there with their children to pursue a career, using her maiden name to avoid what she charges is a cultural bias among Japanese men toward married women in the workplace. After her husband defeats the band of thieves and introduces her by her professional name, she corrects him, reiterating her married name. While his gesture suggests his learned sensitivity (and absorption of the era’s feminist lessons), hers restores tradition.

McClane is also contrasted with the Other. In the original film, it is Sgt. Powell who tries to help him, while a more intense use of racial difference occurs in the third film with Zeus. McClane meets him after Simon orders McClane to stand on a Harlem street corner, wearing a sandwich board that reads: “I hate niggers.” Zeus intervenes, not necessarily to save McClane, but as he explains it, to stop “a white cop from getting killed in Harlem—one white cop gets killed today, tomorrow we got a thousand white cops, all of them with itchy trigger fingers,”⁴⁵ confirming a history of strained relations between the police and the black community. Yet, Zeus’s is an isolated voice—he is the one obsessed with race (not society)—even prompting McClane in one exchange to accuse Zeus of being racist, noting, “You don’t like me because I’m white.”⁴⁶ Making race even more of a personal issue, McClane presses Zeus, “Have *I* oppressed you? Have *I* oppressed your people somehow?”⁴⁷ In this manner, the film “asks us to consider if Zeus suffers from the mythical racial paranoia, or ‘reverse racism,’ so commonly evoked in dominant discussions of race prejudice.”⁴⁸ McClane shames Zeus into participating in the wild goose chase Simon has in store for them (much like the folly Scorpio put Callahan through), scolding, “he [the terrorist] doesn’t care about skin color, even if you do.”⁴⁹ Zeus, though, is a much “shrewder analyst of the thoroughly racial coding of urban geography,” where “the mere sight of him” prompts reaction.⁵⁰ In one example, after McClane hands him a gun, Zeus fumbles with it, asking how it works. After noting

McClane's reaction, Zeus shouts back, "Look, all brothers don't know how to shoot guns!"⁵¹

McClane is also presented as another working stiff in an era that urged upward mobility and a worship of conspicuous consumption. The "yuppie" persona is embodied by his wife's coke-snorting colleague, who is not only condescending to McClane, but also foolishly arrogant about being able to outsmart the terrorists, who eventually kill him. McClane—the American Adam in a torn T-shirt—is also contrasted with Hans's tailored European suits. As one reviewer puts it, McClane is "an 'everyday' sort of guy who gets caught up in circumstances that force him to play the reluctant hero,"⁵² referring to the long-standing criterion in American narratives that heroes not look for trouble, but once duty calls, act swiftly and decisively. Hans also demonstrates a degree of Old World snobbery, including a disdain for American popular culture, nearly hissing his disapproval at McClane's resemblance to a movie cowboy after McClane identifies himself as Roy Rogers in their radio exchanges. He calls McClane "Mr. Cowboy" and chides him as "just another American who saw too many movies as a child ... another orphan of a bankrupt culture who thinks he's John Wayne, Rambo, and Marshal Dillon."⁵³ In their final confrontation, Hans, convinced he has triumphed, warns McClane that this time "John Wayne doesn't walk off into the sunset with Grace Kelly." After correcting Hans's casting mistakes, noting, "It was Gary Cooper, asshole," he helps Hans fall to his death from the building's upper floors, adding a cowboy's whoop of "yippee-ki-yay, motherfucker."⁵⁴

More than Hans and his fellow European thieves, Japan is the film's more targeted foreign threat, depicted as a type of economic terrorism. After McClane meets his wife's boss, Takata, he offers, "I didn't know the Japanese celebrated Christmas."⁵⁵ Takata answers: "Hey, we're flexible. Pearl Harbor didn't work out, so we conquered you with electronics."⁵⁶ Japan as an economic invader is also included in one *Lethal Weapon* film, as Riggs sarcastically speculates about the Japanese-made police radio, quipping, "maybe they bought the LA police force as well."⁵⁷ This us-versus-them approach is one way of demonstrating that the national welfare should override individual concerns—usually those of females and non-white males—since the white male's is already woven into the

nation's. Even Vietnam, a reliable symbol of a fractured America is mentioned by one of the FBI agents, who, after watching a helicopter hover over the besieged skyscraper, remarks, "This is just like fucking Saigon, ain't it?"⁵⁸

Such examples of action cinema, notes Yvonne Tasker, depend "on a complex articulation of both belonging and exclusion,"⁵⁹ and a "placelessness" that enhances the hero character's flexibility and appeal, not only to domestic but also international audiences, all of whom have been exposed to media messages that stress American exceptionalism. In this way, McClane belongs everywhere his nation has influence, making his frequent furloughs from his New York beat less noticeable and irrelevant. More recent installments of *Die Hard*, discussed in Chap. 10, include McClane operating on Russian soil. Through the franchise the character remains as much about America's past as it is about the contemporary issues related to his latest exploits—as familiar as a Western hero or a soldier in a war film. He uses his patchwork references to American popular culture, especially the characters he most resembles, to maximize his appeal. It also helps him (and his conflicts) pass for mere entertainment, seemingly devoid of political ambition, while at the same time, perpetuating an ideologically soaked mythology that he and the franchise so deftly exploit.

Precinct Life and Community Policing

Another variation to capturing this urban cop's challenging turf were those Hollywood offerings that depict a precinct house as much a dangerous locale as anything that ever existed in the nineteenth century western frontier. Such an environment is captured in *Fort Apache the Bronx* (1981), which purposely capitalizes on its resemblance to the isolated frontier outpost in the 1948 western, *Fort Apache*, another John Ford-John Wayne collaboration. This updated and symbolic 1980s fort lies within the decaying, crime-ridden streets of the South Bronx, which as one character notes, has the "lowest income per capita [and] the highest rate of unemployment in the city."⁶⁰ A promotional poster for the film, exclaims: "No cowboys. No Indians. No cavalry to the rescue. Only a

cop.” These cops, though, can barely keep up with the grim crimes being perpetrated by local “gangs, junkies, pimps, and maniacs.”⁶¹

A new level of threat opens the film as two cops sitting in their squad car are shot and killed by a drugged-up hooker—the crime never solved as she later becomes another victim stabbed by a drug dealer. As the desk sergeant warns the incoming, by-the-book Captain Connolly (Ed Asner), “You’d be better off walking a beat in Beirut.”⁶² Connolly is also warned that most of the cops transferred to this outpost are department outcasts, sent here to police a forty-block area with 70,000 people packed in and “living like cockroaches.”⁶³ The cop at the center of the story is the lonely, hard-drinking Murphy (Paul Newman), a cop who has trouble with authority, which his rookie partner, Corelli (Ken Wahl), believes cost Murphy his detective shield. Despite eighteen years on the force, Murphy retains his sense of justice and treats most people with a measure of decency, saving most of his ire for the pimps and drug dealers who prey on the neighborhood.

The film is rare for depicting just how tenuous the relationship is between the police and a poor, ravaged community, in this case predominantly Puerto Rican, who could benefit from police protection but instead are left with a battered precinct that is barely able to function. While the outgoing captain sounds more like a social worker, bemoaning the lack of jobs and opportunity that help create such a hopeless situation, the incoming captain launches an aggressive campaign of arrests to send a signal of strength that he hopes will let decent folks think the cavalry has arrived. What he gets is rioting and demonstrations that he fights with tear gas and night sticks, which only makes matters worse. In the end, Murphy does the right thing by turning in a fellow cop who threw a young man off a rooftop to his death, then resigns and turns in his badge. The last scene shows him joined by Corelli, and after the two spot a purse snatcher, cannot resist giving chase. Even without a badge, he returns to performing small but significant acts of policing despite the tall odds depicted here of winning any larger war on crime.

The film’s depiction of a precinct under duress is matched by the groundbreaking TV show, *Hill Street Blues*, which also premiered in 1981 and ran until 1987 on NBC. The show’s expanded scope and intentional ambiguity were novel for the era’s television programming, using an

entire season to develop characters and including crime stories without easy resolutions. Previous cop shows, dating back to *Dragnet* (1951–1959)—with its lead character’s signature tagline of “just the facts, ma’am”—focused on solving each episode’s featured crime, whereas *Hill Street Blues* treated the crimes as ongoing and rooted in larger, thornier social and political realities. The show also featured a large ensemble cast of characters who report to Captain Frank Furillo (Daniel J. Travanti), a recovering alcoholic who spends as much time settling disputes among his dedicated but dysfunctional cops as he does navigating gang wars in his precinct, all with the dexterity of a trained psychotherapist and the tactical acumen of a battle-weary general. His personal life also has him sparring with a public defender who later becomes his wife and a high-strung ex-wife who frequents the precinct to demand attention for their son.

Among the precinct cops are two white male underbosses: the erudite but imposing Sergeant Phil Esterhaus (Michael Conrad) and the trigger-happy SWAT-style commander, Howard Hunter (James B. Sikking), who hints at the emerging fallout from the increased militarization of urban police. The cast also includes two pairs of black and white buddies: one set that works undercover (as discussed in Chap. 1, cloaks their ability to serve as the nation’s corrective agents); and a set of uniformed cops that include the sensible black partner, Bobby Hill (Michael Warren), who keeps the excesses of his white partner Andy Renko (Charles Haid)—whom he calls “cowboy”—in check. A few notable depictions of a female and other “minority” cops are discussed in later chapters.

The above series was the brainchild of Steven Bochco,⁶⁴ a prolific creator of cop shows during the era and beyond, including *NYPD Blue* (1993–2005), which replicates having white males as the lead characters and utilizing the Other as supporting players amid another large, ensemble cast. The latter show expanded on its predecessor’s focus on documentary-style film techniques, prompting one reviewer to compare the show to a Robert Altman movie.⁶⁵ Its first season pivots around Det. John Kelly (David Caruso), as the series was intended as a vehicle for Kelly’s personal and work-related troubles. After Caruso left the series following the first season, Kelly’s surly and combative partner, Det. Andy Sipowicz (Dennis Franz) became the show’s main character. Sipowicz was introduced in sea-

son one as a drunken burnout who was confined to desk duty, frequently aiming his hostility at his black boss, Lt. Arthur Fancy (James McDaniel). This casting practice of putting black characters in authority positions is meant to “balance” the picture, or as Cedric Clark suggests, to serve as proof that racial uplift has occurred.⁶⁶ Relatedly, it is Fancy who makes clear that Sipowicz is a talented detective despite his personal demons, reiterating the Other’s role to affirm the white’s hero’s essential goodness rather than to challenge or contest such an assumption.

Over the show’s impressive twelve-year run, Sipowicz is matched with several partners—most of who are younger white males, with only Det. Bobby Simone (Jimmy Smits) a standout. Simon’s characterization, however, undermines the actor’s self-identification as a Puerto Rican, which comes into play when a suspect assumes Simon is Puerto Rican and Simon corrects him, explaining how he has French and Portuguese ancestry. To the series’ end, Sipowicz remains a site of unresolved conflicts, admired for his occasional passion for helping particular types of victims, but mostly remembered for his embodiment of an angry white everyman who routinely lets loose a stream of ethnic, racial, and sexist slurs. If Furillo represented the enlightened sensitivity and diplomacy of a creature who had benefitted from the era’s women’s movement, Sipowicz remained a portrait of a contentious and wounded white male, who made a degree of progress during the era but was never quite comfortable in an increasingly multicultural department and wider society.

Notes

1. Video of speech is also available at jfk.org. Also quoted in Stanley Corkin, *Cowboys as Cold Warriors: The Western and U.S. History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004), 233–234.
2. Like the former all-powerful studio, the Production Code was similarly dismantled during this period, replaced with a voluntary ratings system that is still in place.
3. Michael Wallis, *Pretty Boy* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1992), 345. Perhaps evidence of his moral dilemma is his suicide in 1960 using the same gun with which he had killed Floyd.
4. Charles Thomas Samuels, “Bonnie and Clyde,” in *Focus on Bonnie and Clyde*, ed. John G. Cawelti (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1973), 92.

5. Joseph Morgenstern, "The New Violence," *Newsweek*, February 14, 1972.
6. Nicole Rafter, *Shots in the Mirror: Crime Films and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 75.
7. Police are required to read arrested persons their rights, among them, to be represented by an attorney and to keep silent to avoid self-incrimination. Their intent is to reduce individual discretion and to ensure that the process of determining guilt is performed by the courts, as dictated by the American justice system. As Chief Justice William Rehnquist noted in the U.S. Supreme Court's 2004 decision concerning a challenge to Miranda, "the warnings have become part of our national culture." Quoted in Raju Chebium, "Supreme Court Reaffirms That Police Must Read Miranda Rights to Criminal Suspects," CNN, June 26, 2000. Available online at cnn.com.
8. *Dirty Harry*, DVD, directed by Don Siegel (Warner Home Video, 1997).
9. Ibid.
10. *Sudden Impact*, DVD, directed by Clint Eastwood (Warner Home Video, 2001).
11. *The Enforcer*, DVD, directed by James Fargo (Warner Home Video, 2001).
12. *Dirty Harry*, DVD.
13. Ibid.
14. Television first introduced a black and white pair of crimefighters in *I Spy* (1965–1968), but which utilized Cosby's reputation as a comic—an approach to mitigating blackness and defusing the radical potential of its difference—an approach will be further discussed in later chapters.
15. See David Forgacs, *The Antonio Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings, 1916–1935* (New York: New York University Press, 2000).
16. Peter Lehman and William Luhr, *Thinking About Movies: Watching, Questioning, Enjoying* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), 309.
17. Leitch, *Crime Films*, 235.
18. Dennis Bingham, *Acting Male: Masculinities in the Films of James Stewart, Jack Nicholson, and Clint Eastwood* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 182.
19. Clarens, *Crime Movies*, 302–305.
20. *Coogan's Bluff* (1968), also starring Eastwood with Siegel directing, is an apt forerunner to *Dirty Harry*, a story of a Western lawman who travels East (from Arizona to New York City) to catch a thief. Once in the city,

- Coogan confronts characters similar to the vilified hippies and wayward radicals that inhabit Harry's San Francisco.
21. Nicole Rafter, *Shots in the Dark: Crime Films and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 75.
 22. *The Enforcer*, DVD.
 23. The term "neoconservatism" generally refers to a conservatism formed in response to 1960s upheavals, and which re-invests in faith- or moral-based solutions to domestic woes, and deployment of specific foreign policy initiatives supportive of American aggression in world affairs and that eschew multilateralist approaches.
 24. See Wilkinson, *American Tough*, 6.
 25. Susan Jeffords, *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 11.
 26. *Ibid.*, 11.
 27. Susan Jeffords, *The Remasculinization of America: Gender and the Vietnam War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).
 28. Deborah Caulfield, "'Dragon' Rourke Breathes Fire," *Los Angeles Times*, September 16, 1985. Available online.
 29. See chapter 9 in Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies & Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films* (New York: Continuum, 2002).
 30. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick posits that such close male partnerships urge the need to differentiate between camaraderie and homosexuality, the resulting "homosocial" relationship dependent on intense emotional bonds, as well as those that might imitate a father son connection. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 1.
 31. Tasker, *Spectacular Bodies*, 5.
 32. *Ibid.*, 6.
 33. *Ibid.*, 9.
 34. Jeffords, *Hard Bodies*, 13.
 35. Each man's body and its links to virility purposefully advantages Riggs, starting with both men's appearance in the nude. The original film opens with Murtaugh in the bath, with his children crowding into the room to wish him a happy 50th birthday. In this manner, Murtaugh's body is treated as non-threatening, while Riggs's naked and taut torso (captured from the rear) is sexualized.
 36. See Ed Guerrero, "The Black Image in Protective Custody: Hollywood's Biracial Buddy Films of the Eighties," in *Black American Cinema*, ed. Manthia Diawara (New York: Routledge, 1993).

37. *Lethal Weapon*, DVD, directed by Richard Donner (Warner Home Video, 1997).
38. Norman K. Denzin, *Reading Race: Hollywood and the Cinema of Racial Violence* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2002), 96.
39. *Lethal Weapon 2*, DVD, directed by Richard Donner (Warner Home Video, 1997).
40. In *Lethal Weapon 4*: The Jewish Leo (Joe Pesci) and the black Butters (Chris Rock), as in one scene, Leo tells Butters, “we got a history together,” referencing their ancestors’ supposed shared sense of marginalization.
41. Denzin, *Reading Race*, 88.
42. Jeffords, *Hard Bodies*, 57.
43. *Ibid.*, 62.
44. *Ibid.*, 61.
45. *Die Hard with a Vengeance*, DVD, directed by John McTiernan (20th Century Fox, 2005).
46. *Ibid.*
47. *Ibid.*
48. Sharon Willis, *High Contrast: Race and Gender in Contemporary Hollywood Films* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 31.
49. *Die Hard with a Vengeance*, DVD.
50. Willis, *High Contrast*, 52.
51. *Die Hard with a Vengeance*, DVD.
52. James Berardinelli’s review of *Die Hard*, 1988. Available online at reel-views.net.
53. *Die Hard*, DVD, directed by John McTiernan (20th Century Fox, 2004).
54. *Ibid.*
55. *Ibid.*
56. *Ibid.*
57. *Lethal Weapon 2*, DVD.
58. *Die Hard*, DVD.
59. Tasker, *Spectacular Bodies*, 9.
60. *Fort Apache the Bronx*, DVD, directed by Daniel Petrie (Producers Circle, 1981).
61. *Ibid.*
62. *Ibid.*
63. *Ibid.*

64. Bochco worked with co-creator David Milch (who launched *Deadwood* for HBO in 2004). Other Bochco crime shows that proliferated in the 1990s and 2000s include *Brooklyn South* (1997–1998).
65. “‘Hill Street Blues’ Created Two Eras for TV Drama: Before and After,” *Fresh Air*, NPR, May 7, 2014.
66. See Cedric C. Clark, “Television and Social Controls: Some Observations on the Portrayals of Ethnic Minorities,” *Television Quarterly* (Spring 1969).



4

Black Crimefighters: Portraits in Blue

We have to live a double standard ... work twice as hard as a white officer to be accepted ... work three times as hard to convince the [black]community that [we're]... there to do a job... to help them.

Black officer, as quoted in *Black in Blue: African-American Police Officers and Racism*

For much of US history, the border that presented the nation with its greatest challenge was (and remains) the “color line”—a phrase by W.E.B. Du Bois to describe post-slavery racism, which he warned would continue to haunt America. This chapter deals with screen challenges by African American males to the white archetype’s hegemony by tracking their attempts to perform American law enforcement characters, including the rogue variant. They usually fail *by comparison* since they have been constructed as the most frequent criminal whom the white crimefighter has long been commissioned to arrest. Until well into the twentieth century, the black man’s “deviance” was considered *innate*, thus, any rogue behavior on his part was interpreted as further evidence of his “difference,” while the white rogue’s actions were (and are) considered mere

tactics to deploy in times of crisis—easily excused as the ugly means to achieve a noble end.

It is first vital to understand how race played a role in the formation of actual police departments, which came into existence in part to protect white-owned property, including slave-holdings in the South. In the North, with racism establishing different but equally as potent barriers, it was initially nearly impossible for African Americans to use law enforcement to advance themselves as previous “minorities” had done, having first to acquire political power.¹ In the wake of the Civil War, newly emancipated black males were hired as officers; but with the rise of Jim Crow, black officers literally disappeared from Southern police departments by 1910.² Northern blacks began to use the patronage system to secure a few posts as the idea gained favor that “a few Negro police to patrol their own areas might be distinctly helpful”³; the prohibition on their ability to arrest whites, however, curtailed their wider acceptance.

In the aftermath of World War II, given their distinguished service in defense of the nation, black males again trickled into the ranks of police. It was not until after the civil rights movement of the 1960s that urban police departments stepped up their recruitment of “minorities” to better deal with the outrage over persistent white control, especially in large cities experiencing a surge of newly empowered black constituencies.⁴ Within a few decades, several black police chiefs began implementing innovative programs “such as team policing, police storefront offices, and community policing,”⁵ which brought some relief. However, as departments continue to fail to completely eradicate the “invisible wall” it took centuries to erect,⁶ black and other minority recruits remain stymied by an entrenched institutional racism.

Black officers, like other minorities discussed in later chapters, have learned to become “blue” to fit in, even coming to see resistive blacks in ways similar to that of many white officers, viewing young black males in inner cities with suspicion—reactions complicated by their own experiences, prompting responses that range from embarrassment to associative guilt.⁷ Black cops still complain of what many scholars term “experiential racism,” involving discrimination “motivated by racial stereotyping and racial images that have become so integrated into the woodwork of the society that they are barely noticeable to most white Americans.”⁸

No matter what trouble black cops may have in actuality, on screen the picture is even more distorted. Black representation is not merely a side-show but an essential co-creator of white Hollywood, with terrifying blackness having been such an integral part of cinema history. One black cop complains that such negative images are often the only exposure some white rookie cops have of the black community, and confronted with angry black people, “they may think that’s the type of mentality they’re dealing with and grab their pistol.”⁹ In this way, life and art move beyond mutual imitation, helping to co-create each other’s sphere of influence.¹⁰ Even in contemporary cinema, and despite having had an African American serve as president for eight years, it remains difficult for a black male to perform aggression,¹¹ given the sins of hundreds of black characters over a century of Hollywood productions, which frequently framed the black male as a fearsome beast in need of annihilation and in opposition to the white hero. How can a black male, then, perform aggression without appearing threatening, especially since his body (including his sexuality) has for so long served as a major source of cinematic menace? As Tasker notes, “Whilst blackness may be constructed as marginal within Hollywood narratives, it has a *symbolic centrality* [her italics]. This is particularly pronounced in the action cinema, a form that is played out over the terrain of criminality, and one that is often directly concerned with the policing of deviance.”¹²

Sidney Poitier: A Model of Restraint

The arrival of Sidney Poitier as the first major black male star in Hollywood did little to breach the borders that policed black aggression onscreen. Throughout his peak years in Hollywood, he was allowed few romantic leads that sexualized him. Even his two tame kisses with white actresses on screen resulted in well-publicized death threats and boycotts, especially in the South. As a result, his body of work focuses largely on narrative conflicts in which he is a sex-less protagonist among and in the service of whites.¹³

Despite such limitations, Poitier earned acclaim (and an Oscar) for his intelligent but stoic characters, which began to wane amid the changing

currents of the late 1960s, when his poignant dignity seemed much too passive. Like most Hollywood actors before and since, Poitier took his turn portraying a cop in the Oscar-winning film, *In the Heat of the Night* (1967). It features Poitier as Philadelphia homicide detective Virgil Tibbs, who, while visiting his mother in Mississippi, is arrested on suspicion of murdering a white businessman who had been planning to build a much-needed factory in town. Although Tibbs is set free after the local police chief, Bill Gillespie (Rod Steiger), finds Tibbs's badge, he faces worse dangers after agreeing to stay in town to help solve the homicide case. The chief resents Tibbs, this black "boy" who is smarter, better dressed (in his "white man's clothes"), paid more (Tibbs earns more in a week than Gillespie does in a month), and held less hostage to local politics. While Gillespie begrudgingly comes to admire Tibbs's skills, he loathes having to protect Tibbs from racist townspeople. For his part, Tibbs shows his grasp of the power of blue over black when he threatens a black abortionist, warning her about serving "colored people's time" in prison.¹⁴

Like *Dirty Harry*, *In the Heat of the Night* is revelatory for its cross purposes, both challenging and affirming Hollywood conventions. No matter how enlightened the film's exposé on racism during such a charged period in American history—and despite director Norman Jewison's liberal frame—it also affirms the time-tested Hollywood preference for suggesting individuated solutions, while ignoring the larger political or systemic levers in dire need of reform. At the film's end, the two men come to respect each other and hint about a South learning to embrace racial tolerance. At the same time, the film isolates systemic racism *only* to the South, as if to suggest that Tibbs's life in Philadelphia is free of racial oppression, which blatantly ignores the racialized history of Philadelphia's police department (Fig. 4.1).

A subsequent television series (1988–1995) of the same title appeared on NBC (later on CBS) and expanded the film's storyline, with Tibbs (Howard Rollins) moving to Mississippi with his wife and kids to help Gillespie (Carroll O'Connor) transform his department from a backwater outpost into an effective law enforcement agency. The series also tried to capture the fabric of a community, especially one attempting to reconcile its segregated past with a more integrated future. The film's hostile relationship between Tibbs and Gillespie is replaced by a respectful partnership and evolving friendship, which executive producer David



Fig. 4.1 The reticent but competent Philadelphia homicide detective, Virgil Tibbs (Sidney Poitier). Screen shot from official 1967 trailer for *In the Heat of the Night*, released by United Artists

Moessinger hoped would “seep into the American consciousness.”¹⁵ With such purposefully racialized casting, however, along with the demands of a crime show, some plots dealt head-on with race, while the vast majority of the storytelling tried to be “color blind.” It is difficult to have it both ways, as Rollins explains, having to present a pragmatic black detective who transcends his racial difference, while also enabling his character to address racially charged issues “from a human point of view,” and one that exposes the corrosive effects of racism.¹⁶

Black Power, Blaxploitation, and the Hood

Only a handful of films in the wake of the civil rights era investigated richer stories about black life in America.¹⁷ Most black characters in mainstream cinema continued to affirm black criminality, like the “punks” who menace Dirty Harry and Popeye Doyle, such images merely updating what was already familiar. A 1970s Hollywood, now having eliminated the once restrictive Production Code, also took notice of the appeal of potent and audacious black characters who had been earning impressive box office in a few independent films (e.g., *Sweet Sweetback’s*

Baadasssss Song).¹⁸ That sparked MGM to give African American filmmaker Gordon Parks the green light to create *Shaft* (1971), which includes a rare portrait of a black hero, in this case, a private detective.¹⁹ John Shaft (Richard Roundtree) attracted black (and interested white) audiences, since his persona was laced with the same signifiers found in the era's cutting edge political thought, fashion, and music. Scholars have also examined the film's political content for revealing fissures within the black community over the era's approaches to change. For instance, black militants are dismissed as preachy, even dangerous, while Shaft, straddling both white and black worlds, is advanced as a successful mediator.²⁰ Others see the "superspade" of the era's so-called blaxploitation films, with the reclamation of black male sexuality, as a dangerous flirtation with the same circumstances for which the black "buck" was condemned (and often lynched for).²¹

Eventually the limitations of such characters became manifest, as Mark A. Reid notes, offering nothing radically new; "like the doll-makers who painted Barbie's face brown, MGM merely created black-skinned replicas of white heroes of action films."²² Within a few years, blaxploitation films, especially those increasingly made by white filmmakers, became fixated on formula or parody and eventually faded away. Such films, though, made clear the untapped appetite and profit potential in putting more black characters on screen. Thus, as had occurred with the "race films" of an earlier era, especially those by Oscar Micheaux,²³ popular black actors of the time such as Fred Williamson were pulled into the (white) Hollywood system and employed in more mainstream products, but still largely confined to familiar roles as comedians, musicians, athletes, and stereotypical criminals.

Comedy pioneer Richard Pryor co-starred in films with the white Gene Wilder, their match-ups proving to be box office gold, but in part by taming the Pryor known for stand-up routines laced with searing social and political critiques.²⁴ Another comic superstar, Eddie Murphy, took his turn playing a cop in the era's mega-hit, *Beverly Hills Cop* (1984).²⁵ In the film, Det. Axel Foley's primary reason for leaving his Detroit base to travel to Beverly Hills is to solve the murder of his white friend, which he does so by routinely ignoring most rules put in his way. Having Foley's racial difference amid the predominantly white upscale community serves as the

film's central theme—funny enough to account for its stellar box office—but which is also what undermines Foley as serious competition for the white rogue. The same issue arises for the *Bad Boys* franchise—the first in 1995, with a 2003 sequel and another in production (due out in 2020). The films are novel for having two black males in the lead cop roles (Will Smith and Martin Lawrence), but, again, their focus on comedy in general undermines any serious challenge to white dominion.

In many of the so-called “hood” films of the early 1990s, hip hop stars provided more than just their music, also appearing in key roles as troubled and often sympathetic “gangstas,” drawing not only from their musical personas, but also borrowing from the history of American outlawry—long celebrated as the “practice of resistance through style.”²⁶ In *New Jack City* (1991), actor-director Mario Van Peebles created a squad of black and white undercover cops, including Scotty Appleton (rap artist Ice T) as an obsessed cop who wants to avenge his mother's death, but acting more out of revenge than duty. Moreover, as in so many crime films, the film's show-stopping performance belongs to the gangster, Nino Browne (Wesley Snipes). As with blaxploitation films, these films of the early 1990s too often compound the notion of blackness as deviance. Rather than live up to what Todd Boyd calls the “renegade space” possible within crime cinema, they often reiterate criminal stereotypes.²⁷ The only key difference, like early blaxploitation, is that often the filmmaker is black; and even if committed to an alternative portrait, must operate within an existing environment that encourages producing what is familiar rather than oppositional.²⁸

Van Peebles created another notable cop film, *Gang in Blue* (1996), which investigates the conflict that black cops experience wrestling with loyalties of black versus blue. The film is inspired by a real case of a black police officer who wages war on a band of racist cops, but aside from its superficial blackface, largely replicates Dirty Harry's *Magnum Force* of a good guy cop alone battling a few criminals while ignoring any larger systemic connections.

Another film inspired by a similar case of a black cop pitted against a group of racist white cops is Charles Burnett's *The Glass Shield* (1995), which suggests links to wider departmental and societal racism, but also succumbs to genre staples of obligatory shoot-outs and confrontations

between good cop-bad cop, eventually overwhelming the film's fresh point of view. Except for the novelty of the race of Officer Johnny Johnson (Michael Boatman), it is *Magnum Force* with a stubborn focus on the individual at the expense of a more encompassing critique.

Black filmmaker Bill Duke offers up *Deep Cover* (1992), yet another tale of a lone black hero and undercover cop, John Hull (Laurence Fishburne), is shown navigating a corrupt and racist system. It is a complicated film that attempts to capture the interplay of interracial relations as well as contentious *intra-racial* debates about how to ameliorate conditions threatening the black community, most notably the ravages of drugs. However, in order to foreground several nuanced black heroes, the film does so at the expense of re-deploying stereotypes about white, Latino, and Jewish males, along with subordinating differences based on gender and/or sexual orientation. Still, several racialized exchanges are illuminating, including the opening interview of Hull being asked by the white DEA Agent, Gerald Carver (Charles Martin Smith), "What's the difference between a black man and a nigger?"²⁹ The charged question is supposed to test whether Hull can be trusted with a delicate assignment, as previous candidates were dismissed for answers that were too angry or too Uncle Tom-ish. Carver also keeps Hull committed to the mission targeting a Colombian drug lord by telling him illicit drugs are destroying "millions of *your* people." When the drug lord becomes a valued ally and no longer the nation's enemy, Hull's mission is voided and his life put in danger. In the end, Hull exposes Carver's agenda and the government's duplicity about the drug lord, and angrily asks, "[This] new Noriega ... he helps you fight communists [so] you let him bring drugs into the country to sell it to niggers and spics—and you use me to do that shit?"³⁰

Hull's Jewish partner in crime, David Jason (Jeff Goldblum), although seemingly designed to reference—however reductively—the complex history of black-Jewish relations, merely paints a noxious, anti-Semitic portrait. Jason professes a love of all things black, including a penchant for having sex with black women, which Hull dissects as Jason's urge to "feel like you're fucking a slave."³¹ Jason counters, explaining (in racist terms) how much he envies Hull's "gift of fury" and his approximation of a "magnificent beast."³² In their final exchanges, after Hull is confronted by the Christianized black cop named Taft (Clarence Williams III), who

lectures Hull about “sins and souls,” Jason tries to convince Hull to forget this “Christian-Judeo thing that’s enslaved us all.”³³ Although this could be read as engaging critical, horizontal modes of oppression, given Jason’s moral and criminal depravity, his lecture is merely meant to convince Hull to split the drug money with him and spare his life (which Hull does not). After both Taft and Jason are killed, the only redemptive act left open to Hull is to testify before a congressional subcommittee, where he foils the government’s makeover of the drug lord. He is also left with \$11 million in drug money and assesses his choices: keep it and be a criminal, give it to the government and be a “fool,” or “try and do some good with it [but] maybe it just makes things worse.”³⁴ Offering but retracting the last choice negates Hull’s ability to be a hero or to see beyond his personal war. Again, rather than flesh out Hull’s torn loyalties to do his blue duty but forsake his obligations to the black community, the film forsakes the collective politics it flirts with, ultimately abandoning that critique for yet another close-up of a battered hero, one who is black *and* blue, but still basically alone. It also confirms America’s preference for lone heroes detached from community, while leaving this particular black cop unable to find acceptance in any community.

Another of the handful of major black actors of the era, Wesley Snipes also puts on a badge in *Murder at 1600* (1997), in which he portrays a District of Columbia cop dispatched to investigate a murder inside the White House, along with the more vital cover up. It requires that Snipes’s character, Det. Harlan Regis, kill the president’s enemy, which turns out to be the president’s national security advisor. Regis is also paired with a white female secret service agent, Nina Chance (Diane Lane), whose value as a sharp shooter saves his life. She also saves the president’s by throwing her body in front of his to take a bullet. There is great care, though, to avoid the suggestion of any romance between Regis and Chance. It makes little sense unless the century-long taboo on interracial coupling is considered, first as a matter of law, then as a matter of custom, which manages to endure.³⁵

African American writer-director John Singleton, who earned acclaim for *Boyz n the Hood* (1991), created an updated *Shaft* in 2000. This time the story focuses on the original’s nephew, also named John (Samuel L. Jackson), who is—as the reprised Oscar-winning theme song by Isaac

Hayes notes, “the man that would risk his neck for his brother man.” Rather than a private eye, this Shaft is a NYPD detective who makes it his business to hunt down the rich, white male responsible for a racially inspired assault-turned-homicide of a black male. Intent on doing things more brutally than even the NYPD permits (in all its screen iterations), Shaft turns in his badge, which enables him to kill several people in cold blood and satisfy his highly individuated pursuit of justice. As such, he is more vigilante than rogue and, as discussed in the introduction, limits such a character’s ability to perform the nation and stay connected to formal law enforcement with its more prescribed sense of public duty. In addition, at the film’s end, Shaft joins his uncle (the original Shaft, Richard Roundtree) in the private eye business, never reclaiming his police badge. As Jack E. White notes, what made the original *Shaft* so special was its novel depiction of a self-assured black detective talking back to “the Man.” In contrast, the new Shaft is “transformed . . . into a thug.”³⁶

Another noteworthy film of the era to feature a meaty role for a black detective is *Crash* (2005), which purposely investigates the impact of race in the lives of several intertwining black and white characters, especially several key cop characters. However, in the end, Det. Graham Waters, portrayed by Don Cheadle, meets a tragic fate while the racist white cop finds redemption in rescuing the black female (he previously sexually molested) from a burning vehicle. The film won an Academy Award for Best Picture, but despite its best intentions, fails to interrogate the larger systemic links that perpetuate the racism it so intentionally exploits.³⁷

Denzel Washington: The Superstar Black Crimefighter

While the presence of black cop characters has increased, displaying many progressive aspects and more subtle characterizations, there remains no (non-comic) black male who has yet to match the sexual virility, action-orientation, and nation-performing connections of the white male rogue.³⁸ Other top-drawing African American actors such as Morgan Freeman and Samuel L. Jackson continue to be employed as supporting

players—however titan and celebrated their roles are.³⁹ After winning an Oscar for his 2004 portrayal of Ray Charles, Jamie Foxx struggled to find another suitable starring role, returning to serving as the black buddy to Colin Farrell's white detective in *Miami Vice*, the 2006 film inspired by the popular 1980s television show, and which repeats the small screen's tilting of the story's attention toward the white partner. Foxx, as well known as a comedian, returned to comic roles until his potent performance in the neo-western *Django Unchained*.

In light of the above, Denzel Washington, who will be 65 at the end of 2019, remains the lone African American male to have found considerable success playing the lead crimefighter in more than a dozen films. His career also has transcended the limitations of race in part by portraying several broad-based characters who were not necessarily race specific, including the capable attorney in *Philadelphia* (1993). Having already published a comprehensive study about Washington's crimefighters, including his Oscar-winning turn in *Training Day* (discussed in a later chapter), included here is only a brief recap of these crimefighter roles as they relate to this book's objectives.⁴⁰

Washington's first crimefighter was in *Ricochet* (1991), the story of cop-turned-district attorney Nick Styles, who is hounded by a maniacal criminal named Blake (John Lithgow), intent on destroying the man who put him away. Blackness as criminal, though, still haunts the story in the form of Style's boyhood friend-turned-drug lord Odessa (Ice T). Styles, like Dirty Harry before him, is betrayed by an inefficient and spineless police department that suspends him and puts him outside the system. Styles, then, enlists Odessa's help to defeat his foe, Odessa doing the extralegal tasks Styles—the sanitized black hero—cannot do. The juxtaposition of Styles and Odessa together, though, paint a portrait of blackness that affirms the legacy of deviance coded into mainstream cinema.

In *Virtuosity* (1995), a cross between a cop film and a fantasy thriller, Washington is LAPD Det. Parker Barnes, who must finally subdue his non-human nemesis through virtual reality technology. After having lost his wife and daughter to a deranged criminal who wanted Barnes off his trail, Barnes hunts down his new target with the help of a white criminologist, Madison Carter (Kelly Lynch), who believes in him long after the department considers him a killer. Once Carter's young daughter is

kidnapped, Barnes finds a new reason to risk his life: to save the young (white) girl.⁴¹ At the film's end, Carter utters a tearful thank you to Barnes then walks away, offering no gesture of affection, not even a handshake—again, an incongruous outcome for the lead male and female characters in a Hollywood film.

In *Fallen* (1998), Washington portrays homicide detective John Hobbes who witnesses the execution of the demonic serial killer, Edgar Reese (Elias Koteas), whose evil spirit lives on in other people, who then become killers using his same methods. Although the film is more supernatural thriller than customary cop film, the same patterns of Washington's other cop characters are detected in Hobbes—such a righteous figure that even one of his colleagues dubs him a “saint.”⁴² Like other Washington crimefighters, Hobbes is allowed to defend himself against his enemies but not if that means operating outside the rules or being overly aggressive. Even he notes, “If I lost control ... I'd be no better than the people we hunt.”⁴³ As a black male, his anger must be subdued for him to be acceptable, but which negates his ability to perform the rogue who must be able to act aggressively *at his discretion* to accomplish a broader goal.

The Siege (1998) features Washington as Anthony Hubbard, who heads the FBI/NYPD Terrorism Task Force, facing off with Annette Bening as CIA operative Elise Kraft, who is protecting an asset for whom she has feelings, using Hubbard, among others, to fulfill her extralegal political agenda. Bruce Willis also stars as the zealous Major General William Devereaux, who declares Martial Law and whom Hubbard finally arrests for torturing to death a prisoner. Washington, despite being the main character, portrays yet another desexualized black male while his female co-star's character is permitted a sexual liaison with a terrorist-prisoner but kept out of bed with Hubbard. Although Hubbard enjoys a cozy dinner with Kraft, intimately dancing, even kissing her on the cheek, after her terrorist lover shoots her, Hubbard merely holds her hand and prays with her before she takes her last breath.

In *The Bone Collector* (1999) Washington portrays a suicidal ex-cop, Lincoln Rhyme, who after being seriously injured in an accident, is a quadriplegic who writes best sellers on forensics, although only able to move his head and finger. He is called back into service to help stop a serial killer, who is eventually unveiled as a psychotic ex-cop. Rhyme's

helpmate is Officer Amelia Donaghy (Angelina Jolie), a uniformed, white female who becomes Rhyme's eyes and ears, and whom he mentors on the finer points of studying crime scenes and collecting evidence. After Donaghy kills Rhyme's enemy, the film's final scenes suggest they have coupled, hosting friends and family for a party. Although they are physically able to kiss, they settle for touching hands or gazing lovingly at each other from a distance. Again, it seems preposterous since the novel on which the film is based explores the romance between Rhyme and Donaghy.

Despite his star power, and as demonstrated above, Washington's characters rarely indulge in romantic relationships, especially with white female co-stars. In *The Pelican Brief* (1993), which pairs Washington with Julie Roberts, bell hooks noted that "throughout the film, their bodies are carefully positioned to avoid any contact that could be seen as mutually erotic."⁴⁴ Several sources, though, claim it is Washington who refuses to do love scenes with white actresses to avoid offending black female viewers.⁴⁵ Arguably, most viewers (black and white) are likely unaware of Washington's policy and simply left with the impression that it is business as usual for Hollywood.

Leaving *Training Day* out of the chronology for the moment, as it is discussed in a later chapter, Washington continues his cop characters in *Out of Time* (2003), which, more significantly allows him a sex life. In this film Washington is Matthias Lee Whitlock—the police chief of a small department in one of the Florida Keys, not far from Miami, where his estranged Latina wife, Alex Diaz Whitlock (Eva Mendes), works as a homicide detective. After having an affair with a black female he has known since high school, he discovers that she set him up to take the fall for her murder, given an insurance policy that names him as beneficiary. Whitlock's wife finds the woman alive (and the insurance money) and kills her to save his life. Curiously, Washington's resistance to interracial film romances does not extend to Latinas. Mendes, as a Cuban American, who like most Latinas are interpreted as "brown," is apparently lent enough crossover appeal to be acceptable as a sexualized mate for black or white male characters. This, in turn, leaves undisturbed the Hollywood taboo against black mixing with white.⁴⁶

In *Déjà Vu* (2006), Washington is ATF agent Doug Carlin who travels back in time to prevent a terrorist attack on a riverboat in New Orleans that killed more than 500 people. FBI analysts discover a way to investigate the crime scene before it occurs, which is loosely explained as an Armageddon-like act committed by an ex-soldier gone off the rails. The story also hints that Carlin is romantically drawn to the would-be victim, a Creole, representing another complicated racial identity rooted in the history of mixed-race peoples who settled New Orleans. As with Mendes, her “brownness” problematizes but fails to disrupt the nation’s entrenched racial order and the persistent black/white binary.

Finally, there is *Inside Man* (2006) that showcases Washington as NYPD Det. Keith Frazier who is in charge as a hostage negotiator during a major bank robbery. The heist is pulled off by a group that steals a fortune in diamonds hidden in a safety deposit box, but turns over a priceless ring to an intermediary, hoping to expose the true identity of the bank founder: a war criminal and Nazi collaborator who confiscated the ring from French Jews who perished in the Holocaust. African American filmmaker Spike Lee leaves his imprint on the film, teasing out moments that capture how racism and corruption have underwritten white wealth and permeated the justice system. The white female power broker and intermediary, aptly named Madeleine White (Jodie Foster), profits from exploiting her connections with corrupt judges and greedy industrialists. In a telling moment, after she warns a frustrated Frazier that he fails to grasp the full complexity of the robbery, he barks, “Miss White, kiss my black ass.”⁴⁷ The history of NYPD ethnic/race relations is also included, with Frazer interviewing the Irish police sergeant who first called in the robbery. While asking for a recap, Frazier asks Sgt. Collins to stop using “colorful” epithets and racial slurs in his recollections. It is perhaps a reminder of the intertwined histories of the Irish and African Americans in New York, who were once lumped together in the city’s worst slums.⁴⁸ Once the Irish exploited politics and civil service jobs such as police posts to climb the social ladder, they were later charged with becoming among the worse tormentors of their former brethren in poverty.

What Washington’s many roles as a crimefighter hero reveal is that even an award-winning star with consistent box office clout cannot overcome the legacies of racism that still influence Hollywood storytelling.

Like Poitier's characters, Washington's crimefighters are men without a country, rarely depicted as being part of a larger community or an old neighborhood that could help explain their past or speak to their conflicts. Rather, a Washington crimefighter remains an isolated and racialized exemplar rather than a fully integrated figure in a Hollywood that still fixates on his limitations as a black man over his contributions as a "blue" hero.

Notes

1. Chief Reuben M. Greenberg, quoted in W. Marvin Delaney, *Black Police in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), ix. Also, the intertwined history of blacks and the Irish—the latter moving up the ranks of political machines and securing police jobs through patronage—met again under increasingly hostile conditions, including the race riots of the nineteenth century, when “Irish police officers were just as antagonistic and brutal toward blacks as the Irish workers who led the mobs. These conflicts fed an animosity that survived for generations.” *Ibid.*, 3–4.
2. *Ibid.*, 17. The government reported only 576 blacks served as police, most in Northern cities; while in the South, only four Texas cities and Knoxville, TN, employed black officers.
3. *Ibid.*, 115.
4. Geoffrey P. Alpert and Roger G. Dunham, *Policing Urban America* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1997), 215. In the early 1970s, Baltimore, Newark, Memphis, Miami, and New Orleans had populations with roughly 40 percent minorities but had less than seven percent minority membership in their police departments. Criticism of filling the void too fast also occurred in San Francisco, Dallas, Detroit, Houston, and Philadelphia; promotions attained by adjusting standards or scores, which further incited interracial friction, as well as to put those promoted under suspicion of tokenism—a charge that dogged affirmative action policies from their inception.
5. Delaney, *Black Police*, 102.
6. See Kenneth B. Clark, *Dark Ghetto, Dilemmas of Social Power* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1989).

7. James Foreman argues that the hiring of more black police chiefs in urban departments from the 1970s forward did not significantly change incarceration rates for black youth, and, in many cases, made matters worse. These black leaders responded to their communities' pleas for crackdowns on crime, but the reforms they pushed through only exacerbated the systemic racism within the larger justice system. Moreover, black officers often learn to conform to the existing blue culture of their departments (and its baked-in racism), rather than successfully transform law enforcement agencies into being more race-sensitive. See Foreman's, *Locking Up Our Own: Crime and Punishment in Black America* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2017).
8. Kenneth Bolton, Jr. and Joe R. Feagin, *Black in Blue: African-American Police Officers and Racism* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 27–28.
9. *Ibid.*, 95.
10. Scholars point to D. W. Griffith's terrifying would-be rapist in his 1915 film *Birth of a Nation* as a key moment in film history, reinforcing the racialized myth that black males are lustful beasts, which Bogle argues erased sexualized black men from Hollywood films for the next half century and that continues to resonate in contemporary cinema and television programming. Bogle, *Toms*, 10. See also James Snead, *White Screens, Black Images: Hollywood from the Dark Side* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 37–45; and Vincent F. Rocchio, *Reel Racism: Confronting Hollywood's Construction of Afro-American Culture* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000), 29–54.
11. Obama's cool demeanor inspired the comedy team, Keegan-Michael Key and Jordan Peele, to invent a sketch about an "anger translator" named Luther. Luther (Key), barely able to contain his rage and channeling every available stereotype, paces behind Obama (Peele), transforming the president's carefully measured words into bursts of street slang, curse words, and exasperated shouts about issues the president cannot express, including about his "missing" birth certificate. "If he gets angry, he's the angry black man. If he doesn't say anything, he's uppity or ineffectual. The guy couldn't win. So that's where this raging id standing next to him, of Luther, was founded," Key says. See Michele Moses, "Keegan-Michael Key on Playing Obama's 'Anger Translator,'" *The New Yorker*, October 27, 2016. Available online.
12. Tasker, *Spectacular Bodies*, 37.
13. Poitier won the Academy Award for Best Actor for *Lilies of the Field* (1963).

14. *In The Heat of the Night*, directed by Norman Jewison, Amazon Prime (The Mirisch Corporation, 1967).
15. Steve Weinstein, "In the Heat of the Night Sends a Message: Popular NBC Series Gives Positive Role Model of Race Relations, Says Producer," *Los Angeles Times*, February 15, 1989. Available online.
16. Ibid.
17. There were a few exceptional independent films such as *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* (1973), which includes a black cop who is asked to choose between his black and blue loyalties within a revolutionary scenario. See Michael T. Martin, David C. Wall, and Marilyn Yaquinto, *Race and the Revolutionary Impulse: The Spook Who Sat by the Door* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018).
18. Melvin Van Peebles wrote, directed, and starred in the 1971 film, the most successful independent production to date at the time. See Jesse Algeron Rhines, *Black Film/White Money* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 43. Also see Gladstone L. Yearwood, *Black Film as a Signifying Practice: Cinema, Narration and the African-American Aesthetic Tradition* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2000), 185–216.
19. Parks earned acclaim for writing, producing, and directing *The Learning Tree* in 1969. Parks' son, Gordon Parks, Jr., made *Superfly* (1972), which generated its own popularity and critical controversy.
20. Thomas Cripps observes that such blaxploitation films echo a cultural tradition linked to "older Afro-American traditional folk heroes, among the most influential, the trickster modeled after Br'er Rabbit or the 'bad nigger' modeled after Staggerlee, the sexual outlaw of black urban folklore." Thomas Cripps, *Black Film as Genre* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), 128.
21. Mark A. Reid, *Redefining Black Film* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 84. S. Craig Watkins, *Representing: Hip Hop Culture and the Production of Black Cinema* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).
22. Ibid., 84.
23. Donald Bogle, *Bright Boulevards, Bold Dreams: The Story of Black Hollywood* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007).
24. The upsurge in black sidekicks and buddies co-starring in mainstream Hollywood products also produced what Ed Guerrero labels a period of "neo-minstrelsy." Ed Guerrero, "The Black Image in Protective Custody: Hollywood's Biracial Buddy Films of the Eighties," in *Black American Cinema*, ed. Manthia Diawara (New York: Routledge, 1983), 237–238.

25. After adjusting for inflation, *Beverly Hills Cop* remains among the 100 top-grossing films of all time. Source material available online at boxoffice Mojo.com. The film's success fostered sequels in 1987 and 1994.
26. Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 18.
27. See Todd Boyd, *Am I Black Enough for You? Popular Culture from the Hood and Beyond* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997).
28. Earl Ofari Hutchinson, *The Assassination of the Black Male Image* (New York: Touchstone, 1997), 144–145. Also see Boyd's chapter 4.
29. *Deep Cover*, DVD, directed by Bill Duke (New Line Home Video, 1999).
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Snipes was far more experimental than other major black actors with onscreen romances with non-black females, including in *Money Train*, *Jungle Fever* (1991), *Rising Sun* (1993), in which a Japanese woman is the prize for which Snipes competes while serving as Sean Connery's buddy detective; also in *One Night Stand* (1997) as his character is married to an Asian American woman but has an affair with the German born Nastassja Kinski; finally, in *U.S. Marshals* (1998), with French born Irène Jacob. The only two white females in the above list are foreign born, perhaps making them acceptable as his lovers by leaving the taboo on homegrown interraciality undisturbed.
36. Jack E. White, *Time Atlantic*, July 17, 2000.
37. I concur with Ta-Nehisi Coates who charges that the film's characters are contrived representations meant to present "arguments and propaganda" that violently bump into each other and become "impressed with their own quirkiness." Rather than a serious critique of race in America, *Crash* "is the apotheosis of a kind of unthinking, incurious, nihilistic, multiculturalism" that lacks genuine characters through which to interrogate racism. See "Worst Movie of the Decade," *The Atlantic*, December 30, 2009. Available online.
38. *Ebony* featured a story in January 1997 identifying factors that may inhibit black actors from wider success, including lack of major awards, success in action films not carrying over into other genres, the scarcity of

roles for black actresses, and finally, the prohibition against onscreen relationships with white actresses.

39. While their versatility helps to maximize their A-list potential, for most of their careers they had few onscreen romances—the fear of black sexuality, especially with respect to white women that Cornel West posits is deeply rooted in white fear of interracial sex and marriage. See West's *Race Matters* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994).
40. See Marilyn Yaquinto, "Denzel Washington: A Study in Black and Blue," *Black Camera*, 22, no. 2 (2008), 3–23.
41. In the 2004 film, *Man on Fire* (2004), Washington portrays a burned-out government assassin named John Creasy who attempts to redeem himself by avenging the harm done to a family for whom he now works as a bodyguard, growing especially protective of yet another young white girl. Creasy had been recruited for the job by his former American employer who had previously relied on Creasy's talents for eliminating enemies of the state.
42. Like many of Washington's characters, Hobbes meets an attractive white female, Gretta Milano (Embeth Davidts), for whom he has feelings, but which are not expressed beyond a farewell embrace.
43. *Fallen*, DVD, directed by Gregory Hoblit (Warner Home Video, 1998).
44. bell hooks, *Reel to Real: Race, Sex, and Class at the Movies* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 85.
45. Jamila Akil, "While Promoting 'Flight,' the Real Reason Denzel Washington Avoided On-Screen Romances with White Women is Revealed," November 13, 2012. Available online at beyondwhiteblack.com.
46. Vanessa Martinez, "Casting Latina Actresses/Black Actors: Revisiting the Trend," May 8, 2012. Available online at indiewire.com.
47. *Inside Man*, DVD, directed by Spike Lee (Universal Pictures, 2006).
48. Once considered as dangerous a threat as African Americans, the nineteenth-century Irish were regarded as "Negroes turned inside out." Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 40. When the Irish Catholic first arrived, he was outcast and relegated to sharing living and working space with blacks and other marginalized peoples, resulting in a degree of intermingling, which was enough to prompt the 1850 census to include the new category of "mulattoes," or mixed raced people, who comprised up to a quarter of many states' "colored" population.



5

Female Crimefighters Defending the Homefront

Lieutenant wants to see you girls right now. Det. Izbecki
*Women, Izbecki, women. Girls are usually under 18 and don't have detective
shields.* Det. Lacey
Cagney & Lacey, March 21, 1983

White women were first hired by American police departments as early as 1905, even before they earned the right to vote. Mary E. Hamilton, one of the NYPD's first female officers, explains in her memoir that females served in custodial positions, tending to other females and juveniles, as well as being tapped for their feminine "virtues."¹ Venessa Garcia explains that women at the time were not "to replace men in their occupation but to aid and assist them, quietly and unassumingly."² That approach endured until the women's movement of the late 1960s, among other pressures, that eventually impacted hiring practices.³ With white women reductively equated with "moral virtue, the domestic realm, social service, formal rules, administration ...and emotions," it is no surprise that male-dominated departments at the time resisted the idea of hiring more female cops.⁴ Moreover, if a female adopts the profession's masculinist

norms, “she is criticized for not acting like a woman”; in turn, if she relies on traditional feminine approaches, she is considered “unsuitable for the job.”⁵ In actuality and for the most part, women of all races and ethnicities, as collective “outsiders,” utilize a variety of strategies to usually conform to rather than to reform institutions, including “capitalizing on stereotypical femininity” or adopting macho methods as their own.⁶

Despite the initial surge in the numbers of women hired in the 1970s, their percentage of the total police force today remains roughly at 12 percent, with advancement slow and the rate of turnover persistently high.⁷ Although it remains difficult for a society that deploys police to comprehend putting women so directly in harm’s way, women have long been the victims of violence despite society’s professed commitment to protecting them. Moreover, given the cultural training about female “gifts,” there is evidence that female cops “tend to defuse volatile situations and provoke less hostility.”⁸ The reality is that primarily about 20 percent of a police officer’s time is linked to dangerous duties, while 80 percent is spent on “social-work-type jobs” and administrative duties.⁹ Hollywood representations of police culture, though, foster the impression that police work is “action-filled, exciting, [and] adventurous,” promoting an image on and off screen of cops as urban warriors—roles best suited to males.¹⁰

Female Crimefighters on Screen: Battling to be Blue

For most of Hollywood history, a female presence in crime films was reduced to serving as the wives, girlfriends, or victims of both cops and criminals. In the wake of changes described above, female crimefighters began to appear onscreen to contest the boundaries of traditional female behavior. Rather than cinema, it was the medium of television that first featured stand-out female crimefighters, including *Decoy* (1957–1958), showcasing Officer Casey Jones (Beverly Garland) who explains that she is just one of 249 such female officers in the NYPD, “who pose as hostesses, society girls, models, anything and everything the

department wants us to be.”¹¹ A decade later came Officer Julie Barnes (Peggy Lipton) in the ABC television series, *The Mod Squad* (1968–1973); she was a runaway from San Francisco recruited to be part of the LAPD’s experimental “youth squad.” Also with the LAPD was Sgt. Pepper Anderson (Angie Dickinson) in the NBC show, *Police Woman* (1974–1978). Anderson too posed in a variety of stereotypical roles to entrap criminals but at least presented the rare image of a white female putting herself in harm’s way on behalf of the public’s safety.

Probably the more memorable crime-fighting females of the era appeared in *Charlie’s Angels* (1976–1981), an ABC show that announced its intentions in the opening voiceover: “Once upon a time there were three little girls who went to the police academy ... but I took them away from all that. My name is Charlie.”¹² In each episode, his disembodied voice dispatched the women to perform “severely under-costumed undercover work ... as prostitutes, sexy nurses or exercise instructors.”¹³ Such undercover roles—or ability to “masquerade,” as Philippa Gates notes¹⁴—is perhaps a more palatable way to imagine women doing dangerous work, especially if their physical attractiveness is still on view.

As discussed earlier, for males, the most iconic crimefighter characters usually appear in plain clothes, but for a female, the uniform may provide her with a signifier of empowerment *because* of its connections to formal, state power. By covering up *her* body, traditionally representing a site of vulnerability, the uniform lends her its associative authority, helping to override the limitations that her gender customarily poses. This also may help explain why having a female in uniform is particularly disconcerting; and why female cops, like women in the military, initially wore skirts to differentiate them.

One such exemplar appears in *Hill Street Blues*, discussed in Chap. 3, in which Officer Lucy Bates had a small but significant role, earning Betty Thomas an Emmy, although her six-foot, one-inch frame was already atypical by Hollywood standards. Given her physique, Bates’s character is shown helping to wrestle suspects to the ground, and in one instance after such a tussle, sarcastically accuses one of her colleagues of having “copped a feel” during the melee. Bates is also among the first female cops to be framed as a trusted friend to her male partner, who vow to have each other’s “backs” without the usual romantic overtones. The

arc of her character, though, also includes traditional female associations, including her shedding a tear after shooting a suspect and growing more maternal as the series progressed, later adopting the child of a drug-addicted mother who lost custody.

While Bates was depicted as a no-nonsense cop doing her job, a return to glamor was showcased by the uniformed Officer Stacy Sheridan, portrayed by the more glamorous Heather Locklear in *T.J. Hooker* (1982–1986), first aired on NBC then on ABC for its last season. However, it is Tyne Daly, Dirty Harry's female partner in *The Enforcer*, who offered a more expanded portrait of a female cop during the era. In the CBS television series, *Cagney & Lacey* (1982–1988), Daly co-stars as Det. Mary Beth Lacey with Det. Chris Cagney, portrayed by Sharon Gless. Lacey represented the more grounded, married-with-children type, while Cagney was presented as the attractive but tough-talking blond who followed in the footsteps of her hard-drinking Irish cop father, and with hopes of making chief someday. Despite the limitations of their biographies, the show featured the two detectives competently working cases, chasing down suspects, and participating in the occasional shoot-out. Lacey's style of interrogation was to be well-prepared and rooted in being a good listener, patiently asking follow-up questions to encourage victims to remember details and suspects to share more than they intend. In contrast, Cagney relied on her gut instincts to catch a suspect in a lie and emotional outbursts that could unnerve a reluctant witness. Given their gender (and race), the series also investigated the obstacles facing two white female cops from different perspectives, and—novel for its time—committed to each other as friends and partners. As Caryn James notes, “No other female cops [since] have been as down to earth and psychologically complex as those characters.”¹⁵ At the series' end, Lacey had survived breast cancer but was now recovering from a gunshot, while Cagney was still looking for her soul mate along with struggling to stay sober.

An earlier 1981 made-for-TV film, whose stellar ratings inspired the subsequent series, had earned the cover of *Ms. Magazine* for its progressive presentation of two hard-working female cops. Barbara Corday and Barbara Avedon, who wrote the film and series, credit the women's movement for inspiring these female cop characters.¹⁶ The series, which faced two cancellation scares during its run, survived to win two Emmys as a

drama series and earn Daly four Emmys and Gless two for their respective characters.

Uncovering Female Agency and Nurturing Violence

When the era's films began to include more female crimefighters, these roles were mainly a return to undercover work, where such characters could masquerade behind more conventional roles. One example is *Black Widow* (1987), in which Debra Winger portrays a government agent working undercover to get close to a young woman (Theresa Russell) suspected of killing consecutive husbands for their money. Their cat-and-mouse game is intriguing but more akin to the trappings of *film noir*, with its intentional moral fog—one that hampers the customary crimefighter's focus on justice.

Betrayed (1988) is another undercover role for Winger in which she is an FBI agent posing as an itinerant “combine girl” who works the American heartland during harvest time, but also becomes involved with the target of her investigation, Gary Simmons (Tom Berenger). After confirming that Simmons is a white supremacist planning a crime in which her participation is crucial, she becomes imperiled, emotionally and physically. Although she eventually kills Simmons in the line of duty, their unorthodox love story overpowers the focus on her crimefighting skills, and, again, has little to do with justice or to expose the racism at the heart of the story. When convinced that she has been recklessly exploited by the bureau, she sidelines her career, choosing to reconnect one last time with her dead lover's children—even if it means risking retaliation from the white supremacists who remain at large.

Another female undercover cop appears in *Impulse* (1990), directed by Sondra Locke (Dirty Harry's “rescue” in *Sudden Impact*), with Theresa Russell as a prostitute who busts an illicit drug operation, but also becomes fascinated by the sexualized trappings of her alter ego. Moreover, she must rebuke the sexual advances of her boss while consenting to sex with the prosecutor who is directing the task force employing her. Locke

explains that the psychological pressure on this cop is what drew her to the story, yet the role is deemed “a male fantasy” by one reviewer who adds that no “lustful male director could have paid more attention to Ms. Russell’s sex appeal than Ms. Locke does.”¹⁷

Finally, there is *A Stranger Among Us* (1992), which places NYPD Det. Emily Eden (Melanie Griffith) among an orthodox Jewish community to crack a theft-murder mystery. Eden, whom her partner calls a cowboy, solves the case and kills a few criminals, but the action takes a back seat to her forbidden romance with the rabbi’s son.

Despite the new conservatism ushered in by the Reagan presidency, the era charted some improvements toward stronger on-screen female agency, moving beyond mimicking male behavior and stressing intellectual over physical power.¹⁸ Such female characters are included in *Silence of the Lambs* (1991), *Copycat* (1995), and *Fargo* (1996). The first two of these performances slide into the dictates of a slasher film, with the criminal’s evil as meaningful as, if not more so, as the cop’s persona as a force for good. *Silence of the Lambs* is the story of FBI agent Clarice Starling (Jodie Foster) who must stop a serial killer by enlisting the help of the imprisoned Hannibal Lector (Anthony Hopkins). Starling’s dependence on the mesmeric Lector, though, draws the viewer into his horrific orbit at the expense of her crimefighting perspective.

Copycat is another film that depends on the trappings of the horror genre, but also features a capable homicide detective, M. J. Monahan (Holly Hunter), who is progressively “buddied” with another female, a notable criminal profiler played by Sigourney Weaver. Monahan, though, is steeped in man troubles, which somewhat diminishes her representation of strength.

Lastly, in *Fargo*, the discovery of a series of murders in the North Dakota city enables Chief Marge Gunderson (Frances McDormand, winning an Academy Award for her role) to utilize her crack crime-solving skills, despite being in the last few months of pregnancy. Although the film aptly contests several stereotypes about women, especially to supplement her “nurturing” side with a no-nonsense approach usually reserved for male crimefighters, Gunderson is “neither maverick nor lone agent,”¹⁹ which makes her quirky but not likely to supplant the hegemonic white male who otherwise dominates such roles.

When female characters do start participating in the “action,” similar to black males, they are usually relegated to serving as the white male’s support system. Such a female buddy was featured in *Internal Affairs* (1990). Sgt. Amy Wallace (Laurie Metcalf) is further marginalized as a lesbian whose personal life is virtually ignored and whose relationship with the lead male, although respectful, is strictly contained, which enables the heterosexual male lead, Raymond Avilla (Andy Garcia), to focus on his troubled marriage. During the film’s final showdown between cops and criminal (another cop, in this case), Wallace is seriously wounded, leaving the males to shoot it out—a fate similar to that of Daly’s character in *The Enforcer*.

Rather than demonstrate their crime-solving prowess, the evolution of the era’s female characters also shows them muscling up and brandishing the same exaggerated weapons as the male action heroes. Acting tough—a basic tenet of the male crimefighter—is a complicated task for females as it frequently means adopting the same performance of masculinity, already a hyperbolic version of what it means to be male. Even wielding a weapon can appear inappropriate for a female, as it evokes long-standing phallic connotations²⁰ and runs counter to her supposed nurturing nature. If weapons are perceived as an unnatural fit, this further undermines her ability to perform the action-oriented authority that they accord, whether on behalf of the nation-state or rooted in individual discretion—a hallmark of the male archetype’s winning formula.

In addition, portraying a rogue version of a crimefighter requires a character to think for himself or herself, to act on behalf of the greater good rather than for personal concerns. Yet, most female crimefighters have to be awakened by some threat to those with whom they have personal or emotional attachments. The female crimefighter’s motives are most often rooted in a maternal or nurturing instinct, which can include abused and endangered children, family members, and anyone with whom she has intimate connections. There is also the scorned woman scenario, as in *Kill Bill’s* jilted bride, who then becomes a ruthless killing machine. Despite inroads made by women muscling and shooting their way into more action films,²¹ they still act on behalf of intimate concerns, matters traditionally rooted in the private rather than public sphere. “The maternal recurs as a motivating factor, with female heroes acting to pro-

tect their children, whether biological or adoptive (*Terminator 2*, *Aliens*, *Strange Days*) or in memory of them (*Fatal Beauty*).²²

Even the more daring heroine in *The Long Kiss Goodnight* (1996) is split in two, emphasized “through the codes of costume and behaviour”: the tough, crossdressing Charly Baltimore (Geena Davis) who kicks ass, and her alter ego, the “feminine” Samantha Caine who is “defined by her motherhood, community role, and hence by the needs of others.”²³ Baltimore is a CIA assassin who loses her memory and becomes the unassuming mom, Caine, who lives with her daughter in a quiet New England town. Once she recovers her memory, she struggles to balance work and motherhood, which, in this case, means killing in cold blood (on behalf of the nation).

Besides the acceptable motivation to protect loved ones and homesteads, female characters are usually permitted more aggressive behavior when rape is involved. However, acting preemptively or out of revenge is customarily the dirty work males must do. In this manner, Sondra Locke’s character in *Sudden Impact*, discussed in Chap. 3, represents a novel approach in trying to settle the score herself, but Callahan’s protection of her vigilantism also restores male control and dominion over her actions.

The muscular, gun-toting Sarah Connor in *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (1991) and the feckless Lt. Ripley in *Alien* (1979 and sequels in 1986, 1993, and 1997) become soldiers *not* on behalf of the nation’s defense, but primarily to protect loved ones and themselves. As such, they do not chase the same goals as male avengers who seek restorative justice on behalf of society as a whole. Even if the male character perceives his duties as personal—which in essence he often *must* as the personification of self-determination—his role reads, circulates, and sparks discussions as though it represents something larger and more profound, enabling *his* story to garner greater cultural acceptance and become part of the “national bloodstream.”²⁴ In other words, given the male’s ability to act as a universal agent, his mission is positioned to speak for the collective, while *hers* remains insular and isolated.²⁵

Having witnessed the handful of female defenders and action heroines who first emerge in the 1990s,²⁶ observers began to ask: “Will female shoot ’em-ups help or hurt women?”²⁷ A few scholars argue that having

women act as aggressively as men is hardly progress.²⁸ They charge that female masculinity in cinema comes at the expense of redefining female participation; and to have female characters mimic the prevailing masculinist norms does little to realign the gendered assumptions about the role of a hero.²⁹ I would argue that Hollywood action films similarly fail to address the reality of most men's lives, but by specifically discouraging women from performing such fantastic, violent, incongruous, exhilarating onscreen behaviors also denies female characters the full range of human expression—good, bad, and preposterous.³⁰ More importantly, such a view reiterates essentialisms that frame violence as inherently male and non-violence as “natural” to females. Considering America's embrace of aggressive action—in my view, the more serious problem—it stands to reason that American women too have absorbed the nation's macho mindset. To bar them from participating in its expression on screen, given Hollywood's cultural ubiquity and global influence, helps to maintain males as the only legitimate agents who can perform the nation. Thus, my argument is not with females intruding on action films or their depiction of violence—the gist of much film scholarship, especially in the 1980s and 1990s—it is having a particular hyper-masculinized version (whether performed by males or females) as the *only* viable and appropriate expression of American heroism.

Case of the Blues: Female Cops on the Small Screen

Despite the proliferation of crime shows on television starting in the 1990s, female crimefighters were still kept largely on the sidelines. *NYPD Blue*, discussed in Chap. 3, features one multifaceted uniformed officer, Janice Licalsi (Amy Brenneman), who kills a mobster she had been forced to work for to protect her disgraced cop father and to save the life of her lover, the show's lead character. Starting in season two (through season seven), Det. Diane Russell (Kim Delaney), who also serves as the girlfriend (later wife) of another male detective, is plagued by personal problems—haunted by a father who sexually abused her and shown struggling

with alcoholism. Other female characters who arrive later in the series remain run-of-the-mill supporting players who do little to expand representations of female crimefighters.

The early twenty-first century debuted more female characters but most merely replicate existing limitations. *The Division* (2001–2004) showcases the perspectives of five female cops in the San Francisco police, including Capt. Kate McCafferty, portrayed by Bonnie Bedelia. The show was produced for the Lifetime network, originally launched in 1984 as a cable channel targeting female audiences.³¹ To its credit, the show includes a diverse cast with several black female and Latina detectives, along with exploring issues related to sexual orientation. However, as Amanda D. Lotz notes, the series privileges their private lives at the expense of their crimefighting, with “minimal chase scenes or action sequences,”³² along with being relegated to what may be derisively called the “pink ghetto” of niche cable channels targeting female viewers.

Without a Trace (2002–2009), dealing with missing persons, features an effective female character, Det. Samantha “Sam” Spade (Poppy Montgomery) but mostly serves as a supportive partner for the show’s male lead. *Cold Case* (2003–2010) offers Philadelphia detective Lilly Rush (Kathryn Morris), but the show rarely rises above the routines of a typical police procedural. *Castle* (2009–2016), whose title refers to the name of the mystery writer who insists on tagging along on murder investigations with homicide detective Stana Katic (Kate Becket), is as much about their budding romance as their crimefighting partnership.

Other shows emerged that put a female crimefighter at centerstage, including *The Closer* (2005–2012), with CIA-trained, Deputy Chief Brenda Leigh Johnson (Kyra Sedgwick), who runs the Homicide Division of the LAPD. She is described as a “tough investigator” and often compared to the extraordinary British inspector in *Prime Suspect*,³³ but her “action” is mostly confined to interrogations. An unorthodox female detective is also embodied by Holly Hunter as Grace Hanadarko in *Saving Grace* (2007–2010), a uniquely flawed, reckless, and gifted cop but who gets aid from a recurring vision of an angel.

Rizzoli & Isles (2010–2016) stars Det. Jane Rizzoli (Angie Harmon) who is paired with a female medical examiner, Maura Isles (Sasha Alexander), but Rizzoli is undermined by flashbacks of her kidnapping

and torture, which also roots her passion for police work in the realm of the personal. Before the series ends, she is attacked again while on the job, which also results in a lost pregnancy.

The Chicago Code (2011), starring Jennifer Beals as Teresa Colvin, Chicago's first female (and youngest ever) police superintendent, proves to be more a vehicle for her former partner, the white male rogue, Jarek Wysocki (Jason Clarke); he routinely ignores nearly every directive she gives him, doing things his own extralegal way.

The *Law & Order* franchise made its debut on NBC in 1990, with the original show (ending in 2010) bifurcating its storytelling—the first part about investigating a crime and the back half about what happens to the accused in the courtroom. As its creator Dick Wolf noted, “the prosecution would be the hero,” making it more procedural than an investigation of cops' motivations and links to the larger social context being explored in this book.³⁴ In one of the two spinoffs, *Law & Order: Criminal Intent* (2001–2011), Det. Alexandra Eames (Kathryn Erbe) is impressive but too often eclipsed by her volatile and senior partner, Det. Robert Goren (Vincent D'Onofrio). Although the duo tackle serious crimes, as one reviewer notes, “you can't get past the fact that you've seen this all before, just assembled differently.”³⁵

The other spin-off, *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit* (later changed to simply *SVU*), started in 1999 as a male and female detective partnership and evolved into a starring turn for the female detective, Olivia Benson, earning Mariska Hargitay an Emmy in 2006 for the role. Despite its longevity, as it is still in production, its focus is primarily on sexual offenders, with most victims being female, having long earned the label of “women's work” with police departments. No doubt focusing on such crimes is vital and absent from most mainstream crime shows, but by depicting them as primarily the concern of female officers, cordons them off and further compounds their “special” or marginalized status.

Benson also falls prey to some well-worn tropes, prompting one reviewer to note how the character is already a child of rape, is nearly raped more than once during the series' run, and finally kidnapped and tortured, “breaking her down in the most brutal ways.”³⁶ Rather than do so to further develop the character's arc, this treatment serves to chip away at her embodiment of a cop hero. Other studies similarly note the

show's "increasingly visual representations of victims' traumatic experiences," including those of the lead character, which merely exacerbate its culture of victimization.³⁷ For all the steps forward the show is given credit for, this trend seems both regressive and dangerous.

Another of the show's clichés is having Benson become a mother to an orphaned boy (much like *Hill Street Blues'* Bates), with the new role prompting Benson to vow she will start shifting her priorities at work to accommodate motherhood. Although admirable, given the realities of her position, especially in a Hollywood crime story, it also represents the antithesis of the male crimefighter's all-in devotion to his profound *raison d'être*. For sure, male crimefighters often have loved ones to worry about, but it is also clear that their families must grasp their sacrifices are on behalf of the greater good among the larger community (or nation)—much like how military service is viewed. For Benson, it is her dedication to work at the expense of her family that seems to be framed as "unnatural" and negligent. This adherence to such a double-standard is another reason *SVU* creates little new terrain for a female crimefighter, despite its star being one of the executive producers with some influence over the show's direction.

One exception among television shows featuring female cop characterizations is *Third Watch* (1999–2005), showcasing the uniformed officer, Faith Yokas (Molly Price), an impressive amalgam of all the progressive female cops who came before her, but with added depth only limited by her inclusion in a large ensemble cast. Several scenes reveal almost a banal quality to her life as a cop, capturing the abrupt shifts from the everyday routines of a working mom suddenly interrupted by the call to duty. In one instance, after going off duty and stopping at a store for groceries, she notices the strange behavior of two men and springs into action, with her gun drawn and eventually foiling an attempted robbery.³⁸ On another occasion, she carefully grabs a suspicious backpack that may contain a bomb, walking it away from a crowd of school children and ignoring the possible danger to her own life.

Yokas's relationship with her partner, Maurice Boscarelli (Jason Wiles)—the resident white male rogue—is a study in contrasts, with her playing the mature, practical one, dispensing tough love and barbed wisecracks; but she also pushes back when he crosses her, rarely yielding to him at the expense of her agency. In turn, even as the precinct cowboy,

Boscarelli is capable of introspection and able to serve as her support system when it counts most—more a nod to police partnerships than to gender politics, on or off screen.

At the same time, Yokas is saddled with the usual domestic stress of balancing her job with the demands of a husband and two kids at home. How Yokas handles her private life is what is novel, as her husband stays home with the kids while she works the evening “third” shift. Over the course of the series, she pays an emotional price for this arrangement, with her 11-year-old daughter giving her as much grief as her husband, as he struggles to find steady work along with combating alcoholism. While Yokas is shown to be the breadwinner, the family is still unable to make ends meet; this in part prompts her to end an unexpected pregnancy with an abortion, drawing sharp rebukes from both male partners in her life.

Despite such stressors that usually overwhelm most female cop characters, they serve to humanize rather than to subjugate Yokas, lending authenticity and dimension to her depiction of a cop. In the last season, after divorcing her husband but regaining the respect of her daughter (who has grown to admire her mother as a flawed but formidable role model), Yokas earns her detective shield, providing appropriate validation and closure for such a rare female cop hero. Such a multifaceted character has yet to be repeated in films or on TV, despite the expanded venues provided by pay cable and Internet-based platforms.

Out of Sight: Black Female Crimefighters

While white females enjoy some inclusion as Hollywood crime fighters, black females—doubly marginalized on the basis of gender and race—remain far more invisible. For most of the 1970s, the career of Pam Grier, although largely a product of independent cinema, was a notable exception and a rare example of an avenging female character who seeks justice, not just for herself, but also on behalf of a community as a whole.³⁹ In 1980s Hollywood, Whoopi Goldberg offered a more mainstream portrait of a black female star, but her cop film, *Fatal Beauty* (1987), and her character, Rita Rizzoli, merely reinscribe a maternal instinct as she acts

aggressively on behalf of the memory of her dead child. It is Goldberg's comic persona, much like Eddie Murphy's, though, that most limits her ability to disrupt Hollywood norms about the gender (and race) of an effective cop hero.

Television in the 1990s offered *Angel Street* (1992), with black and white female "buddy" detectives from Chicago. The show was novel for its reversal of stereotypes, making the black female, Det. Anita Hill (Robin Givens), the well-heeled and educated one, and the white Det. Dorothy Paretsky (Pamela Gidley) the more grounded, working class cop. Unfortunately, it was canceled after only three episodes. Another offering of the era was the 1974 TV movie, *Get Christie Love*, which fostered a short-lived series on ABC (1974–1975) starring Teresa Graves, whose character—inspired by Pam Grier—lacked the original's audacity, having been tamed and contained for a television audience.

Third Watch, discussed above, also included a black female cop, Sasha Monroe (Nia Long), but who spent most of the series as an outcast Internal Affairs agent, then shot while pregnant, eventually marrying fellow officer Ty Davis (Coby Bell). As the series came to a close, Monroe leaves police work entirely to pursue a career in politics.

In *Southland* (2009–2013), although dominated by its male leads (discussed in the final chapter), the black female detective, Lydia Adams (Regina King), has her turn in the spotlight. The series was created by Ann Biderman who had already earned an Emmy for writing an episode of *NYPD Blue*; she now partnered with John Wells, the executive producer of *Third Watch*, and together created *Southland*, which one reviewer described as less about the moral failings of criminals and more about "cops who are in need of intervention." Adams, too, struggles to deal with an aging mother (who dies during the series) and a pregnancy that she is not sure she wants to see through (but does).

Similar to Yokas, such factors do not cripple Adams but get absorbed into her already layered contradictions. The character displays compassion and callousness toward victims, witnesses, and more than a few colleagues, as well as proving to be as cautious as she is confrontational. In other words, she is a fully rounded character not so easily defined by any one factor of her identity, but an evocative synthesis of her race, gender, and profession. Adams represents a remarkable character whose run was

cut short by the show's cancelation, having already been shuttled from NBC to TNT to get a second life. Some reviewers speculated that the show's already bleak outlook had nowhere else to go and simply ran its course. Although the show earned a measure of critical acclaim for its gritty realism, it also had its fair share of detractors,⁴⁰ with one critic observing that the show's cop characters are "very, very white," with King's Adams being the exception, "and the perps are very, very non-white—a lack of diversity that undercuts its realism."⁴¹

This is not to say that white male producers and writers are not capable of creating strong female cop characters (black or white), as producer Barney Rosenzweig was the hands-on, co-creator of *Cagney & Lacey*, and John Wells was the driving force behind many shows under study here. As these producers themselves have acknowledged in interviews, though, there is no better way to achieve a more organic understanding of the perspectives of females and people of color than to strengthen their inclusion in the creative and production processes.⁴²

Shots Fired

Two African American writer-producers, Reggie Rock Bythewood and Gina Prince-Bythewood, accomplished the feat outlined above with their 10-episode limited series, *Shots Fired*, which aired on the Fox Network in 2017. The husband and wife co-creators assert that the series was inspired by the galvanizing tragedies of Michael Brown in 2014 (that set off an uprising in Ferguson, Missouri), and before him, among others, Trayvon Martin in 2012. Rather than a polemical exercise, they hoped to create both empathic black and white characters whose experiences could provide a "key for understanding" how race is embedded in the nation's justice systems, especially as experienced by the two lead African American characters who hold intersecting but divergent points of view.⁴³ A more comprehensive analysis of this particular series is warranted, given its depiction of the crucial interplay of gender and race and their combined impact on public perceptions of criminal and police behaviors on either side of the thin blue line.

The series opens with the shooting of unarmed college student, Jesse Carr (Jacob Leinbach), by Deputy Joshua Beck (Tristan Mack Wilds), in the small, fictional town of Gate Station, North Carolina. The anomaly, the film asserts, is that in this case the cop is black, and the victim is white. Given the racialized nature of the incident, the governor asks the Department of Justice to take over the investigation and requests a black prosecutor from its civil rights division. Also assigned is Ashe Akino (Sanaa Lathan), a former cop and DEA agent, who is paired with Preston Terry (Stephan James), the DOJ's rising star with far more faith in the system's ability to be color-blind than Akino. They soon discover that the shooting by Beck was not "clean" as the local sheriff's department claims, also learning that the town's beleaguered black community claims the predominantly white department is blatantly ignoring a suspicious death of a black youth.

To protect its deputy, the department plants weed in Carr's car so it appeared that he came to the rough neighborhood—known as The Houses—to buy drugs. At the same time, the killing of the black youth, Joey Campbell (Kevin Harrison Jr.), implicates a controversial program run by the governor that allows well-heeled campaign contributors to conduct patrols through The Houses as auxiliary deputies with little or no training; Akino refers to their patrols as akin to cowboys roaming the "Wild West." In the end, it is the governor's most powerful donor, Arlen Cox (Richard Dreyfus), who actually shot and killed Campbell but lies when he claims he did so because he feared the black youth's supposedly aggressive behavior. Akino and Terry solve the intertwined crimes but along the way are also affected by the racialized circumstances embedded in the town's (and the nation's) justice system (Fig. 5.1).

Like female crimefighters before her, Akino is depicted as a competent cop but crippled by a fractured personal life. It stems from a tough childhood following her mother death and father's illness, which landed her in foster care. Her current troubles are rooted in a nasty custody battle with her daughter's father, Javier (Angel Bonanni), who claims Akino is a reckless, unfit mother. During court-ordered counseling, she is found to be suffering from job-related PTSD. Despite the usual gendered burdens, Akino is a highly respected investigator who began her law enforcement career as a cop before working as a DEA agent in Mexico for six years—now choosing to be an investigator for hire. More importantly, while



Fig. 5.1 DOJ investigator Ashe Akino (Sanaa Latham), with Deputy Caleb Brooks (Beau Kapp), probes a race-based homicide in the South. Screen shot from *Shots Fired*, Fox Network Season 1, “Hour Two: Betrayal of Trust.”

Akino was a rookie cop, she too shot and killed an unarmed youth. Although it was ruled justifiable, Akino tells Terry she thinks about the dead boy every day; as her custody battle drags on, she fears she may not be deserving of her daughter, having once killed someone else’s child.

Akino’s competency is rooted in the familiar street cop’s learned toughness. When she tracks down a suspect that turns out to be a witness hiding from police, she and the youth have a physical fight that she eventually wins. On another occasion she chases down a college student selling drugs, tackling him then cuffing him with little trouble. It is her face-offs with the crooked Lt. Breeland (Stephen Moyer), though, that most tests her mettle, especially after he arranges for another cop to pull her over, rough her up and threaten her. Later, she and Breeland have a showdown in which he knocks her to the ground, calls her “a relentless bitch,” but eventually loses ground to Akino who nearly chokes him to death until Terry

intervenes. Akino is so committed to solving both cases that she also approaches Javier, still in the DEA, and asks him to check out the ownership of the murder weapon—the ID having been filed off. Despite their personal animosity, Akino appeals to his sense of duty to help her catch the killers.

Shortly after her first meeting with Terry, he too tries to curb her swagger, reminding her that he is charge despite his lack of experience, drawing Akino's salty response, "It only took you two hours to start swinging your junk, most guys at least wait a day."⁴⁴ She dismissively refers to Terry as the "black Jesus," thinking him both righteous and naïve, telling their bosses that he may be in over his head on this case. She tries to contain his enthusiasm, and echoing the Hollywood cop's mantra, warns, "You got to know the rules in order to break them."⁴⁵ Her jaded demeanor even prompts Terry's brother Maceo, a cocky professional football player (with whom she has sex), to ask, "So, what you dig cuffing brothers?" to which Akino dryly replies: "I dig cuffing bad guys. They come in all shades."⁴⁶ Other male characters also offer her compliments about her defiance of gendered norms, including Cox who tells her she has "balls," prompting her to merely offer a curt "thank you." She also understands the value of bonding with other cops, initially sitting down with Breeland and his deputies, who offer her a shot of Prairie Fire, a mix of Wild Turkey and Tabasco; after she swigs it down, she gasps, "I think I just grew a testicle."⁴⁷

The series features other potent and complex female characters, including the two grieving mothers, the governor, and a fiery local pastor. Race for them too is treated in both blunt and subtle ways, including revelatory rifts between black characters as well as those across the black-white divide. Each of the victim's mothers—one black and one white—are given moments that showcase their grief, but also their ability to use their racial identities to pivot toward activism in the search for racial justice. The white female governor, Patricia Eamons (Helen Hunt), who is already coping with the media storm behind the racialized murders, also spars with her daughter who at one point reminds Eamons that white "liberals can be racists too."⁴⁸ Her daughter also criticizes her mother's education initiative, meant to address long-standing systemic racism, charging her

mother with hypocrisy for sending her to an expensive private school after concluding the public ones are “too dangerous.”

Pastor Janae James (Aisha Hinds) is another stand-out character, more of a match for Akino than Terry, as she puts her community-based effort against Akino’s law enforcement approach. The pastor has her own demons, including running a vigilante squad that bullies would-be drug dealers “by any means necessary.” James’s strengths include her ability to bring black and white together as she does so with the two grieving mothers. Her ambition is also on display along with her disdain for a respected black reverend whom she accuses of befriending monied white townspeople who are doing little to stop black children from dying. Her rhetoric is often inflammatory, as she hints that she wants another Ferguson-type eruption that might force more radical change; at one point, she cites Martin Luther King’s words that a riot is the language of the unheard. After James witnesses the riot’s destruction of a restaurant owned by a local veteran of the civil rights movement, she tempers her approach. Akino has several telling interactions with James, including visiting her in prison after the police frame James for Campbell’s murder. She asks James to “keep the faith,” with James, in turn, asking Akino if she has lost hers, offering, “We’re both incarcerated in our own ways.”⁴⁹

In the final episode, Akino is shown having a supervised visitation with her daughter, having lost the custody fight, with no mention of any professional reward for having been key to solving both cases. It was her unauthorized visit to Cox that broke open one of them, as she convinced Cox to confess to Campbell’s shooting, which Cox does but only to blame the department for failing to properly train him in firearms, thus sidestepping murder charges. Terry is shown to have matured, not only professionally, but also in terms of his identity as a black male, especially revealed in exchanges with his father and brother as well as with Beck.⁵⁰ The moments between Terry and Beck touch on issues of class as well as race, as each tries to grasp how they fit into the justice system—one a federal prosecutor, the other a local deputy. When Beck finally realizes his superiors are only protecting themselves, he vows he is “done being blue” and agrees to provide evidence to expose the department’s corruption. In the end, Terry is saddened to jail “another brother,” but, as a prosecutor,

vows to make the system live up to its color-blind ideals, even if the larger society has yet to do so.⁵¹

At the start of the series, Terry announced at a press conference, “I am here because we are creating a generation of American who are becoming quickly disillusioned with the postracial America we like to tout.”⁵² In the final scenes, he is shown compiling a list of civil rights violations he intends to pursue against Cox. The closing moments, though, belong to James and several supporting characters, including Beck’s white deputy friend, the black and white mothers at the center of the media storm, and the governor’s former aide. They gather to propose a grassroots effort, one rooted in a diverse community united by a common fate; it presents a far different ending than the usual violent epitaph for a crime drama.

Although the series presents a more comprehensive portrait of the impact of race and gender in policing and matters of justice, its central female cop character—however complex—is still plagued by familiar limitations that curtail her ability to represent a more significant challenge to the hegemony of the white male archetype. While this chapter has made clear that such pioneering female characters have made inroads into *his* protected turf, portraying brave, gutsy and multidimensional crimefighters, they remain contained by persistent stereotypes. These handicaps continue to restrict their motives to the realm of the personal rather than their competencies and toughness applied on behalf of the greater good. They also still fall far short of being able to perform the nation and successfully embody—as their male counterparts do—many vital and long-standing American mythologies.

Notes

1. Mary E. Hamilton, *The Policewoman: Her Service and Ideals* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1924).
2. Venessa Garcia, “‘Difference’ in the Police Department,” *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, 19, no. 3 (August 2003), 333.
3. The Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972 extended Title VII aspects of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to state and local agencies, making it illegal to discriminate against women for civil service positions.

Samuel Walker, "Racial Minority and Female Employment in Policing: The Implications of 'Glacial' Change," *Crime & Delinquency*, 31, no. 4 (October 1985).

4. Jennifer Hunt, "The Logic of Sexism Among Police," *Women and Criminal Justice*, 2, no. 1 (1990).
5. Garcia, "Difference," 341.
6. Anastasia Prokos and Irene Padavic, "'There Oughtta be a Law Against Bitches': Masculinity Lessons in Police Academy Training," *Gender, Work and Organization*, 9, no. 4 (August 2002), 441; See also Mary Dodge and Mark Pogrebin, "African-American Policewomen: An Exploration of Professional Relationships," *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies & Management*, 24, no. 4 (2001). They note that "hegemonic masculinity is a central defining concept in the culture of police work," 442.
7. According to a 2013 Department of Justice report, only 12 percent of full-time law enforcement officers nationwide are female—up from 8 percent in 1987; females in leadership positions still lags behind, with only one in 10 supervisors being female and only 3 percent serving as police chiefs. Available online.
8. Multiple studies also reveal that women perform well on patrol and often deploy the same tactics as their male counterparts when the need arises—a result of similar training. See *Women in Policing*, The Police Foundation, 1972. Available online at policefoundation.org. A more recent report by The National Center for Women and Policing also identified key advantages in hiring more women in policing, including a less likelihood they will use excessive force, are more geared to community-oriented policing, and demonstrate more effective responses to violence against female victims. Available online at womenandpolicing.com.
9. Garcia, "Difference," 340.
10. Prokos and Padavic, "Gender," 442.
11. *Decoy*, Season 1, episode 1, "Stranglehold," directed by Donald Medford, aired on October 14, 1957, Amazon Prime Video.
12. *Charlie's Angels: The Complete Series (1976–1981)*, DVD, Spelling-Goldberg Productions.
13. Emily Nussbaum, "Misogyny Plus Girl Power: Original-Recipe *Angels*," *The New York Times*, June 29, 2003. Nussbaum is referencing a film sequel that the series inspired, but which remains true of the series on which it is based. The 2000 film, *Charlie's Angels*, starred Drew Barrymore, Cameron Diaz, and Lucy Liu and self-consciously parodies its 1970s TV

- forerunner, with the 2003 sequel, *Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle*, featuring the same cast. Another sequel is set to premier in 2019 with Elizabeth Banks directing and three new “angels” cast in the roles: Kristen Stewart, Naomi Scott, and the biracial British Ella Balinska.
14. Philippa Gates, *Detecting Women: Gender and the Hollywood Detective* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2011), Kindle.
 15. Caryn James, “Women Cops can be a Cliché in Blue,” *The New York Times*, April 15, 1990, Sect. 2 and 17.
 16. See Julie D’Acci, *Defining Women: Television and the Case of Cagney and Lacey* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994). Also, Judine Mayerle, “Character Shaping Genre in *Cagney and Lacey*,” *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 31, no. 2 (1986), 133–151.
 17. James, “Women Cops.”
 18. See Carol M. Dole, “The Gun and the Badge: Hollywood and the Female Lawman,” in *Reel Knockouts: Violent Women in the Movies*, eds. Martha McCaughey and Neal King (Austin: University of Texas, 2001).
 19. *Ibid.*, 92.
 20. It suggests Lacan’s notion of a woman as guardian of the phallus; the tension between holding and using the phallus in several scenes may suggest this interpretation, rather than just female mimesis of a male’s symbolic power. See Julia Kristeva, “Experiencing the Phallus as Extraneous, or Women’s Twofold Oedipus Complex,” *Parallax*, 4, no. 3 (1998); also see Philippe Van Haute, *Against Adaptation: Lacan’s Subversion of the Subject*, trans. Paul Crowe and Miranda Vankerck (New York: Other Press, 2002).
 21. *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (1991), with Sarah Connor (Linda Hamilton), as discussed in Willis, *High Contrast*, 118–119. Tasker also notes that by the film’s end, Connor “has acquired military discipline, becoming well-armed and self-sufficient,” just as Ripley transforms from an “inexperienced military leader ... into a soldier.” *Spectacular Bodies*, 138–139.
 22. Yvonne Tasker, *Working Girls: Gender and Sexuality in Popular Cinema* (London: Routledge, 1998), 69.
 23. *Ibid.*, 82.
 24. Pauline Kael uses this phrase to describe the impact *Bonnie and Clyde* had on attitudes and cultural discussions at the time of its release.
 25. Dole, “The Gun and the Badge,” 89.
 26. Sharon Willis asserts: “Readings that pronounce the film dangerous and wrongheaded because it invites women to take on wholesale the tired

clichés of masculinity” that “prevail in the history of westerns, road movies, and action films depend on certain foreclosures” is an “argument [that] skips over the process by which the film explicitly parades the takeover of these clichés.” Willis, *High Contrast*, 108. Callie Khouri, the screenwriter for *Thelma & Louise* (1991), described her female characters as earning “a piece of the action, instead of relegating them to on-screen benchwarming” and “a validation of strength”; in Mandy Johnson, “Women as Action Heroes,” *Glamour* (March 1994), 153.

27. Feminist scholars, in particular (a roster that includes men), expanded and disputed the earlier observations of Laura Mulvey, who in her groundbreaking 1975 essay, argued that the male gaze of classical Hollywood confined women to positions of passivity, from which they served as objects of the gaze rather than as agents who drive the action. Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” in *Film and Theory: An Anthology*, eds. Robert Stam and Toby Miller (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000). See also Laleen Jayamanne, “Introduction,” in *Kiss Me Deadly: Feminism and Cinema for the Moment* (Sydney: Power Publications, 1995), in which Jayamanne reviews feminist film theory and its three lines of inquiry: the first aims at a generalized study of women’s cinematic images long ignored; the second encompasses consideration of the woman “as sign,” along with the development and utilization of psychoanalytic theory and “frame-by-frame analysis” of films; the third involves recent work on spectatorship. All three remain in play.
28. Jeanine Basinger contends, “Having a female in a mindless, violent, Arnold Schwarzenegger-type role is not a gain for women. If there is no extra female dimension to the character, there is ... no progress ... these roles still don’t deal with the reality of women’s lives.” Basinger quoted in *Glamour* article cited above. Also see Basinger, *A Woman’s View: How Hollywood Spoke to Women 1930–1960* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1995).
29. See Marilyn Yaquinto, “Tough Love: Mamas, Molls, and Mob Wives,” in *Action Chicks: New Images of Tough Women in Popular Culture*, ed. Sherrie A. Inness (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), for a discussion of how the Soprano women defied the usual stereotypes and perhaps altered the rules of the gangster genre itself.
30. Other female protagonists of the era include Demi Moore’s Navy Seal recruit in *GI Jane* (1997) and Halle Berry’s Jinx in *Die Another Day* (2002).

31. On the network's website, a feature called "her America" is showcased. See mylifetime.com.
32. Amanda D. Lotz, *Redesigning Women: Television after the Network Era* (University of Illinois Press, 2006), 155.
33. See Philiana Ng, "Kyra Sedgwick Reveals Why She Almost Didn't Take 'The Closer,'" *Hollywood Reporter*, August 10, 2012. Available online. The primary focus of the long-running British TV series (also airing on the American PBS system and later via DVD and livestreaming), was Detective Chief Inspector Jane Tennison (Helen Mirren). The first of the six feature length programs (1991–2004) depicted Tennison struggling to be taken seriously despite being in charge a high-profile homicide investigation. Reveling in her strategies for coping, negotiating, and overcoming such obstacles, the show evolves as she is promoted, eventually focusing on her ability to lead investigations that solve grisly crimes. Other British series featuring strong female crimefighters includes *Happy Valley* (2014 and 2016) and *Scott & Bailey* (2011–2016)—the latter by Sally Wainwright, *Prime Suspect's* writer/producer.
34. Kevin Courrier and Susan Green, *Law & Order: The Unofficial Companion* (Los Angeles: Renaissance Books, 1998).
35. Tim Goodman, "'Alias' is Dumb Fun a la 'Femme Nikita'/Student Leads a Double Life as Spy," *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 28, 2001. Available online at sfgate.com.
36. E. Oliver Whitney, "The Major Problem with 'Law & Order: SVU' this Season," *Huffington Post*, December 6, 2017. Available online.
37. Kathryn Hampshire, "Children in Chains: On the Productive and Exploitative Tendencies of Representation in *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*," *Digital Literature Review*, 2 (2015), 57–58. Also see Lisa M. Cuklantz and Sujata Moorti, "Television's 'New' Feminism: Prime-Time Representations of Women and Victimization," *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 23, no. 4 (2006), 302–321.
38. My father worked for the Detroit Police Department, following in both his grandfather and great uncle's footsteps, as did my brother (and many of his in-laws). With my mother also working at police headquarters, we were aptly labeled a "police family." As my father rose in rank to commander, his record including harrowing service in the 1967 riots, and with promotions also earning an unmarked vehicle that we often utilized as a family. Many times I witnessed him answer or assist calls he heard over the police radio—even when off duty. I was told to stay in the

- car while I watched him “go to work,” which on one occasion, meant taking over an accident scene and keeping a woman alive with his bare hands until an ambulance arrived. He credited his “cop’s eyes” for an ability to scan people and situations for imminent danger and an undeterred sense of duty that he explained was a 24/7 proposition.
39. In *Coffy* (1973) Grier’s character abandons her career as a trained nurse to go on a one-woman crusade to kill or neutralize the dope pushers, pimps, Italian mobsters, and crooked cops who have destroyed both her family and community. Grier’s characters also make the call as to how and when to deploy violence along with acting unilaterally in the manner of a redeemable rogue. In *Foxy Brown* (1974) after Brown is raped, she sets her two assailants on fire to burn to death.
 40. Robert Bianco, “‘Southland,’ ‘The Unusuals’ Don’t Make their Case,” *USA Today*, April 7, 2009.
 41. Randee Dawn, “Cops’ View of Mean Streets Makes for Potent Drama,” *Reuters*, April 7, 2009. Available online.
 42. In her acceptance speech on January 7, 2019, for winning a Golden Globe as Best Supporting Actress for *If Beale Street Could Talk*, Regina King vowed that she would only participate in projects that employed “50 percent women” among cast *and* crew.
 43. From a panel discussion with the series creators and several cast members; Forum on Law, Culture, and Society at the New York University Law School, March 20, 2017. Available online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UklTqf9SdYE>.
 44. *Shots Fired*, “Hour One: Pilot,” directed by Gina Prince-Bythewood, aired on March 22, 2017.
 45. *Shots Fired*, “Hour Seven: Content of their Character,” directed by John David Cole, aired on May 3, 2017.
 46. *Shots Fired*, “Hour One: Pilot,” directed by Gina Prince-Bythewood, aired on March 22, 2017.
 47. Ibid.
 48. *Shots Fired*, “Hour Four: Truth,” directed by Malcolm D. Lee, aired on April 12, 2017.
 49. *Shots Fired*, “Hour Nine: Come to Jesus,” directed by Ami Canaan Mann, aired on May 17, 2017.
 50. Touré and Michael Eric Dyson, *Who’s Afraid of Post-blackness? What It means to be Black Now* (New York: Atria Books, 2011).

51. See Ronald G. Fryer, “An Empirical Analysis of Racial Differences in Police Use of Force,” *Journal of Political Economy* (October 29, 2018). Also see Cassia Spohn and David Holleran, “The Imprisonment Penalty Paid by Young, Unemployed Black and Hispanic Male Offenders,” *Criminology*, 38, no. 1 (2000), 281–306.
52. *Shots Fired*, “Hour One: Pilot,” directed by Gina Prince-Bythewood, aired on March 22, 2017.



6

Becoming American: Ethnic Others as Crimefighting Heroes

I always wanted to be a good cop but there's no straight line to that. I always told myself that the end would justify the means. But now that I'm at the end I can't justify anything.

Det. Harlee Santos, *Shades of Blue*, 2016

For those who had “earned” white status by the latter part of the twentieth century,¹ they began to appear as mainstream American crimefighters, especially on television, given the expanded time and space the medium affords. The 1970s showcased more diversity that included a starring turn for the Greek American Telly Savalas in the CBS show, *Kojak* (1973–1978). The role was reprised in a limited USA Network series in 2005, this time with the African American Ving Rhames in the role of Det. Theo Kojak; the surname was retained, which is actually Polish but interpreted as Greek in the original show to match Savalas’s ethnic background. Whether embodied by Savalas or Rhames, and in keeping with the prevailing norm of a Hollywood cop, Kojak regularly breaks the rules, although one reviewer noted that the 1970s version “had a little more respect for the law” than the reboot.²

Another blend of ethnic identities was evident in *Columbo*, which aired as an episodic series and as TV movies from 1968 through 2003 (on NBC, then later on ABC), and starred the Jewish Peter Falk as the fumbling but shrewd Italian American detective, Frank Columbo. Another memorable Italian American cop, the “maverick” NYPD detective, Tony Baretta, was featured in *Baretta* (1975–1978)—this time portrayed by the Italian American Robert Blake (born Gubitosi). The above characters’ ethnicity was still regarded as incidental rather than purposeful until Frank Furillo, the Italian American captain in *Hill Street Blues*, discussed in Chap. 3. Matched by the actor’s ethnicity, Daniel J. Travanti’s Italian-ness drew notice on occasion, with his girlfriend often referring to him as “pizza man.” In a more telling exchange with his Latino lieutenant, who was complaining about prejudice from Anglos, Furillo offered, “I’m not exactly Anglo” either,³ referring to his community’s hard-fought battle for acceptance as normative (white) Americans.

Jewish cops too become more commonplace on television, including one half of the 1970s television duo, *Starsky & Hutch* (1974–1979), with Paul Michael Glaser portraying David Starsky. Similar to the characters mentioned above, there were few markers of any ethnic “difference.” *Hill Street Blues*, discussed in earlier chapters, also included two Jewish cops, Henry Goldblume (Joe Spano) and Sgt. Mick Belker (Bruce Weitz)—the former depicted as an intelligent and deliberate member of Furillo’s inner circle, while the other was an explosive undercover cop—and both with flashes of their “difference” incorporated into some plots and exchanges of dialogue. Hal Linden, as the Jewish captain in the ABC comedy series, *Barney Miller* (1975–1982), embodied a pragmatic but empathetic boss whose run-down precinct of hard-working detectives amicably co-existed despite their cultural differences. The show featured other Jewish cops, including the over-the-hill Det. Phil Fish (Abe Vigoda), who delivered sardonic asides like a Borsht Belt headliner; and Det. Arthur Dietrich (Steve Landesberg), who regularly mixed his intellectualism with a dry wit. These characters’ portraits of ethnic difference too were not central but peripheral to their makeup, made manifest only in the occasional Christmas-timed episode, but otherwise indistinguishable from other normative (white) male cops on TV.

Another of the era's Jewish cops was Det. John Munch (Richard Belzer) from the NBC series, *Homicide: Life on the Street* (1993–1999). Munch was among the key players within another large ensemble cast—a tapestry of cynical but involved detectives who chip away at their grim cases within a battered Baltimore, which Barry Levinson, the show's executive producer, describes as “divided by race, religion and class, as are many cities in the United States.”⁴ Munch was intense and sarcastic, more devoted to conspiracy theories than to any one of his four wives. His character also remarkably “crossed over” to appear in ten different network shows, most notably *SVU* for fifteen seasons.

Although Munch's Jewishness was never a particularly salient part of his characterization, more a vaguely cultural marker, until the episode, “Kaddish.” When asked about his faith in one scene, he offers, “The only thing I have in common with Judaism is that we both don't like to work on Saturdays.”⁵ The story makes clear, however, that Munch knows Jewish burial laws, a couple of Yiddish words, and even more about prayer. In the episode flashbacks to his high school days reveal his crush on a female who is now a homicide victim. It forces him to reckon with his identity, which includes having been bullied in his youth while dreaming of becoming a detective like Johnny Staccato—the hip, jazz-playing private detective and namesake of the NBC series from the late 1950s. During the victim's shiva, Munch refuses to participate in a minyan, which involves a group of ten Jewish adults needed for specific prayers. When the victim's daughter presses him, he claims not to remember the mourner's Kaddish, a hymn that praises God on behalf of loved ones who have passed. Later, after finding her picture in his yearbook, he catches up with the other mourners, prayer book in hand, and pulling a yarmulke from his pocket before joining them in the ritual service.

Homicide also featured African American male detectives who surpassed the usual limiting stereotypes, including Lt. Al Giardello (Yaphet Kotto), who once chastised the acerbic and gifted Det. Frank Pemberton (Andre Braugher) about needing to be more of a team player, adding, “This is not a black thing. This is a blue thing.” If *Homicide* had a weakness it was its all-male universe for the first five seasons, as its lone female to that point was written out of the series. Melissa Leo, who portrayed Det. Kay Howard, claims she was terminated over disagreements with

writers about her character's lack of growth, growing weary of serving as the foil for the squad's more three-dimensional males. The series remains one of TV's most critically acclaimed crime shows, winning three Peabody Awards in the late 1990s for "its ongoing record of distinction and achievement,"⁶ but also struggling to find wider acceptance with a stronger viewership. As Levinson explained at a 2018 reunion of the show's cast and creators, its legacy and influence on subsequent shows is unmistakable, with its focus on characters, especially how they worked together and paid a price for the type of work they do.⁷

Looking for a Contemporary Charlie Chan

Asian Americans remain a profoundly underrepresented group among homegrown crimefighters. Dozens of films in early Hollywood had featured the fictional, Honolulu-based, Chinese detective Charlie Chan, most notably portrayed by Swedish American actor Warner Oland in "yellow face." The character, beloved by some and considered racist by others, left a lasting impression that has made it difficult for Asian American characters to overcome. Chan's skills as a clever detective were often overpowered by his steady stream of "pseudo fortune-cookie aphorisms," notes Yunte Huang, who explains that Chan was based on an actual Hawaiian cop, Chang Apana, a type of "cowboy" cop who used a "rough-riding paniolo" (or whip) that spoke "louder than any law or gun."⁸ For a nation that enacted the 1924 Johnson-Reed Act, better known as the Immigration Act⁹ that put harsher quotas on non-white immigrants, early Hollywood responded by limiting Chan's gifts to exotic and ages-old "Oriental" wisdom, leaving out any aggression that might remind mainstream viewers of the "yellow peril,"¹⁰ which such legislation and public fears had embraced.

Further complicating matters is that the two major Asian cop characters in Hollywood productions in recent decades both have their roots in Hong Kong action cinema. Jackie Chan portrayed Inspector Lee who buddies with LAPD Det. Carter (Chris Tucker) in the *Rush Hour* franchise (1998, 2001, 2007, and a fourth film in production), with cultural clashes highlighted as part of these films' appeal. In one scene, Carter and Lee spar over

whose father has the most impressive cop credentials, with Carter claiming, “My daddy’ll kick your daddy’s ass all the way from here to China, Japan, where ever the hell you from and all up that Great Wall too.”¹¹ The other Hong Kong action star, Chow Yun-Fat, portrayed the immigrant cop, Nick Chen, in *The Corruptor* (1999), also serving as sidekick to rogue NYPD detective, Danny Wallace (Mark Wahlberg). The film also includes the rogue’s familiar line, but one that elicits an insightful response as Wallace tells his father in one scene, “The ends justify the means, Pops,” to which his father replies, “The ends is bullshit. The means is what you live with.”¹²

Lucy Lui, a Chinese-American actress, is among even fewer available Asian American females in Hollywood. Lui portrayed a uniformed cop character in *Southland* but who is disgraced for having lied to Internal Affairs to protect herself after shooting an unarmed civilian who pointed a toy gun at her. In the *Charlie’s Angels* films, Lui portrays the tough “angel,” Alex Munday, who shows off her mastery of the martial arts—a go-to skill for an Asian American working in Hollywood.¹³

Barney Miller, discussed above, also included a comic portrait of a Japanese American cop, Det. Nick Yemana (Jack Soo), whose wisecracks often exposed the vacuous nature of stereotypes but also hide their darker harm. In one exchange, a precinct visitor notes Yemana’s wit, adding, “I didn’t know Orientals had a sense of humor,” to which Yemana responds, “Are you kidding? We invented gunpowder.”¹⁴

Although the CBS show, *Hawaii Five-0* (1968–1980), was primarily a vehicle for its lead white male detective, Steve McGarrett (Jack Lord), the show also featured several Asian American actors, including Kam Fong Chun as Det. Chin Ho Kelly (once a real Hawaiian cop); and another Hawaiian, Gilbert Lani Kauhi (also known as Zulu) as Det. Kono Kalakaua. Without the glamorous locale and “natives” to lend a touch of the exotic, though, the show was a routine police procedural. A reboot of the show debuted in 2010 and is still in production; and despite the passage of thirty years, it remains a vehicle for its two white male leads, Alex O’Loughlin as McGarrett and Scott Caan as Danny Williams, originally portrayed by James MacArthur as McGarrett’s second in command. The reboot debuted with the additional Asian American characters, with Daniel Dae Kim and Grace Park reprising the roles of detectives Kelly and Kalakaua, respectively, but both actors left the series in 2017 amid

charges of pay inequities and the “whitewashing” of storylines. The highly publicized departure became part of the #OscarsSoWhite controversy and prompted Kim to post a Facebook message that noted, “The path to equality is rarely easy.”¹⁵

Another issue for Asian American actors and their characterizations is the misunderstanding of the vast diversity behind the blanket term “Asian,” which may include nations stretching from Turkey to Japan.¹⁶ It is a region Edward Said once described as having been categorized by Western colonizers as exotic, mysterious, backward, and deceptively cunning—a broad, racist approach he dubbed “orientalist.”¹⁷ To further compound matters is that actors with Indian backgrounds are often classified as South Asian and find work in Hollywood “passing” as Middle Eastern or Latino/Latin American characters. One high-profile example is Priyanka Chopra, who was born in India but emigrated to the United States at age 13; she starred as Agent Alex Parrish in the ABC series *Quantico* (2015–2018), in part having earned international fame as a major star of Bollywood films, known for their lavish musicals set in the Indian metropolis of Bombay (now Mumbai).¹⁸ *Quantico* is a series about agents-in-training at the FBI Academy in Quantico, Virginia, and is told in flashbacks after a terrorist attack traces back to a sleeper agent hiding among the recruits. The series includes a diverse cast of characters rarely seen on US television, and although somewhat contrived for their “differences,” include a gay male, a Mormon male, a Latina, and a set of twin Muslim females (both played by Yasmine Al Massri)—the hijab-wearing sister among the first to be suspected as the mole. It was an interesting experiment that premiered to favorable reviews and decent ratings, but with melodrama soon overwhelming the crimefighting, sinking ratings eventually ended its run.¹⁹

Native Blue: Transforming America’s Original Frontier Other

Since Native Americans were once considered the nation’s primary “enemies,” charged with resisting its Manifest Destiny, it follows that few males or females with ties to continental tribes have embodied crime-

fighting heroes in Hollywood stories. However, a set of films that originally aired on PBS—later available on DVD and livestreaming, and with Hollywood legend Robert Redford serving as executive producer that present a native-based perspective of tribal police worthy of including and examining more closely here. They are based on the best-selling mysteries by Tony Hillerman with Officer Jim Chee (Adam Beach) as a young uniformed officer in the Navajo police force and whose partner is the more experienced Lt. Joe Leaphorn (Wes Studi), a college-educated urban detective who had been working in the big city and now back on the reservation due to his wife's illness and desire to return home. While Leaphorn has difficulty adjusting again to tribal life, Chee struggles to be both a good cop and a good Navajo—the former mired in logic and evidence, the latter dependent on rich native spiritual and cultural legacies. Rather than choose to be “blue” at the expense of his Navajo identity, Chee attempts to integrate the two.

In the first film, *Skinwalkers* (2002), a murderer is posing as a skinwalker—a supernatural being in Navajo culture. After three elder medicine men are killed, Chee and Leaphorn find clues that involve arrows made of human bone and footprints that turn from animal to human; Chee recognizes other cultural clues that only confound a doubting Leaphorn who seeks plausible explanations less rooted in what he considers native “superstitions.” Chee, who is learning to be a healer, uses his Navajo ways in addition to his police training to successfully expose the reservation's new doctor as the murderer. Chee learns that Dr. Stone (Michael Greyeyes) was raised by white parents in Santa Fe and now wants revenge on the medicine men who failed to treat his biological father, who became gravely ill after being exposed to lead poisoning from a nearby paint factory.

The second film, *Coyote Waits* (2003), tracks the murder of a Navajo cop, with Chee getting injured while trying to rescue his colleague from a burning squad car. After being put on medical leave, Chee remains saddened and stumped by the nature of the crime, which like most mysteries includes tracking several suspects until the real killer is revealed. Among the suspects is an elderly Navajo hired by an ambitious scholar to help locate the bones of Butch Cassidy, rumored to have escaped capture according to Navajo stories—a discovery that could earn the scholar fame

and riches. A subplot features a Vietnamese family struggling to make a new life in America, which encourages Leaphorn to share his experiences about feeling like an outsider, having been “a Navajo in an ocean of white people” while in college.²⁰

In the final film, *A Thief of Time* (2004), an archaeologist is poaching pots that she believes hold the secret to the ancient Anasazi culture. After she disappears, other poachers and their accomplices turn up dead, pointing to a suspicious pair of rival scholars most interested in the pots for what they can yield on the black market. While Chee and Leaphorn eventually solve the murder mystery, the film also glimpses the “theft” of cultural artifacts found on native lands, which are sold to private collectors or cultural centers with few if any tribal affiliations.

Hillerman explains that his novels were rooted in a respect for Navajo culture, including “their value system,” one in which Redford wanted replicated in the films, incorporating realistic and contemporary Native American life, and “not in some imagined way . . . or some bad Hollywood movie that just always characterized Native Americans as monosyllabic villains.”²¹ Rather than an either-or proposition, the two cultures are shown to work in concert. That integration was made possible by hiring predominantly Native American actors and crew, including director Chris Eyre, who first earned critical acclaim for *Smoke Signals* (1998).

Like other screen cops, the “blue” in Chee has him pressuring a defense attorney for an address she is not authorized to share, later reprimanded by his boss who complains that Chee “doesn’t play by the rules.” He also loses his temper with Ashie Pinto (Jimmy Herman), after the elderly Navajo refuses to answer Chee’s questions. Pinto continues to speak in Navajo about the need to “restore harmony,” which Chee scoffs at, finally losing patience and physically attacking Pinto. Leaphorn chastises Chee for so aggressively trying to get Pinto to cooperate, asking, “So you’ll beat it out of him . . . is that what they taught you? Is that what I taught you?”²²

In other smaller moments of the films, being Navajo plays a crucial part in the storytelling, including Chee’s ability to speak the language, which enables him to approach witnesses and suspects with more facility than Leaphorn. In the final showdown in *Skinwalkers*, Chee reminds Stone that as a doctor and a healer he should honor “the sanctity of life,” while Stone lumps Chee in with his contempt for medicine men, charg-

ing that Chee is another of “the stick waivers” and “a dying breed.”²³ Although Chee demonstrates his talents as an investigator and eventually tracks down Stone, he also experiences strange visions from a “bone bead” lodged in his skin, about which a healer had warned; he also sees images of a skinwalker during his struggle with Stone, who is ultimately shot and killed by Leaphorn.

As Chee evolves into a competent cop, he also grows as a healer, shown praying over bodies, even instructing his cat “to eat what you kill,” another nod to traditional beliefs. At the end of *Skinwalkers*, Chee completes a sand painting for Leaphorn’s wife to help her cope with her illness. In *Coyote Waits*, he repeats the ritual to help both his colleague’s widow and Pinto, with Chee showing compassion to the elder who eventually admitted to having killed two men in a drunken stupor. Janet Pete (Alex Rice), the defense attorney who had returned to the reservation from the East Coast, shows her ability to balance being a lawyer who relies on evidence with her faith in Navajo practices, including a medicine man’s remedies that she vouches helped her father cope with diabetes. As she grows closer to Chee, she also observes, “Wow, a medicine-man cop. Illogical, contradictory, how wonderfully Navajo.”²⁴

None of Hillerman’s eighteen other novels featuring Leaphorn and Chee have been adapted for films, with his daughter Anne Hillerman now having published several best-selling books using the characters but also adding a female protagonist, Officer Bernie Manuelito, who is married to Chee. A further commitment to diversity on Hollywood’s part could make for imaginative and progressive films by adapting more of these stories.

Latinos: America’s Largest Invisible Other

The omission among screen cops and crimefighters that is the most flagrant, though, is that of Latinos, given the statistical changes to both the nation’s population and within law enforcement agencies. What the US government defines as Latino now accounts for 17 percent of the population, but is more complicated when race is factored in, as nearly 66 percent self-identify as white, while the rest list other races—since multiracial

is not always an option on the census questionnaire.²⁵ For the 2020 census, the government plans to continue asking about a Latino identity in terms of racial difference. Moreover, the draft of the new questionnaire goes a step further than most previous efforts to list specific categories for white, including English, Irish, German, French, Italian, and Polish ancestry—many of these once only contingently white, as previously discussed. Since the government changes the categories for every decade's census since census-taking began in 1790, it makes it difficult to chart actual shifts in the ethnic-racial makeup of the nation. It also shows a stubborn resistance to treating Latinos as anything but a persistent Other, given the insistence on differentiating such an ethnicity in racial terms as well.²⁶ Some observers liken it to the “one-drop rule” used for centuries to determine black identity with the same punitive outcomes.²⁷

This confusion is replicated in counting Latinos within US law enforcement agencies, which however complicated the measurement, shows a steady growth in Latinos being hired as cops and other law enforcement agents.²⁸ As the former NYPD Det. Edward Conlon noted in 2004, “officers named Gonzales will become the kind of cultural cliché in the next century that patrolmen named Murphy were for the last two.”²⁹

When it comes to Hollywood storytelling, the problem is even more acute. A 2017 university study found that Hollywood had made little progress in on-screen diversity, with white actors continuing to account for nearly 71 percent of the speaking roles, which was not remarkably different than estimates a decade earlier.³⁰ Stacy L. Smith, who conducted the study, concluded that an “epidemic of invisibility” was still negatively impacting minority communities.

For Latinos, the picture is even more startling.³¹ While African American and Asian characters approximate their share of the nation's population, only three percent of speaking characters in films for 2016 were Latinos—even though they comprise roughly six times that number as Americans.³² Moreover, activists charge that those Latino speaking roles that did exist were dominated by characterizations of drug dealers, criminals, and rapists. This overwhelmingly negative portrait has political consequences such as providing cover for President Trump's harsh rhetoric against Mexicans and other Latin American immigrants—an animosity that began the day he announced his candidacy and that apparently resonated with a significant portion of the American electorate.³³

These numbers about acute under-representation fail to make sense unless the potency of existing myths and prejudices is taken into account.³⁴ It is especially illuminating considering that Hollywood fixates on cop stories about the NYPD and LAPD, the locales of so many cop shows and films—both departments including sizable numbers of Latino cops and detectives. Moreover, as once was the case for Italian American males cast as gangsters,³⁵ what roles there are for American-born Latinos and those born in Latin America are persistently rooted in harmful stereotypical roles that date back to early Hollywood: chief among them the criminal, dark-skinned, Spanish-speaking intruder; and the irrepressible Latin lover—the latter as obsessed with sex as the already beleaguered black male but capable of seduction rather than supposedly acting on baser instincts.

In crime shows and films, all of the above Others are shown learning lessons about being “blue,” which is then expected to subsume all other allegiances, including those rooted in race/ethnicity, gender, and, more recently, sexual orientation. That is not to say that the minority cop’s struggle to assimilate is a purely Hollywood invention, as non-white cops frequently complain of having to straddle two worlds but who concede they eventually succumb to the dominant white (or blue) norm. The problem with the screen version of such a struggle is that this “different” or non-mainstream perspective is nearly always of secondary importance—only their loyalty to a white partner or to the department is of narrative importance, reflecting the enduring importance of what Toni Morrison’s described as the marginalizing effects of the “white gaze.” Very few crimefighter roles tackle the problem of living with a hyphenated identity from the Other’s point of view, choosing instead to focus on the triumphant outcome of assimilation or acceptance of mainstream views, especially about matters of justice.³⁶ Although it is natural for humans to type each other in order to distinguish potential friends from foes, it is the practice of stereotyping that is so destructive, as it reduces people to a few (usually negative) characteristics, often deemed fixed by Nature, and which short-circuits an individual’s ability to transcend the limitations imposed by group affiliation, especially if a group is marginalized.³⁷

A few notable Latino cops have appeared on television, again given the broader range of programming opportunities available as compared to

film production. Amid the ensemble cast of *Hill Street Blues*, discussed earlier, is Lt. Ray Calletano (Rene Enriquez), who is prominently featured in several episodes, including one in which he receives the Hispanic Officer of the Year award. At the ceremony, though, Calletano confronts his department's institutional racism, first asking why they are serving a mix of Mexican and Puerto Rican food, not having bothered to find out he is of Colombian descent. "I look around a room full of ranking officers and the only other Hispanics I see are waiters and bus boys," he complains, adding, "As far as I am concerned, you can keep your award."³⁸ Calletano later becomes a captain of another precinct but faces a mutiny after being dubbed "Captain Taco," and is eventually relieved of his command. That leads him to resign and join the Latin American Coalition, which advocates legal and political change, including holding the police accountable for unjust actions; it represents an interesting character progression but treated as a minor subplot in only a few episodes.

Another notable Latino cop was the intense, expressionless Lt. Martin Castillo (Edward James Olmos) in *Miami Vice* (1984–1989), although his job largely pivoted on reining in his black-white buddy vice detectives, Rico Tubbs (Philip Michael Thomas) and Sonny Crockett (Don Johnson), whose Armani suits, pastel T-shirts and unshaven stubble became as vital to his characterization as a 44 Magnum was to Dirty Harry a decade earlier.

Finally, a more recent and impressive Latina cop was included in the ensemble cast of *Third Watch*, also discussed in Chap. 5, with the plainclothes Sgt. Maritza Cruz (Tia Texada) depicted as much a cowboy cop as the males but too often shown obsessed with personal vendettas. She ultimately performs a heroic act in her final appearance, strapping on two grenades and sacrificing herself to blow up a street gang. Also limiting her characterization was to serve as the love interest for Boscarelli and competition for his partner, Yokas, with many scenes suggesting a cat fight with badges that only ends when they accidentally shoot each other in the line of duty.

When it comes to films, the list of Latino crimefighters is even shorter. A notable Latino cop appears in *Bound by Honor* (1993)—also released as *Blood in, Blood Out*—a film directed by Taylor Hackford about three Los Angeles gang members: two Latino brothers and their cousin, the

latter a complicated biracial character. After one of the brothers escapes gang life to become an undercover cop, he confronts the struggling cousin who sinks deeper into criminality.³⁹ Although the film is rare for putting Latinos front and center, its overall focus is a well-worn tale of gang life.

The only (male) Latino to ascend to lead roles in Hollywood as a crimefighter is Andy Garcia. His first meaty although still supporting role was in *Black Rain* (1989), in which he plays the sidekick to Det. Nick Conklin portrayed by Michael Douglas. Unfortunately, Garcia's character, Det. Charlie Vincent, is gruesomely beheaded roughly halfway through the film and disappears from the story.

In *Internal Affairs* (1990), Garcia co-stars as Raymond Avilla, who eventually catches (and kills) corrupt cop Dennis Peck, portrayed by Richard Gere. As an Internal Affairs investigator, Avilla is not the standard cop hero, representing the usually despised bureaucratic watchdog who exists to monitor departments—routinely treated in Hollywood (and often in actuality) as a “rat” rather than as an agent who performs a public good. An even more important shortcoming in terms of a Latino character is the reliance on stereotypes to imply a larger cultural connection. Avilla's emotionalism and quick temper—a Latin stereotype that even Peck exploits, noting, “You know what they say about Latin fighters, Raymond, too fucking macho [and] won't back pedal when they have to.”⁴⁰ This taps into the Latin concept of *machismo* that Omar S. Castañeda describes as “complex and multifaceted [but] too often, in Anglo-American interpretations, reduced to self-aggrandizing male bravado that flirts with physical harm to be sexual, like some rutting for the right to pass on genes.”⁴¹ Peck also insinuates a sexual tryst with Avilla's wife Kathleen (Nancy Travis), enraging Avilla enough to confront her in a crowded restaurant where he physically assaults her, shouting accusations in Spanish that remain un-translated, as if there is no need to further comprehend this Other's digression. Having the blond Anglo wife also frustrates a more thorough understanding of Avilla's ethnicity, as he is shown to have no other family or community ties.

Garcia's so-called “Latin looks” and its horizontal connections to other “swarthy” ethnicities has not limited him to only Latino roles, as he first earned acclaim and an Academy Award nomination for his portrayal of

the Corleone heir in *The Godfather Part III* (1990).⁴² Another of Garcia's non-Latino cops appeared in *Jennifer Eight* (1992), with the non-descript Sgt. John Berlin leaving the LAPD to work in a small town in northern California, where he gets embroiled in a murder mystery and falls in love with his chief witness, the blind Helena (Uma Thurman). Finally, in *Night Falls on Manhattan* (1997), Garcia is Sean Casey, a New York cop-turned-district attorney, whose Irish name is inherited from his father, while his Latino roots belong to his mother, Maria Nuñez, but as deceased is unable to fill in the blanks of his blended ethnicity.

Part of Garcia's ability to play normative white characters as well as those marked specifically Latino (or read as "brown") is rooted in his Cuban background. According to many studies, Cubans *as a whole* are better placed than other Latinos in American society, but the disparity between those Cubans identified as black from those deemed white creates a complicated and consequential disparity.⁴³ However, similar to other Latino communities, mainstream America continues to interpret the ethnically Cuban as "outsiders," given their Spanish surnames and cultural traditions still marking them as "foreign."⁴⁴ This also ignores how American culture was and continues to be created, with each immigrant group influencing what the nation becomes, while absorbing the cultural pastiche that is forever in the process of becoming. As such, Cubans, individually privileged or not, remain largely cast and interpreted as not yet white enough.

Arguably, many Latinos, including Garcia, do not wish to exclusively portray Latino characters, given the need for creative expression as actors and producers, but also because it would limit their employment possibilities. That motivation for an individual to consent to portraying yet another Latino gang member or drug lord in a film or TV show is understandable, just as it was for Bill Robinson to play "Bojangles" or hundreds of Navajos to sign on to serve as marauding "savages" in John Ford films—it represented a way to earn a living when few other choices were available. Moreover, despite crossover opportunities for Puerto Ricans to portray Mexicans and Mexican actors to depict Colombians, among other substitutions, the larger point is that most Latino roles remain as predominantly perpetrators of crime and rarely as the crimefighters, unless as supporting players to Anglo leads.

Jennifer Lopez: In and Out of Uniform

Like Garcia, Jennifer Lopez is the stand-alone Latina star, who too has portrayed Italians, as in her hit movie, *The Wedding Planner*—perhaps to subdue her Puerto Rican difference for mainstream audiences. Lopez, more than any other Latino, male or female, has portrayed the most crimefighters. Her first appearance was as Grace Santiago in *Money Train* (1995), a transit cop and the love interest of the principle characters played by Wesley Snipes and Woody Harrelson, who compete for her attention. Lopez's oft-touted pride of having grown up in the Bronx lends her character a degree of street-wise toughness, also demonstrated on screen with scenes of her boxing and firing weapons. At the same time, her body is often positioned in images linked to sexuality and dancing in body-hugging gowns, which are more reminiscent of sexualized Latina stereotypes that Clara E. Rodriguez describes as ranging from the “frilly *señoritas* or volcanic temptresses” to the “Latin spitfire” and “hotblooded tamale.”⁴⁵

In *Out of Sight* (1998), Lopez portrays Federal Marshal Karen Sisco, who falls in love with a clever bankrobber (George Clooney), whom she is also doggedly pursuing. The film—part comedy, part thriller—stressed romance over crimefighting, and again presents Lopez as a competent but sexualized female cop.

Lopez garnered the lead role in *Angel Eyes* (2001) about the uniformed Chicago cop, Sharon Pogue, who had been toughened up by an abusive father whom she once turned into the authorities, and which left her estranged from her family. More of the story's focus, though, is on her feelings for a stranger named Catch (Jim Cavaziel), who remains a mystery until she learns that they met before at a car accident that claimed the lives of his wife and son; she was the officer who took his statements at the scene and whose “angel eyes” captivated him. Their second meeting occurs when he intervenes in a confrontation between her and a gunman who, having already shot her (a vest initially protecting her), is poised to shoot her in the face and kill her. Catch's “lost” state, unable to remember the accident or his life prior to it, is matched by her loner status and inability to sustain intimacy; she routinely takes out her frustrations on

prisoners, much to the disapproval of her partner—the black male Robby (Terrence Howard). As the romance with Catch takes over the story, Pogue's uniform is replaced with dresses and sexy undergarments; she also appears nude for the obligatory sex scene. By the film's end, she has softened, learning to accept and reciprocate Catch's love, which were behaviors previously unavailable to her.

Lopez's Latina identity in the film is also somewhat contained by her blond hair and Anglo father, a strategy used with Garcia in *Night Falls on Manhattan*. Lopez, as a Puerto Rican who descends from Spaniards as well as Africans, is a natural target for racial purists.⁴⁶ This was in part responsible for the controversy surrounding Lopez being cast in the role of the Mexican American pop icon Selena. It was a role that earned Lopez considerable critical acclaim, but also exposed the tensions within intertwining ethnic and racial markers that make up various Latina identities.⁴⁷ Latinos, as part of Western culture, have similarly absorbed the value placed on whiteness, holding Puerto Ricans in lesser esteem for their African heritage (Fig. 6.1).⁴⁸

More recently, Lopez had the lead role in the NBC series, *Shades of Blue* (2016–2018), for which she also served as executive producer. Below



Fig. 6.1 The redeemable but troubled female rogue, Det. Harlee Santos (Jennifer Lopez). Screen shot from *Shades of Blue*, NBC

is a more comprehensive analysis of this series, as it showcases a more contemporary and convoluted interplay of non-normative identities, which clash not only with their own “blue” loyalties, but also with a more complicated and compromised white male rogue. The show tells the story of a corrupt but effective unit within the NYPD that dispenses “street justice,” taking pride in its ability to tap down as much crime as possible in an otherwise dangerous neighborhood. They not only accept money for paid protection, but also dole out guidelines to their “clients” to help minimize crime, especially related to drug trafficking; the unit’s goal is to reduce crime rather than to attempt to unrealistically eliminate it.

However, when Lopez’s character, Harlee Santos, is caught in the act of collecting a cash payment from one of her crew’s new clients, Special Agent Robert Stahl (Warren Kole) gives her the choice of prison or serve as a mole to help entrap her boss, Lt. Matt Wozniak (Ray Liotta). In the first episode Santos also records a video for her daughter Cristina (Sarah Jeffery), in which she tries to explain how things have gone so terribly wrong. The full content of the video is revealed at the series’ end once she agrees to testify—not only to own up to her unit’s corruption, but also as a way to stop the more blatantly criminal Intelligence Unit in the department with ties to drug cartels and organized crime.

By season three, the series had amply explored the many “shades of blue” that accompany policing such a rough precinct, often exposing the darkest shades in this unit’s self-styled pursuit of “the greater good,”⁴⁹ as Wozniak calls it, but which increasingly included murder. Equally tarnished is the FBI’s Stahl, whose obsession with Santos leads him to plant evidence, murder associates, and eventually kidnap her—their duel ending with her killing him in self-defense. Santos also kills her former boyfriend, Miguel Zepeda (Antonio Jaramillo), an ex-convict she once framed to put in prison. During an episode in which Zepeda attempts to rape her, Santos lets the act unfold until his head is positioned between her legs, at which point she twists her legs and breaks his neck. In addition to the criminal Intel Unit, the crew’s enemies list also includes corrupt Internal Affairs bosses and a mayoral candidate whose organized crime connections nearly gets them killed in an ambush. Up against those threats, their approach to battling the usual array of street thugs and mur-

derous drug dealers seems almost heroic, although eventually unmasked as too criminal to be sustained.

In the final episode, Santos explains that she can no longer justify her behavior and the series ends with her preparing for prison; unlike most male rogues, she must surrender her badge to become the story's redeemable hero. While Lopez's Santos presents a few solid steps forward among female crimefighters, her characterization also indulges in a few female-oriented clichés and familiar stereotypes. In her struggles with her conflicting loyalties and wrestling with whether to remain loyal to her crew or to cooperate with the FBI, she confirms that her main concern is to spare her daughter the pain of discovering her mother's criminality. It is this maternal drive that represents an all-too-familiar refrain.

Still, given the length and breadth of storytelling laid out in a three-season television series, it is Santos's perspective that drives the storytelling—a rarity for female characters on small or large screens. Moreover, plenty of scenes showcase Santos as a clear-headed, capable cop with ample know-how and street experience. More progressively, Santos is depicted as a sexualized being who experiences both the pleasure and pain of intimacy. At its darkest, she is the victim of Stahl's obsessions, often tinged with sexual menace and physical violence, along with her troubled history with Zepeda. She is also shown choosing lovers for her own gratification and the first to act on a mutual attraction between her and an assistant district attorney, James Nava (Gino Anthony Pesi), later killed by her enemies.

In only one scene does Santos and her daughter's Latina difference get specifically highlighted, and it has as much to do with class as ethnicity. Santos is called to her daughter's expensive, private school after Cristina got in a fight after being teased about her family, with one classmate sarcastically claiming to be a fan of "telenovelas,"⁵⁰ the popular soap operas of Latin America; it was meant to disparage Cristina's "daddy issues ... [and] single mom dramas"⁵¹ included in news reports. Santos talks the school out of suspending Cristina but tells her daughter not to take the bait put out by "some entitled bitch," acknowledging that they are occupying space usually reserved for well-heeled white women.

No doubt Santos's relationship with her boss Wozniak, although not romantic or sexual in nature, demands a sizable share of the spotlight,

given Liotta's star status. His character is shown running his crew like a Special Forces operation, rooted in his previous tours of duty as a Marine before becoming a cop. Wozniak, though, is no routine portrait of a white male rogue, given how deeply conflicted he is, being both sentimental and savage in equal parts, and capable of cold-blooded murder as well as the ability to shed tears and show real remorse. One of his most novel vulnerabilities is his bisexuality, which nearly costs him his marriage, but also brings him closer to his gay son. Most of all, Wozniak is grief-stricken about his daughter's fatal drug overdose, including a guilt that often haunts him in the guise of her ghost with whom he has conversations. He explains that her death is what drives his aggressive policing to ensure that none of his "family"⁵² is harmed on his watch, including Santos and her daughter as well as the rest of his crew.

Finally, such a series allows room to showcase an array of differing portrayals of the Other in blue. Among the other strong female characters is former cop turned FBI boss Gail Baker (Leslie Silva), Stahl's partner Molly Chen (Annie Chang), and the ambitious but compromised mayoral candidate Julia Ayres (Anna Gunn). It is another female member of Woz's crew, though, who is a stand out; like Santos, she offers a complex portrait of a female cop. Tess Nazario (Drea de Matteo), a tough-talking, capable cop, is shown chasing down and cuffing suspects, bravely going toward danger to save her crew, and surviving a gunshot at the end of the first season. Nazario too is shortchanged from being a more radical challenge by the usual tropes of female representation, having to worry about a cheating husband and kids to raise. References to her children, though, are often fleeting and usually because they clash with her job duties. She complains that one interrogation is taking too long for her to get her son Troy to practice on time; on another occasion, she wastes no time beating up a suspect, griping that she has to pick up her kids at school and has no more time to invest in questioning him. Nazario's toughness is also trusted enough by her crew that she often takes the lead in interrogating suspects. In one scene, she barks: "Listen up. I'm bloated, I'm cramping, my shoes are killing me. And my husband is cheating on me and I have to go apologize to the bitch that he's been screwing ... I'm going to kill someone before this day is over." With that, the suspect promptly gives up information. In another scene, one of her partners

warns a would-be assassin, “I won’t torture a woman, but she will.” Nazario then tases the woman repeatedly with little hesitation.

Shades of Blue’s Male Others

Besides Santos and Nazario, Wozniak’s crew also includes the Jewish David Saperstein (Santino Fontana), killed by Wozniak part way through the series as the suspected FBI mole. Also, Carlos Espada (Vincent Laresca), who is the least developed supporting character, while two more interesting African American characters offer intriguing and contrasting portraits of what it means to be black and blue. Marcus Tufo (Hampton Fluker), a part of the crew for six years, is an aggressive, dedicated soldier who adopts Wozniak’s us-versus-them mentality. After Saperstein is killed, Tufo is outraged to learn that his former partner was funneling prescription drugs to a former doctor and his accomplice, a priest, who dole out the medicines to needy people in the neighborhood. Tufo confronts the priest who then schools him about how clergy too have to go rogue at times and grapple with gray areas between right and wrong, admitting, “When what’s right doesn’t square with the letter of the law, then there’s a choice to be made.”⁵³ Later, after Tufo’s world view is seriously challenged, he picks up where Saperstein left off, handing the doctor his number and thanking him on “behalf of many people.”⁵⁴

Part of Tufo’s confusion is revealed in exchanges with the crew’s newest member, rookie Michael Loman (Dayo Okeniyi), who is uncomfortable having to work in an impoverished, crime-ridden precinct dominated by African Americans, often viewing cops as just another source of misery. Loman is introduced in the opening minutes of the series as he accompanies Santos on a call, but hears gunshots coming from inside an apartment, busts open the door, and shoots an unarmed black man—the shots actually occurring in a video game. Santos quickly springs into action, concocting a story to make what happened look like a “good shoot.”⁵⁵ “I don’t want to be that kind of cop,”⁵⁶ Loman protests. Santos points out that his badge now makes him part of the unit’s “family,”⁵⁷ forcing her to protect him and now advising him to view this situation as a “hero who made a mistake.”⁵⁸ Once Loman is accepted by the crew, he still questions

their methods, although too often he fails to practice what he preaches about following rules. On another call with Santos, it is Loman who no longer wants to wait for a warrant, claiming to hear a cry for help that lets him barge through a locked door. Later in the series, it is Loman's turn to cover for Santos who has shot a stranger she mistook for Stahl, with Loman now helping concoct a story to help cover up her deadly mistake.

Loman's most impactful moments, though, occur when race is at the heart of the matter. When Wozniak tries to make Loman feel better about shooting the unarmed drug dealer, he tells Loman, "I've done the same thing and then some ... justified shootings, but a killing just the same."⁵⁹ Loman counters, arguing, "It's not the same. You're a white cop," with so few of the crew's arrests being white suspects.⁶⁰ "We're picking up people who look like me eight times more than people who look like you," which he fears makes him a "sell-out," adding that "these kids scattering in the streets [are] terrified that the police are going to shoot them ... someone's got to show them that being a good cop isn't the exception to the rule."⁶¹ Wozniak reminds Loman that he killed a man who sold heroin to the very people "you're trying to protect."⁶² Loman rejects Wozniak's logic, noting, "We don't get to fight a preemptive war ... pop people because of what we think they're going to do ... That's why they don't trust us." Wozniak insists they are "absolutely fighting a preemptive war. That's what policing is."⁶³ It is Tufo, though, who makes the strongest case for Loman about the differences between social work and policing when he notes, "If I'm chasing some thug through my old neighborhood, the only color he sees is blue."⁶⁴

Along with having Lopez as the main protagonist, *Shades of Blue* and its supporting players offer a significant exploration of the uncharted terrain of the Other in blue, whether a female, an African American, a Latino/a, or the myriad others who continue to deal with invisibility in Hollywood. This remains especially troublesome as the ubiquitous and influential crimefighter persistently gets to police who has access to American privileges and who gets jettisoned to the margins. As this chapter reveals, it is hard to effectively embody the role of the Hollywood crimefighter when for too long such non-white or not-white-enough challengers have been members of communities still having to prove their credentials as Americans. Despite some pioneers and individual success stories, too many among the ethnic Other continue to be perceived as too

different or too “foreign,” and still wearing the scars of the marked and dangerous Other.

Notes

1. See Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 4. Jacobson notes how “Caucasians are made and not born,” with each wave of immigrant having to earn whiteness, as defined by a WASP or Caucasian standard, which describes a normative white person as derived from northern European. The Irish were first rejected as white, as were Jews and most immigrants from southern and eastern Europe—some of the basis of religion, class standing and/or a “swarthy” appearance. White status was subsequently earned through court rulings or other means that allowed them inclusion into the normative Caucasian classification.
2. Robert Lloyd, “Ving Rhames isn’t Savalas but his Own Man in ‘Kojak,’” *Los Angeles Times*, March 25, 2005. Available online.
3. *Hill Street Blues*, Season 7, episode 4, “Bold Ambition,” directed by Ben Bolt, aired on October 30, 1986.
4. Like many of his films, Levinson created a Baltimore precinct that reflected the city he once described as “divided by race, religion and class, as are many cities in the United States ... Baltimore is my homeland ... a place for me to examine all the issues that interest me, past and present, with humor and passion, for better or worse.” *Homicide: Life on the Street*, Cast and Creators Reunion, Paley Center, New York, [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...), 2018.
5. *Homicide: Life on the Street*, Season 5, episode 17, “Kaddish,” directed by Jean de Segonzac, aired on February 2, 1997 (2017; *Homicide: Life on the Street. The Complete Series*), DVD.
6. Peabody—Stories that Matter, “Homicide: Life on the Street,” [peabody-awards.com](https://www.peabody-awards.com), 1997.
7. *Homicide: Life on the Street*, Cast and Creators Reunion, Paley Center, New York, [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...), 2018. The show’s writer-producers, Tom Fontana and David Simon, became part of HBO’s stable of creators: Fontana developed *Oz* (1997–2003) and Simon, *The Wire* (2002–2008).

8. Robert G. Lee, *Orientalism: Asian American in Popular Culture* (Temple University Press, 1999). Also see “Investigating the Real Detective Charlie Chan,” *NPR*, aired September 7, 2010. Available online.
9. History, Arts & Archives—U.S. House of Representatives, “The Immigration Act of 1924,” [historyhouse.com](http://history.house.com).
10. John Kuo Wei Tchen and Dylan Yeats, *Yellow Peril: An Archive of Anti-Asian Fear* (New York: Verso, 2014); also see Robert G. Lee, *Orientalism: Asian American in Popular Culture* (Temple University Press, 1999).
11. *Rush Hour*, DVD, directed by Brett Ratner (Warner Brothers, 2008).
12. *The Corruptor*, DVD, directed by James Foley (New Line Home Video, 1999).
13. Lui appeared in the original 2000 film with Cameron Diaz and Drew Barrymore and the 2003 sequel, *Charlie’s Angels: Full Throttle*.
14. *Barney Miller*, Season 1, episode 10, “The Guest,” directed by Noam Pitlik, aired on March 3, 1975 (*Barney Miller: The Complete Series*, Shout! Factory, 2011), DVD.
15. See Meg James and David Ng, “In Hollywood, Asian American Actors See Few Lead Roles, and Pay Discrepancies When They Land One,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 8, 2017.
16. See “Census Data and API Identities,” at Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence. Available online at <https://www.api-gbv.org/resources/census-data-api-identities/>.
17. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994).
18. The term Bollywood conflates the industry’s Hollywood-type productions with its Bombay locale—now known as Mumbai. See Patricia O’Neal, “Imagining Global India: Bollywood’s Transnational Appeal,” *Continuum, Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*, 27, no. 2 (April 2013), 254–266.
19. Nellie Andreeva and Denise Petski, “‘Quantico’ Canceled After Three Seasons on ABC,” *Deadline Hollywood*, May 11, 2018. Available online.
20. *Coyote Waits*, DVD, directed by Jan Egleson (PBS Home Video, 2003).
21. Robert Redford and Tony Hillerman, “The Making of *Skinwalkers*,” DVD, *Skinwalkers*, directed by Chris Eyre (PBS Home Video, 2002), Special Feature, 2002.
22. *Coyote Waits*, DVD.
23. *Skinwalkers*, DVD.
24. *Ibid.*
25. “Hispanics in the US Fast Facts,” *CNN*, March 22, 2018. Available online. The Census Bureau describes someone of Hispanic or Latino

- ethnicity as “a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture of origin regardless of race.” See <https://www.census.gov/topics/population/hispanic-origin/about.html>.
26. Hansi Lo Wang, “2020 Census to Keep Racial, Ethnic Categories Used in 2010,” *NPR*, aired January 26, 2018. Available online. Also see Anna Brown, “The Changing Categories the U.S. Has Used to Measure Race,” June 12, 2015. Available online at pewresearch.org.
 27. A.D. Powell, “White Racial Identity, Racial Mixture, and the ‘One Drop Rule,’” *The Multiracial Activist*, September 1, 2004. Available online at <https://multiracial.com/index.php/2004/09/01/white-racial-identity-racial-mixture-and-the-one-drop-rule/>.
 28. “Percentage of Local Police Officers Who Were Racial or Ethnic Minorities Nearly Doubled Between 1987 and 2013,” US Department of Justice, May 14, 2015. Available online.
 29. Edward Conlon, *Blue Blood* (Riverhead Books, 2004), 318.
 30. Press release, “Happy to Fire, Reluctant to Hire: Hollywood Inclusion Remains Unchanged,” University of Southern California Annenberg, July 30, 2018. Available online at <https://annenberg.usc.edu/news/research/happy-fire-reluctant-hire-hollywood-inclusion-remains-unchanged>.
 31. *Ibid.*
 32. *Ibid.*
 33. Darran Simon, “President Trump’s Other Insensitive Comments on Race and Ethnicity,” *CNN*, January 13, 2018.
 34. Berta Esperanza Hernández-Truyol, “Building Bridges: Latinas and Latinos at the Crossroads,” *The Latinola Condition: A Critical Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 1998).
 35. See Aaron Baker and Juliann Vitullo, “Screening the Italian-American Male,” in *Masculinity: Bodies, Movies, Culture*, ed. Peter Lehman (New York: Routledge, 2001).
 36. Guillermo Avila-Saavedra, “Ethnic Otherness versus Cultural Assimilation: U.S. Latino Comedians and the Politics of Identity,” *Mass Communication and Society*, 14, no. 3 (2011).
 37. See Stephen Worchel, *Written in Blood: Ethnic Identity and the Struggle for Human Harmony* (New York: Worth Publishers, 1999).
 38. *Hill Street Blues*, Season 3, episode 5, “Officer of the Year,” directed by David Anspaugh, aired on October 28, 1982.

39. The Latino cop is portrayed by the biracial Benjamin Bratt—his mother a Peruvian Indian who emigrated to America and married a German American; the biracial character is played by the Mexican American Damian Chapa.
40. *Internal Affairs*, DVD, directed by Mike Figgis (Paramount Pictures, 1999).
41. In Ray González, ed., *Muy Macho: Latino Men Confront Their Manhood* (New York: Anchor Books Doubleday, 1996), xiii.
42. As Rodríguez notes, the Latin or Latino look dictates a person who is “slightly tan, with dark hair and eyes,” which may dominate casting choices but fails to represent such a vast array of peoples. Clara E. Rodríguez, *Latin Looks: Images of Latinas and Latinos in the U.S. Media* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 1.
43. Christina Garcia, *Havana USA: Cuban Exiles and Cuban-Americans in South Florida, 1959–1994* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996). With respect to black and Cuban identity, see Jon Nordheimer, “Black Cubans: Apart in Two Worlds,” *The New York Times*, December 21, 1987; and Henry Louis Gates, “Black in Latin America,” *PBS*. Available online at <https://www.pbs.org/wnet/black-in-latin-america/featured/preview-black-in-latin-america/172/>.
44. Louis A. Pérez, Jr., *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality, and Culture* (New York: Ecco Press, 1999).
45. Rodríguez, *Latin Looks*, 2 and 76.
46. Cristina Veran, “Born Puerto Rican, Born Taino? A Resurgence of Indigenous Identity Among Puerto Ricans has Sparked Debates Over the Island’s Tri-racial History—Again,” *Colorlines Magazine: Race, Action, Culture*, Fall 2003.
47. Dave Karger, “Jennifer Lopez Met Backlash for Her Role as ‘Selena,’” *Entertainment Weekly*, August 9, 1996.
48. Jorge Duany, “Neither White nor Black: The Representation of Racial Identity Among Puerto Ricans on the Island and in the U.S. Mainland,” in *Neither Enemies nor Friends: Latinos, Blacks, Afro-Latinos*, eds. Anani Dzidzienyo and Suzanne Oboler (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).
49. *Shades of Blue*, Season 3, episode 5, “The Blue Wall,” directed by Steve Shill, aired on July 15, 2018, NBC.
50. *Shades of Blue*, Season 3, episode 2, “The Hallow Crown,” directed by John Behring, aired on June 24, 2018, NBC.
51. *Ibid.*

52. *Shades of Blue*, Season 3, episode 5.
53. *Shades of Blue*, Season 1, episode 9, "Live Wire Act," directed by Millicent Shelton, aired on March 3, 2016, NBC.
54. Ibid.
55. *Shades of Blue*, Season 1, episode 1, "Pilot," directed by Barry Levinson, aired on January 7, 2016, NBC.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid.
58. Ibid.
59. *Shades of Blue*, Season 1, episode 4, "Who Is It Who Can Tell Me Who I am?" directed by Dan Lerner, aired on January 28, 2016, NBC.
60. Ibid.
61. Ibid.
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid.
64. *Shades of Blue*, Season 1, episode 2, "Original Sin," directed by Barry Levinson, aired on January 14, 2016, NBC.



7

Globocops, La Frontera, and America's War on Drugs

You better help us get Pablo.

DEA Agent Steve Murphy (*Narcos*)

I want him dead too.

Elisa, communist revolutionary

We're not a death squad.

Murphy

You clearly don't know your country's history in Latin America.

Elisa

From Indiana Jones outsmarting Nazis to Han Solo battling threats “in a galaxy, far, far away,” the message in many Hollywood films is clear: America is on duty everywhere. These two characters were both portrayed by Harrison Ford, the quintessential American everyman, who also took his turn as a cop in *Blade Runner* (1982), along with the iconic CIA analyst, Jack Ryan, first containing the Soviets during the Cold War then battling drug cartels south of the border. What such films and their globe-trotting American protagonists broadcast is that borders are relative concepts. Similarly, US presidential candidates routinely exploit homegrown fears that the nation's borders are dangerously porous while

treating other nations' borders like invisible fences—and no match for American globocops dispatched to tackle threats in the name of US security.

Whether battling those who have committed crimes on American soil (then fled across the border) or to increasingly hunt down terrorists around the world, it is the assumption of American crimefighters—or globocops—that it is their right to “police the world,” which is most reminiscent of (now condemned) behaviors of European regimes toward their former colonial “possessions.” Although the United States did not replicate the same colonializing process, its presumption of access and dominion over much of the world is what draws postcolonial-type criticism of such US “policing” attitudes, which can spark types of armed resistance similar to what the European empire-builders experienced. Yet, failing to view the Vietnam War as instructional, US actions continue to attempt to maintain or extend American jurisdiction above all else. As the introduction established, this interest in global policing—different in key ways from military interventions—has become as commonplace as it is dangerous, on and off screen.

Working an Expanded World Beat

The two films below feature NYPD cops who represent the familiar rogue operating far beyond his customary jurisdiction and within such an ever-expanding world “beat”—their sense of entitlement tempered by their vulnerability to related political and cultural fallout. *The French Connection II* (1975) finds Popeye Doyle in France to pursue the elusive “French connection,” the drug trafficker who escaped capture at the end of the original film. It soon becomes evident, though, that the NYPD has sent Doyle to France merely as “bait” to draw out Charnier, who eventually has his men abduct Doyle and inject him with heroin until he is desperate enough to confess what he knows, which is little. Convinced Doyle is a stooge, a gravely ill Doyle is dumped off in front of French police, for whom he has been a nuisance, especially to Inspector Henry Barthelemy (Bernard Fresson). Barthelemy has kept watch over Doyle since his arrival, and now Doyle having endured withdrawal (cold turkey), joins

Barthelemy in pursuing Charnier. As before, Doyle proves to be a good detective but abroad an even better rogue. Doyle beats up prisoners until he gets what he wants, while Barthelemy must canvass witnesses to more methodically gather evidence. However obnoxious Doyle is—irked that the French do not understand his English nor appreciate the majesty of American baseball—he gets his man, relentlessly pursuing Charnier on trams and boats, and in the film's last shot, killing Charnier in cold blood. The ending satisfies his need for revenge but does little to disrupt the insidious drug trafficking problem that Charnier represents.

Another film featuring an NYPD detective on foreign soil is *Black Rain* (1989). As its tagline notes: "An American Cop in Japan. Their country. Their laws. Their game. His rules."¹ Like Doyle, this film's lead cop, Nick Conklin (Michael Douglas), has as much a reputation for causing trouble as catching criminals. Conklin and his partner, Vincent, Garcia's character briefly discussed in the last chapter, witness a murder in New York by a Japanese gangster named Sato (Yasuka Matsuda), and are then assigned to escort him back into Japanese police custody. Almost immediately upon their arrival in Japan, Sato escapes with the aid of some of his underworld friends who come disguised as cops. Conklin and Vincent are compelled to join forces with Japanese police to recapture Sato, although their presence is unwelcome, with Conklin frequently disparaging both their methods and cultural differences, including (again) their failure to speak English. As one official reminds Conklin, "This isn't New York. We have rules here,"² which is meant to insult Conklin but who interprets it as proof of Japanese weakness. Refusing to leave, Conklin and Vincent are assigned a Japanese partner who also serves as their interpreter, Masahiro (Ken Takakura); or as Conklin puts it, "a nip that speaks fucking English."³

Vincent tries to demonstrate some cultural sensitivity, including using chopsticks and learning a few Japanese words, even reminding Conklin that he needs to "smoke a little peace pipe" with his new Japanese partners (a reference borrowed from the western genre). After Vincent's beheading by Sato's accomplices, Masahiro becomes Conklin's buddy, although his representation stresses quiet nobility, which is framed through an American lens as Asian passivity. Masahiro teaches Conklin about cooperation and "honor," while Conklin teaches Masahiro how to

follow one's own instincts—even if that means breaking the rules. In a familiar refrain, Conklin explains that if the killer is caught, the means are justified. The film is also book-ended with a line of dialogue first uttered by Vincent then Masahiro, both warning Conklin to “watch your tail, cowboy.” It helps anchor Conklin's presentation of the urban cowboy and rogue cop whose people skills may be rough, whose appearance is unorthodox (wearing a leather jacket and long hair), whose family is sacrificed (he is divorced), but who is still the best man for the job. Conklin eventually learns humility (and a few Japanese words) from Masahiro, demonstrating his tolerance of the Other, and hence, his suitability to be the American hero in a global world. Masahiro, by refusing Conklin's attempt to bow in respect, instead holding out his hand for a Western handshake, signals his capitulation to Conklin's American ways. The gestures suggest a type of cultural reciprocity, albeit still on unequal terms.

The film's title references the name the Japanese gave to the debris falling from the sky after the US military exploded an atomic bomb over Japan during World War II. One Japanese gangster describes his childhood bitterness about the “black rain,” explaining that his pursuit of money as a criminal (and spilled blood in New York that first got Conklin involved) is a “payback” to the Americans. The film also contains anxiety about the Japanese infiltrating America with everything from sushi bars to the martial arts craze, similar to such references included in the *Die Hard* and *Lethal Weapon* films of the same era.

America's Troubles at La Frontera

American interference in Latin America nearly dates back to the nation's start, but began in earnest with the Monroe Doctrine of 1823, later extended by Roosevelt with his 1904 “corollary” that stipulated that some acts “may force the United States, however reluctantly, in flagrant cases of wrongdoing or impotence, to exercise an international police power.”⁴ Roosevelt set the stage for subsequent interventions, including the transformation of sovereign states into political and economic protectorates, along with defending any US interest deemed relevant to national security.⁵ That often meant supporting repressive governments and military

dictatorships whose iron-clad control ensured stable environments in America's "backyard" that were also necessary to protect economic (and predominantly American) investments.

A more complicated relationship has long existed with Mexico, with the nation's immediate southern border often viewed as an extension of the US frontier as much as an international boundary. President Franklin Roosevelt introduced a "good neighbor" policy⁶ to encourage friendlier relations with Latin America, including ending the 1933 occupation of Nicaragua by US Marines. However, subsequent presidents rescinded the policy as the Cold War triggered US actions meant to counter perceived Soviet aggression in Latin America or to be used against any socialist or left-leaning politics around the globe.⁷ The Nixon administration intervened in Chile's election, opposing the socialist, Salvador Allende—although democratically elected—as a perceived threat to US national security, and engaged in several cloaked operations.⁸

The Reagan administration continued the trend, with the so-called Reagan Doctrine sanctioning clandestine agencies to shore up anti-communist regimes in El Salvador and Guatemala, along with funding right-wing Contra rebels battling Nicaragua's socialist junta.⁹ Once Reagan publicly declared a War on Drugs in the mid 1980s, Central America, and increasingly Mexico, became the war's frontlines that justified the bypass of national borders and other nations' sovereignty.¹⁰ More importantly, most of the above policies were not carried out as predominantly military operations but as Roosevelt-inspired "police" actions, using the CIA and other such agencies to accomplish the nation's goals.

Scholars working in the broad-based field of "border studies" have long-noted the concept of "crossings" and hybridization for communities along borders (physical and political), which are the most impacted by such disputes or interventions. Yet, few Hollywood products ever capture such fluidity, preferring to depict the border as a site of conflict characterized by an us-versus-them mentality and war zones, as defined above.¹¹ As films and television programs customarily explore the micro experiences of characters' lives (impacted by the larger society or macro-level politics), the American ethnocentrism of Hollywood stories is all the more obvious when the border is involved. Rather than depict fluid identities, the approach seems to reiterate Turner's line "between savagery and

civilization,” in which Mexicans, in particular, are cast as the savages occupying a vast, amorphous southern frontier.

Unlike the nineteenth century western version characterized by a singular vision of big skies, open range, and boundless opportunities, the southern borderlands are envisaged as a sullied landscape of “foreign” inhabitants. Pablo Vila identifies four distinctive border environments and how people (on both sides) experience them differently.¹² It is reminiscent of Colin Woodard’s dissection of the United States into eleven different regions that profoundly affect how Americans view their relationship to the larger nation-state.¹³ Similarly, for “border actors,” Vila asserts, identity is already a “strange sedimentation of past, present, and future,” and ideally more akin to Gloria Anzaldúa’s concept of hybridity or a “mestiza” way of thinking, a logic of both, rather than us or them.¹⁴

The films and television programs below represent not only the us-versus-them perspective that absorbs the political frames outlined above, but also one that fetishizes the border as a fixed, insatiable concept whose transgression is often a fearful “crossing” into darkness and difference. One of the earliest Hollywood films to explicitly deal with the Mexican border is *The Border Patrolman* (1936), but as a western focuses on the ability of criminals to slip across the border to evade capture—a trope that becomes a staple in Hollywood’s border stories. Another western, *Border Incident* (1949), utilizes another familiar motif: Mexico as a land of extremes. Such a setting was ideal for the noir offering, *Borderline* (1950)—one of the first to capture the drug trade along the border, with a pair of male-female undercover agents who suspect each other of being involved with a cartel; the story is eventually overwhelmed by their romance.

It is not until *Touch of Evil* (1958) that a major Hollywood film reflected on many of the political and cultural assumptions discussed above, along with amplifying key stereotypes about Mexicans. In this noir classic, Hank Quinlan (Orson Welles) is an intimidating police captain operating in a small, seedy American town along the US-Mexico border, but who makes it his business to exert influence on both sides of the border. Quinlan’s authority goes largely unchallenged until Ramon Miguel “Mike” Vargas (Charlton Heston), a high-ranking Mexican

narcotics investigator—in town on his honeymoon—offers to help solve a local murder; jurisdiction is already murky, as the car bomb that kills a local tycoon and his mistress was planted on the Mexican side before exploding on American soil. From the start, Quinlan distrusts Vargas, not only for being Mexican, but also as a “rigid, noble law-abiding policeman.”¹⁵ Although they both want to solve the crime, Vargas makes it as much his mission to defeat Quinlan, who in turn is intent on destroying Vargas (in part by terrorizing his American bride). As Quinlan so aptly puts it, “border towns bring out the worst in a country.”¹⁶

Meanwhile, Quinlan uses his “unorthodox” methods to frame another Mexican for the double homicide, having vowed never again to let a killer go free after the unsolved murder of his wife twelve years earlier. Vargas needs help bringing down Quinlan, enlisting Quinlan’s loyal sidekick, Sgt. Pete Menzies (Joseph Calleia), who idolizes the man who once took a bullet for him but comes to understand the extent of his mentor’s abuse of power. Vargas and Menzies trap Quinlan into confessing that he not only set up Vargas and his wife, but also has for years been using criminal means to catch criminals.

To be clear, Quinlan’s corruption is not rooted in accepting bribes to make himself rich but more in a manner akin to *Dirty Harry*, in which the cop is convinced that the rule of law too often interferes with securing justice. Quinlan’s downfall, though, is not rooted in his ugly methodology as a cop but in his loss of focus as a man haunted by private demons, which pushes him to start drinking again. For his part, Welles reportedly abhorred Hollywood racism with respect to Mexicans, but by casting Heston and putting him in “brownface,” any attempt to contest such practices was seriously undermined. Critic Roger Ebert, though, gave Welles credit for ironically depicting “the clash between the national cultures,” as “Vargas reflects gringo stereotypes while Quinlan embodies clichés about Mexican lawmen.”¹⁷

Following *Touch of Evil*, Hollywood continued to explore conflicts along the border but primarily through the lens of a western similar to those mentioned above, or via additional noir treatments. It is not until the 1980s that the border becomes a renewed site of contested politics and identity crises, especially with respect to the role of border agents. In the 1980 film, *Borderline*, Charles Bronson portrays a border patrol

officer whose partner is killed and whose suspicions about the killer range from the smuggler of undocumented workers to drug traffickers, only to discover in the end that the murder was committed by an ex-soldier.

British director Tony Richardson offers a more critical view in *The Border* (1982), in which a border agent is also cast as the enforcer of immigration policy. His film stars Jack Nicholson as Charlie Smith, an agent charged with stopping the flow of Mexicans illegally crossing the border—most of who are being aided by American businessmen interested in them as cheap labor and who regularly bribe cops like Smith to help. After Smith finds he is in dire need of money, he reluctantly agrees to work with his corrupt partner Cat (Harvey Keitel), and together they start trafficking “wets” across the border. Their partnership falters when Cat fails to stop the kidnapping of a baby who belongs to a Mexican woman Smith increasingly views as symbolic of the border’s more tragic effects. Smith turns on his colleagues to help the woman get her baby back, explaining how he now wants “to feel good about something.”¹⁸

Another 1980s border film is *Flashpoint* (1984), which stars Kris Kristofferson as jaded border agent Bobby Logan, who finds an old car caught up in a flash flood also containing a skeleton, a gun, and nearly \$1 million in a bag. In this case, Logan kills his partner (who was trying to do the right thing), keeping the money but leaving the system he hates intact.

As Camilla Fojas notes of the above films, “in typical border film fashion, the border marks the limit between order and corruption and escaping to Mexico means impunity.”¹⁹ Fojas calls the approach “bordersploitation,” and these films from the 1980s “play out the psychodrama of border transgressions that allegorize a larger threat to the integrity of US national identity.” In such a scenario, she adds, “the border guard became the new cowboy of the American frontier.”²⁰

Narcos: The War on Drugs

Few films or television programs since the 1980s have dealt head-on with drug-trafficking as its central focus, usually relegating the issue to a mere plotting point or as the excuse for the crimefighter to prove his worth. The first major Hollywood story on any size screen to tackle the history

and complexity of the international narcotics industry, as well as the knotted and contradictory politics of the decades-long War on Drugs, is the Netflix original production, *Narcos* (2015–2017). Given its focus and the characters involved, which so directly speak to the themes under study in this book, an in-depth examination follows that attempts to locate patterns similar to earlier analyses that can attest to rogue characters who perform the nation and embody its exceptional access and “policing” of its Latin American backyard.

The series divides the complicated saga into two intertwining stories—the first being the rise and fall during the 1980s of Pablo Escobar, the notorious Colombian drug lord. He, in turn, faces two types of enemies: the Cali Cartel that eventually swallows up his Medellín cartel; and the American government, whose war on Escobar and his associates complicated already tenuous relations with its Latin American neighbors.

Escobar was born an ambitious peasant with grandiose dreams; his fame and fortune derived from his consolidation of the manufacture and distribution of cocaine from its source through its delivery to foreign markets, principally Miami. Dubbed a “smuggling genius,”²¹ Escobar organized rival drug lords into an uneasy alliance—or cartel—that enabled all parties to prosper, but which required the massive coordination of bribes and demonstrated violence in order to control judges, police, and politicians. Escobar’s business model was so successful that demand for his product soon outstripped his supplies, with ramped up operations soon posing another problem: where to hide all the massive stacks of US currency. After literally burying obscene amounts of cash in the Colombian countryside, the narcos graduated to laundering money to hide burgeoning fortunes. Escobar, though, sows the seed of his own destruction through his lavish lifestyle, once declared one of the era’s richest men in the world;²² he is also doomed by his escalating brutality, breeding enemies who help defeat him (then take his place).

The other parallel story in *Narcos* is the effort of two DEA agents who first try to alert the US government of Escobar’s potential, and later to jolt someone in authority to notice the sheer volume and audacity of his threat. Steve Murphy (Boyd Holbrook) and Javier Peña (Pedro Pascal) also tackle two types of obstacles. First is the drug kingpin himself and his supportive infrastructure of compromised Colombian officials and

corrupt factions of the nation's courts and federal police. The DEA as an American agency cannot make arrests in Colombia, having to partner with local law enforcement, which at the time was often difficult to distinguish from Escobar's henchmen. The other problem is comprised of other Americans, including a few recalcitrant CIA operatives, a communist-obsessed Marine colonel, a host of frustrated American ambassadors, along with politicians, including President Reagan, who are telegraphing conflicting messages.

Both agents are considered "gringos" by the Colombians, despite Peña's Latin roots and fluent Spanish; Murphy is dubbed "the golden gringo"²³ for his blond hair and American swagger. Murphy is also the series narrator, frequently explaining context in voiceovers and the more familiar "everyman" who left his comfortable California post to move to Colombia with his wife at the start of Escobar's rise. Murphy likens his sense of duty to his father's reaction to the Japanese attack on American soil; this new "attack" of illicit drugs coming across the border was Murphy's war and he "was ready to fight it."²⁴

Like other Hollywood crimefighters, Murphy and Peña go rogue when they deem it necessary, earning suspensions at the end of season one for their end-arounds of both Colombian and American restrictions. Peña is depicted as the more experienced and somewhat unorthodox agent who sleeps with the same hookers the narcos do, including one who serves as his confidential informant. Peña is also more of a lone wolf, abiding by his own code of ethics, which Murphy often questions. After Escobar's accountant is arrested, and the agents learn that Escobar's empire is garnering \$60 million a day, they steal some of the evidence to follow leads on their own (not wanting to wait for their Colombian "partners"). Peña, though, directs Murphy to put the papers down his pants, noting how "they won't search a white boy."²⁵ Noting the rogue's enduring mantra, Peña also adds, "Sometimes you got to do bad things to catch bad people."²⁶ Like other screen rogues, Peña decides when to kill a narco rather than to arrest him, ordering the Columbian "response force" to "give him lead,"²⁷ once he notices that his target, a high-level member of the cartel, is out of bullets. In another instance, Peña stops short of killing a young boy who points a gun at him, his hesitation allowing an Escobar sicario to escape, but which firmly establishes Peña's moral compass as an American agent hero.

After Murphy and Peña uncover Escobar's mug shot from an arrest earlier in life—its existence long denied by Escobar, who destroyed the evidence along with any witnesses—they give the photo to the Colombian minister of justice, Rodrigo Lara Bonilla, who uses it to expose Escobar as a criminal, preventing him from taking his seat in the government. Escobar had been elected in a landslide, seen by many as a *raisa* Robin Hood who handed out cash to the poor and built housing for the homeless—a tactic similar to America's homegrown outlaws during the Great Depression.

Given the delicate arrangement of rules that the agents frequently flaunt, their situation is made much worse by the CIA's indifference—even sabotage—of their mission. After Peña nabs the wife of a dead cartel associate who had taken over the family drug operation, he offered to cut a deal with her for information she possessed in exchange for sending her north into witness protection, a deal the CIA hijacks for its own goals. When Peña confronts the CIA station chief, Bill Stechner (Eric Lange), he is told, "You should have stayed in your lane ... we'll get them someday, just not your way."²⁸ In a meeting with the US ambassador, Murphy and Peña plead for help getting Escobar, they are told by the ranking military commander that the nation's resources have to be directed "at America's problems," which in this case only means Cuban or Soviet encroachment in the region. The CIA officer present concurs, noting that Escobar is "not a direct threat to our country's strategic interests in South America," adding that the agency prefers "not to get involved in local police problems."²⁹

The agents' uphill battle dramatically changes after they nab an ex-CIA pilot who shares his "get out of jail" card: a photo of Escobar loading cocaine into a plane's cargo hold in Nicaragua. It provides valuable evidence that cocaine is coming to America via a communist country. As a reward, Peña wants to give the pilot time to disappear, but Murphy balks at Peña's loyalty to "a guy who's flown 500 tons of cocaine across the border."³⁰ Peña explains that he has "a code of ethics when it comes to informants,"³¹ but Murphy wonders where Peña's code was when it came to "torturing suspects with hot coffee." Once Reagan saw the proof, being anxious for another reason to punish Nicaragua, he went on TV to address the American people and express "outrage" at Nicaraguan involvement in drug trafficking. As Murphy notes, now that "fighting the narcos

was the same thing as fighting commies,”³² a “care package” finally arrived in Colombia, supplying the agents with planes, helicopters, and other war materiel.

Meanwhile, Escobar and the other drug lords feared extradition more than other actions, especially after one of the Medellín kingpins is sentenced to life in a US prison *plus* 135 years. To fight back, Escobar engages in what Murphy dubs “narco terrorism,” including blowing up a plane and killing 100 people on board in an attempt to assassinate a pro-extradition candidate (who was not aboard the flight). To stop the violence, the Colombian president cuts a deal with Escobar to serve prison time for a one-time charge, but in a “five-star” prison, where he owns the guards, hand-picks the inmates (usually sicarios beholden to him), and that stipulates that police and military have to stay beyond a two-mile radius. Such a luxury prison humiliates the Colombians and further taunts American officials. Escobar was also keen to exploit the US obsession with communists and thus funded M-19—a communist guerilla group—that assaults Colombia’s high court. Murphy explains how Escobar was ultimately blamed for the attack that resulted in the deaths of half of the judges and successfully destroyed more than half a million pages of evidence against him.

Once Escobar is gunned down on the street and Murphy exits the series, the Cali Cartel rises up to take his place, and Peña ironically becomes the voice of restraint for newer agents. After they embark on a raid of a kingpin’s compound (led by a clean, by-the-book, Colombian general who insists on signed warrants), it is Peña who must contain a young agent, especially after the Colombian attorney general arrives and demands the agents surrender their passports (Fig. 7.1).

Near the end of the show’s final season, after the above events and the US Congress changes Colombia’s status from an ally to a hostile nation in the War on Drugs, Peña is left frustrated, noting in voiceover: “Another deal ... compromise ... charade, a way for governments who don’t give a shit about the war they’re supposed to be fighting to go on pretending they’re winning it.”³³ A frustrated Peña talks with a Colombian reporter on background, detailing American complicity with vigilante “death squads” comprised of Colombian police and military personnel. The news report shakes up Colombia and implicates the American government who “allowed it to happen.” Peña is told to “resign” then offered an assignment



Fig. 7.1 DEA Agent Javier Peña (Pedro Pascal) flies the Cali cartel security chief he flipped across the border to safety. Screenshot from *Narcos*, Season 3: Episode 10 on Netflix

fighting another belligerent cartel, this time in Mexico, his boss adding, “what else is a guy like you going to do?”³⁴

Narcos: Mexico was supposed to be the fourth season of *Narcos* but turned into its own series in 2018. The new voiceover, agent Scott Breslin (Scott McNairy), announces that this is when “the first shot was fired—the one that started the drug war,”³⁵ referring to the earlier assassination of DEA agent, Kiki Camarena (Michael Peña). Again, the story is told along two intertwining tracks: the rise and fall of Mexico’s homegrown drug lord Miguel Ángel Félix Gallardo (Diego Luna), and the efforts of Camarena and his associates to catch Gallardo. Gallardo methodically builds his Sinaloan monopoly, first by trafficking marijuana, then later partnering with Colombian cocaine traffickers once the Americans plug the Caribbean drug routes, forcing the Colombians to move their product through Mexico to get across the US border. Near the end of season one, after Camarena is tortured and killed, Gallardo survives by providing Guillermo Calderoni (Julio Cesar Cedillo), a commander in the federal police, with tapes that reveal his government’s arrangement with the narcos. If exposed, Calderoni’s world is also threatened, as Gallardo warns him, the system “doesn’t like heroes.”³⁶ Camarena’s death ignited intense

American reaction, which is expected to play out in season two, (due out in 2019), along with Gallardo's reign and eventual fall.

Peña, who portrays Camarena, had already earned positive notices for his portrayal of Miguel "Mike" Zavala in the 2012 film, *End of Watch*, which tells the story of two LAPD uniformed cops who patrol one of the most dangerous areas of the city, earning the tag of "ghetto gunfighters."³⁷ Peña and his partner Brian Taylor (Jake Gyllenhaal) stumble upon a drug house run by the Sinaloa cartel—the same one as in *Narcos: Mexico*—and seize a substantial amount of illicit drugs, but also discover dozens of people locked in the house as evidence of human trafficking. The cartel hires a local gang to hunt down Zavala and Taylor, with Zavala being shot in an alley, having first thrown his body across Taylor's to save his partner's life. Although bordering on a cliché to have Taylor survive and the Latino cop sacrificed, Zavala is shown as an equal partner who schools a receptive Taylor in Mexican American culture. Similarly, Peña provides a multi-dimensional portrait of Camarena in *Narcos: Mexico*; and, like Murphy, Camarena is a family man whose wife joins him in Guadalajara for this new assignment across the border.

Given the locations of both versions of *Narcos*, large casts of Latino and Latin American actors are featured, which also drew criticism for such representations again being mired in gangsterism and narcotics trafficking. Also causing some consternation is the lack of Colombian actors portraying key players, including the Brazilian actor who portrays Pablo Escobar. Overall, both series are viewed as a step forward for the breadth and depth of their Latin/Latino characterizations, which range from the criminal to the heroic.³⁸ Also, both series are novel in presenting most of its dialogue in Spanish, something producer/writer Chris Brancato claims he had to convince Netflix to do. English voiceovers and subtitles help to orient non-Spanish speakers and to provide them with vital context, but the series' bilingualism is perhaps also indicative of Netflix's ambitions to reach more international audiences.³⁹

The original series also gives a voice to Colombians—both political and criminal—who are available to remind viewers of American duplicity in these Latin American "partnerships." In one instance, Escobar writes the Colombian presidential candidate, Luis Carlos Galán (Juan Pablo Espinosa) to complain that American interference "entails the most

flagrant violation of the sovereignty of our Motherland.”⁴⁰ Galán shares the letter with the US ambassador, but also warns that “America wants Pablo Escobar to prove they’re winning a battle when clearly they’re losing a war.”⁴¹ The Colombian president, while citing American statistics about 660 tons of cocaine being consumed in the United States, also suggests, “Perhaps if your resources were focused at home, we’d all be better off.”⁴² In the end, the Colombian minister of justice concedes that his country must ask America for help to defeat Escobar but vows to never accept America’s “condescension,” along with presciently pointing out the limitations of American might to win such a war, noting, “John Wayne only exists in Hollywood.”⁴³

***Sicario*: Descent into Darkness**

While the pair of *Narcos* series cover the early years of the drug war, the pair of films below—*Sicario* and its sequel—investigate the war’s prolonged chaos and subsequent escalation well into the twenty-first century. Rather than the sense of a fresh endeavor, one in which to unleash American might, the films below signal a sense of fatigue or fatalism that accompanies such a quagmire; as such, they merit closer scrutiny and consideration in this study.

Sicario (2015) features FBI agent Kate Macer (Emily Blunt), whose kidnap response team descends on a modest house in suburban Phoenix only to find no hostages but horrific evidence of a drug cartel operation, including 42 dead bodies wrapped in cellophane and stacked inside the walls. The team also finds an outbuilding with a rigged padlock that when cut sets off an explosion that kills two officers and injures several others, including Macer—the grisly ordeal attributed to the Mexican Sonora cartel.

After showering and picking shrapnel out of her scalp, Macer attends a meeting with members of the Department of Homeland Security, in which she agrees to join an inter-agency task force targeting Manuel Diaz, the one who is responsible for what the media dubbed the Arizona “house of horrors.”⁴⁴ Although CIA agent Matt Graver (Josh Brolin) picks Macer for her tactical experience, he actually needs her FBI

credentials to partake in the mission since the CIA cannot operate inside US borders without a domestic agency attached. Graver identifies himself only as a defense department “adviser,” keeping her on a need-to-know basis to stonewall her questions, especially those related to jurisdiction, prosecutable evidence, and rules of engagement. Although she is told they are headed to El Paso to pick up Diaz’s brother, Guillermo, she soon finds herself in a heavily armed convoy entering Juárez, Mexico, to take Guillermo back to a Texas detention center. She is seated next to another “adviser” known only as Alejandro (Benicio del Toro), who warns her that “nothing will make sense to your American ears”⁴⁵ until the ordeal is over. On the trip back to Texas, and while stopped in heavy traffic at the border, the crew engages in a deadly shoot-out with cartel associates, with Macer having to shoot and kill someone in a uniform; Alejandro had already warned her that Mexican state police are “not always the good guys” (Fig. 7.2).⁴⁶

Back in the US, the crew discovers that Diaz is laundering \$17 million of cartel assets through an American bank in Texas. Macer wants to prosecute Diaz with such evidence but Graver urges letting Diaz remain free as part of the larger goal: to create enough “chaos,” as Graver puts it, so Diaz is called back to Mexico by the kingpin, Alarcón, whom they will locate by tracking Diaz. As Alejandro explains, getting to



Fig. 7.2 FBI Agent Kate Macer (Emily Blunt) takes aim at cartel associates at the US-Mexico border. Screenshot from *Sicario*, official trailer from Lionsgate

Alarcón would be like “finding a vaccine,”⁴⁷ and a way to end his reign of terror. After torturing Guillermo, Alejandro learns about the cartel's tunnels underneath the border. Graver's team, with the help of Delta Force, raid the tunnels to create more “chaos” for Diaz, killing “mules” and “bandits” along the way. Macer, by now having figured out she has been used, insists on going along as a witness and stumbles onto a scene where Alejandro has caught a Mexican cop unloading cocaine bundles from the trunk of his police car. Since Graver told her she could seize any drugs found, she points her gun at Alejandro, demanding he step aside; instead, he shoots her in the chest—her vest saving her life—then instructs her to walk away.

Once out of the tunnels, Macer charges at Graver, demanding explanations, including what the word *Medellín* references. Graver explains how it refers to a time when one group controlled every aspect of the drug trade, providing “a measure of order that we could control ... [but] until somebody finds a way to convince twenty percent of the population to stop snorting and smoking that shit, order's the best we can hope for.”⁴⁸ She also asks who Alejandro works for, and Graver admits that Alejandro, a former prosecutor, is now an assassin—or *sicario*—who is hunting down the person “who cut off his wife's head and threw his daughter in a vat of acid.”⁴⁹ Macer tells Graver she refuses to be the “person you're gonna hide it all behind,”⁵⁰ insisting she will reveal what she has witnessed. She had previously tried to appeal to her FBI boss who told her the mission was well-financed and any fear she had about operating out of bounds, he reassured her, “the boundary has been moved.”⁵¹

Meanwhile, Alejandro forces the corrupt cop to pull over Diaz along a deserted road in Mexico; Alejandro then shoots through the cop's body to wound Diaz, forcing him to proceed to Alarcón's compound. Once there, Alejandro kills the drug lord and his family at their dining room table. At the film's end, Alejandro lets himself into Macer's apartment, wistfully telling her that she reminds him of his daughter. When she repeatedly refuses to sign off on the official paperwork, he puts a gun under her chin to force her, warning: “You should move to a small town where the rule of law exists. You will not survive here. You're not a wolf and this is the land of the wolves now.”⁵² Alejandro reiterates the long-standing reliance

on having the rogue hero behave like a wolf, which dates back to Roosevelt's frontier concept of having to out-savage the savage to tame the frontier.

Although Alejandro is no rogue American agent, Graver is, and Alejandro's skills and criminality are being deployed on behalf of American goals. As Alejandro walks to his car, Macer points a gun at him from her balcony, but once he turns around to stare her down, she relents, perhaps heeding his warning that it would solve nothing and only get her killed. The final scene, though, belongs to the young family of the Mexican police officer whom Alejandro shot and killed, as his widow and young son attend a local soccer game, pausing briefly to acknowledge the crackling of gunfire in the distance, then turning back to the game, perhaps like Macer, able to do little about the carnage that engulfs their lives.

Sicario attempted to show the fallout of such "policing" in the War on Drugs, while the sequel, *Sicario 2: Day of the Soldado* (2018), not only tracks the further criminalization of Alejandro (and his discovery of a protégé), but also unveils a new tactic in the drug war: to link it to the War on Terror and unleash further out-of-bounds action. The film opens with agents discovering prayer rugs left near the US border with Mexico, followed by scenes of terrorists blowing up a department store in Kansas City. The coincidence leads the secretary of defense to vow in a public address that such bombs only empower America, which will "send you something that is truly terrifying ... the full weight of the United States military."⁵³

Rather than troops depicted, the story cuts to Graver interrogating a prisoner who may have information on how the terrorists got into Mexico. He tells his subject he will forego torture but promises something more horrifying to the detainee: an air strike on the house where his brother lives. The prisoner scoffs, believing Graver is bluffing as an American who must follow rules. Graver shakes his head, noting, "No rules today,"⁵⁴ before making the prisoner watch a monitor that shows his brother's house exploding. Graver tells the prisoner he knows where all his brothers live, implying that he is prepared to kill each of them until the prisoner cooperates.

Once government officials think fighting the cartels can be linked to the War on Terror, "this expands our ability to combat them."⁵⁵ This includes replicating the Iraq War tactic of getting groups to fight each

other—an idea they tell Graver can be replicated in Mexico. “If you want to start a war, kidnap a prince and the king will start it for you,”⁵⁶ Graver offers, then given the green light to put together a team of outside hires, which must be kept “way off” the books; he also tells them he is “going to have to get dirty.”⁵⁷

Graver's crew then kidnaps Isabel Reyes (Isabela Moner), the teenage daughter of another drug lord, leaving behind signs that implicates a rival cartel. Alejandro is on hand to supposedly rescue Isabel but lies to her and explains how she will be turned over to the Mexican military for safe return to her father. As Graver, Alejandro, and Isabel are traveling inside a heavily armed convoy, the Mexican police turn from escorts to enemies and a deadly shoot-out ensues that sends Isabel escaping into the desert on her own.

While Alejandro sets out to find her, Graver is told by Cynthia Foards (Catherine Keener), the CIA deputy director who has been directing his mission, that “we're shut down ... Mexico is America's neighbor ... you were supposed to start a war with cartels, not the Mexican government.”⁵⁸ When Graver is told the president “doesn't have the stomach for this,” he insists that she “sit that fucking coward down and tell him this is how we win.”⁵⁹ After Foards learns that Isabel was a witness to the massacre, she also orders Graver to “clean the scene,”⁶⁰ which means to kill her *and* Alejandro. To Graver's further dismay, the Kansas City bombers turned out to be from New Jersey and not illegals who came across the Mexican border, rendering his fabricated inter-cartel battle a botched and bloody exercise in futility.

Meanwhile, Alejandro and Isabel embark on a harrowing journey, and against orders, Graver extracts Isabel and puts her into witness protection. Alejandro, thought to be killed by narcos, manages to escape, then tracks down a young Mexican American, Miguel (Elijah Rodriguez), whose evolving criminality has been a haunting and recurring subplot. Alejandro now seems poised to take Miguel under his wing, telling his potential protégé, “Let's talk about your future.”⁶¹ It is never clear if Alejandro is a conscientious vigilante or merely a hollowed-out monster, or some macabre blend of the two, with the ending perhaps merely a set-up for another sequel.

Reviews for the first film, directed by Denis Villeneuve, were largely positive for its intimation of a costly, macho drug war that devours its own logic, along with Macer's presence as a righteous counter-argument to the government's cynicism and the CIA's duplicity. The second film, directed by Stefano Sollima, is missing her as a foil to contrast with the itch for violent confrontation—this time seemingly more reckless and without purpose. Along with the original's grim but poignant investigation, the two films together paint a portrait of how rogue is too rogue to chart “progress” in the still raging War on Drugs—one that treats Mexico as an alleyway en route to another dispossessed American frontier.

Global Trafficking: Comparing Performances of Nation

A profound shift occurred in the nation's mindset in the wake of 9/11, which eventually found its way into Hollywood storytelling—one that also engages the enduring War on Drugs. Although subsequent chapters offer a more comprehensive review of the many crimefighters who emerge to tackle the War on Terror, this chapter's next section compares three productions that tell a similar story about international drug trafficking (actually building on each other for inspiration), and which effectively expose shifts in American storytelling from a pre-9/11 to a post-9/11 mindset. The 1989 British miniseries, *Traffik* (1989), served as the inspiration for the American feature film, *Traffic* (2000), with both exploring the difficulty of policing borders amid the global explosion of the illicit drug trade. In contrast, the post-9/11 American TV mini-series, *Traffic: The Miniseries* (2004), overpowers the drug trafficking storyline and dispenses with the political protagonists to showcase a rogue agent as the best weapon to battle both the War on Terror and the previous (and ongoing) drug war.

The British *Traffik* presents a set of four interlocking stories steeped in the pernicious world of illegal drug use and abuse, including affluent smugglers, damaged addicts, and frustrated police. The main point of view is that of conservative government minister Jack Lithgow (Bill

Paterson), who is charged with facilitating British success in curbing illegal drugs in Pakistan by promising economic aid—an approach he quickly learns is no more effective than using his wealth and class privilege to stop his daughter's addiction to heroin. Other characters include a poor Pakistani who grows poppy to feed his family and the English wife of a high-end drug smuggler, who carries on the family business after her husband is arrested by German police. Such police are shown being stymied by smug criminals, inept justice systems, and wealthy people whose money and connections complicate prosecution.

Hollywood retooled and collapsed the British series to fit the format of a feature film, which under the direction of Stephen Soderbergh, switches the focus from heroin to cocaine trafficking and substitutes a conservative Ohio supreme court judge, Robert Wakefield (Michael Douglas), for the British production's government official. Wakefield becomes the nation's new drug "czar," perhaps reflecting the American preference for non-career professionals and "outsiders" who can embody middle American values, which (in theory) overpower bureaucratic red tape and beltway cynicism (the *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* model). The film quickly betrays these assumptions, as Wakefield, like the British Lithgow, finds his access to power and money unable to protect his junkie daughter from being seduced by drugs. The film also includes the arrest of a well-heeled California drug smuggler, and a criminalized Latino whose European wife continues the business to protect her privileged lifestyle. The German police are also replaced with a singular characterization of an earnest Mexican cop, Javier Rodriguez (Benicio Del Toro), as well as two minor but determined federal agents, Montel Gordon (Don Cheadle) and Don Castro (Luis Guzmán), who hound the California drug connection.

American television resurrected the British format, premiering *Traffic* as a mini-series on the USA cable network. While this *Traffic* retains the complexity of the prior productions' interrelated stories, it makes the drug trafficking storyline service a narrative better suited to a perceived post-9/11 priority: the terrorist war on America. Accompanying the shift in focus is a beefed-up role for a rogue cop, in this case, DEA agent Mike McKay (Elias Koteas), another American everyman with a Scotch-Irish surname who forsakes the rule of law for

the violent abuse of law and order. Although based in Seattle, his turf also extends to Afghanistan, where he is charged with dismantling that country's drug export operation. He ends up a rogue essentially operating alone to stop a drug shipment commandeered by al Qaeda and headed for Seattle with the smallpox virus onboard as an act of bioterrorism.

Both the British miniseries and the Hollywood film portray the government officials as flawed patriarchs whose task of protecting their countries from drug trafficking is as much a failure as their inability to safeguard their families from the ravages of drug use. As men in three-piece suits, working largely inside government offices, they seem ineffectual, especially in a post-9/11 environment. What the rogue McKay shares with these other male leads, though, is an estrangement to family, as all three men remain focused only on their missions until their families are nearly destroyed through their neglect.

In the Hollywood film, Del Toro's Rodriguez (garnering the Academy Award for Supporting Actor) explains to US agents that all he wants for his trouble is help building a baseball diamond in his hometown to help keep local boys occupied, as well as to provide them with a piece of the American dream. Another telling scene near the film's end captures a small but effective moment of one agent's determination to do his job despite the odds against winning any larger "war." Cheadle's Gordon stages a confrontation with the drug smuggler whom he earlier arrested and who now appears to be free; he does so to plant a bug in the criminal's house before being told to leave. It signals that Gordon's mission is not over, even though he has already lost a partner to the criminal's retaliatory violence. The gesture also pays homage to the smaller but vital acts many cops and agents must do to build a case—a far cry from McKay's self-aggrandizing and often counterproductive methods.⁶²

The American miniseries not only forfeits the earlier versions' attempt to probe how decency and malevolence battle for the same soul, but also reinforces the American preference for clues to distinguish "us" from "them" that then justify any means necessary to vanquish such a demonized enemy. McKay too briefly traffics in heroin—something he supposedly learned to do from his brief partnership with the CIA—to buy information about cargo intended to kill American civilians. Although on the run from his own government, once reports show an outbreak of

small pox related to the cargo, McKay's rogue efforts are vindicated, and he is reframed the story's hero.

The First World response to the problem of illegal drugs is common to all three productions but focused on reducing or eradicating supplies coming from the Third World instead of addressing the insatiable demand at home, which keeps the globalized black market alive, whether involving drugs or people (as human trafficking is included in the American miniseries). Both the British miniseries and the American film hint at the shortsightedness of supply-side thinking, offering several scenes that expose the conflicted feelings of the government officials charged with solving a drug problem that has yet to be properly understood. Lithgow, in his final sermon, warns, "We cannot police the world,"⁶³ as drugs are too easy to produce, leaving only the option of limiting demand.⁶⁴ Wakefield gives a similarly bleak speech at the close of the Hollywood film, lamenting, "There is a war on drugs and many of our family members are the enemy. And I don't know how you wage war on your own family."⁶⁵

Another distinctive feature of the British version involves the professed commitment to helping developing countries replace contraband economies with sustainable and lawful investments. This perspective is replaced with the Mexican cop's ordeal in the film but completely absent in the mini-series, which focuses on Afghani characters, supposedly with ties to al Qaeda, many of who are reduced to dehumanized figures that merely harbor evil. Despite being undercover agents, the opening scenes show McKay's partner driving through the clogged pedestrian traffic in Afghanistan in a conspicuous Jeep, shouting, "Look out, American coming!"⁶⁶ However incongruous, the scene is purposeful, as it establishes the imagery of America and its rogue agent as a white savior amid the uncivilized Afghan wilderness, where he seems like an underdog working against a mass evil, but one as undefined as the brown faces that impede the progress of his vehicle.

Unlike the British version's consideration of a non-Western or subaltern perspective, the 2004 miniseries presents only moments of unvarnished contempt. The rogue's clear-eyed mission toward a noble goal stands in sharp contrast to the previous *Traffik/Traffic* politicians, who in comparison to the rogue's macho (and xenophobic) tactics, now seem much too diplomatic, even impotent. As McKay and his partner question

their hospitalized prisoner, the Afghan farmer tries to explain his government's program to pay farmers like him just \$250 an acre to grow anything but poppy, which usually yields more than \$2000 an acre in heroin—a scenario similar to the one involving Lithgow in Pakistan. Unlike Lithgow's mixed feelings, McKay reacts by kicking the farmer's bed and shouting, "Cut the bull!" with his partner chiming in, "Why don't you let us know when you want to pull the turban out of your ass."⁶⁷ McKay, wearing a FDNY baseball cap to signal his emotional allegiances to the 9/11 tragedy, had earlier explained to the prisoner: "We're not here because we want to mess with your country ... you want to live in the Middle Ages, you go right ahead. We just want to stop you from messing with ours."⁶⁸

Again, this enlists the familiar theme of showcasing an American battling on foreign soil *not* to advance his (or his nation's) agenda or to interfere in another nation's sovereignty, but as a defensive measure meant only to protect a vulnerable America. Moments later, with his partner gone, McKay diverts the security cameras to begin his own plan of action, implying that torture is next. Torture becomes the new tool for so many of Hollywood's rogue crimefighters who emerge with renewed vigor in the wake of 9/11. Such characters, more fully investigated in the chapters to follow, reclaim this once-rejected means for achieving the nation's new ends—to be unleashed a new with near immunity in an increasingly borderless (global) frontier that America declares is its expanded and rightful domain to police.

Notes

1. Poster included on imdb.com (Accessed February 15, 2006). *Black Rain*, DVD, directed by Ridley Scott (Paramount Pictures, 1999).
2. *Black Rain*, DVD.
3. Ibid.
4. Available online at theodorerooseveltcenter.org.
5. Brian Loveman, *No Higher Law: American Foreign Policy and the Western Hemisphere since 1776* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

6. Fredrick B. Pike, *FDR's Good Neighbor Policy: Sixty Years of Generally Gentle Chaos* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010).
7. The Truman Doctrine in 1947 sent economic and military aid to Mediterranean nations to stop Soviet aggression at the start of the Cold War. See the trumanlibrary.org for related documents.
8. Kristian Gustafson, *Hostile Intent: U.S. Covert Operations in Chile, 1964–1974* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2007).
9. William M. LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard: The United States in Central America, 1977–1992* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000). Involvement with the rebels was implicated in the Iran-Contra scandal that later plagued the Reagan administration.
10. The State Department summarizes the existing Merida Initiative, passed in 2007, “Merida fosters greater cooperation between U.S. and Mexican law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, and judges as they share best practices and expand capacity to track criminals, drugs, arms, and money to disrupt the business model of transnational crime. Because of our collaboration, our shared border is more secure, information sharing more fluid ... Our cooperation with Mexico has never been more vital in the fight to combat the deadly threat of illicit fentanyl, heroin, and synthetic drugs.” Available online at <https://www.state.gov/j/inl/merida/>.
11. The extreme expression of that is President Trump's declaration of a “national emergency” in February 2019 to find funds to construct his long-promised “wall” (often referred to as a barrier as well) along the official border, after failing to get funding from the US Congress (even when his own Republican Party dominated both houses).
12. Pablo Vila, *Crossing Borders, Reinforcing Borders: Social Categories, Metaphors, and Narrative Identities on the U.S.-Mexico Frontier (Inter-America)* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013), 6.
13. Colin Woodard, *American Character: A History of the Epic Struggle between Individual Liberty and the Common Good* (New York: Penguin Books, 2016).
14. Vila, *Crossing Borders*, 9. Also Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands—La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (Aunt Lute Books, 1987), i.
15. James Robert Parrish, *The Great Cop Pictures* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1990), 608.
16. *Touch of Evil*, directed by Orson Welles (1958; Universal Pictures Home Entertainment, 2000), DVD.
17. Roger Ebert, Review of *Touch of Evil*, *Chicago Sun-Times*, September 13, 1998.

18. *The Border*, directed Tony Richardson (1982; MCA Home Video, 2004), DVD.
19. Camilla Fojas, "Bordersploitation: Hollywood Border Crossers and Buddy Cops," *symplokē*, 15, no. 1, *Cinema without Borders* (2007), 92.
20. *Ibid.*, 86.
21. *Narcos*, Season 1, episode 1, "Descenso," directed by José Padilla, aired on August 8, 2015, Netflix.
22. Halah Touryalai, "Watching Netflix's *Narcos*? Here's Pablo Escobar in Forbes' First-Ever Billionaire Issue in 1987," *Forbes*, September 15, 2015. Available online.
23. *Narcos*, Season 1, episode 6, "Explosives," directed by Andi Baiz, aired on August 8, 2015, Netflix.
24. *Narcos*, Season 1, episode 1.
25. *Narcos*, Season 1, episode 4, "The Palace in Flames," directed by Guillermo Navarro, aired on August 8, 2015, Netflix.
26. *Ibid.*
27. *Narcos*, Season 1, episode 6.
28. *Narcos*, Season 2, episode 9, "Nuestra Finca," directed by Andrés Baiz, aired on September 2, 2016, Netflix.
29. *Narcos*, Season 1, episode 4.
30. *Ibid.*
31. *Ibid.*
32. *Ibid.*
33. *Narcos*, Season 3, episode 10, "Going Back to Cali," directed by Andi Baiz, aired on September 1, 2017, Netflix.
34. *Ibid.*
35. *Narcos: Mexico*, Season 1, episode 10, "Leyenda," directed by Andrés Baiz, aired on November 16, 2018, Netflix.
36. *Ibid.*
37. *End of Watch*, directed by David Ayer (2012; Universal Pictures Home Entertainment, 2013), DVD.
38. "*Narcos* is a Hit for Netflix but Iffy Accents Grate on Colombian Ears," *The Guardian*, September 17, 2015.
39. "Spanish-speaking Actors Beaming with Pride," *The Straits Times*, September 13, 2017. Available online.
40. *Narcos*, Season 1, episode 4.
41. *Ibid.*
42. *Narcos*, Season 1, episode 7, "You Will Cry Tears of Blood," directed by Fernando Coimbra, aired on August 8, 2015, Netflix.

43. *Narcos*, Season 1, episode 3, "The Men of Always," directed by Guillermo Navarro, aired on August 8, 2015, Netflix.
44. *Sicario*, directed by Dennis Villeneuve (2013; Warner Home Video, 2014), DVD.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.
53. *Sicario: Day of the Soldado*, directed by Stefano Sollima (2018; Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2018), DVD.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid.
60. Ibid.
61. Ibid.
62. Stephen Soderbergh, *Traffic: The Shooting Script* (Newmarket Press, 2000), viii.
63. *Traffik—Miniseries*, directed by Alastair Reid (1989; Acorn Media, 2001), DVD.
64. Neither version of the story suggests how decriminalization may be as plausible an approach as treatment, rehabilitation, or prevention.
65. *Traffic*, directed by Steven Soderbergh (2000; Universal Pictures Home Entertainment, 2002), DVD.
66. *Traffic: The Miniseries*, directed by Eric Bross and Stephen Hopkins (2004; MCA Home Video, 2004), DVD.
67. Ibid.
68. Ibid.



8

The War on Terror, Homegrown Racism, and the White Knight

I love my country ... and in the real world, sometimes that means you have to do ... terrible things, even unforgivable things, for the sake of your country. But you know all about that, don't you, brother?

Graem Bauer to Jack Bauer, 24, 2007

In the wake of 9/11, now more than ever the white knight was called to duty and given a license to police nearly anyone, almost anywhere. Much as the Cold War enabled American crimefighters to comb the globe for communists and dangerous left-leaning threats to national security, the War on Terror was a license to hunt down “terrorists” anywhere in the world—or declare those impeding such an effort as enemies of the state. As President Bush told a joint session of Congress in 2001, “Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.”¹ As the nation’s political and cultural landscape changed, so did Hollywood narratives—the two as codependent as ever.

Jack Bauer: The Post-9/11 Rogue Hero

One television series that directly tackled the need for such a post 9/11 rogue was *24*, with its contemporary white knight, Jack Bauer (Kiefer Sutherland). The series warrants the in-depth analysis that follows given its widespread impact on subsequent characters, but also Bauer's surprising entrée into offscreen political discussions related to the newly launched War on Terror. The series debuted just weeks after the attacks on the World Trade Center and quickly became a cultural phenomenon; like the nation that dispatched him, he appeared vulnerable to all manner of enemies—foreign, homegrown, and elected. *24* aired on the Fox Network for the next nine seasons over a 13-year period (not counting sequels without Bauer), which encompasses more than 200 hours of programming. Given its breadth, rather than provide detailed recaps of each season or review the extensive array of characters—areas amply covered by other writers—below are those details that best help identify discernible patterns that affirm or advance the continuum of Hollywood rogues and their behaviors under review, especially those that further influence screen crimefighters that follow.

Bauer no doubt inherits the traits of previous action heroes, including the ability to shoot any weapon and to outshoot any foe (often with just a handgun versus automatic weapons), fly any aircraft (usually without permission), and escape most kidnappings to be “the last man standing,”² as one of his superiors puts it—the quintessential description of an American hero, regardless of genre or historical period. Bauer's more routine rogue behaviors include dispensing with the usual warrants, protocols and customary collaborations, but which get exacerbated by his status as an ex-agent, frequently suspended or exiled and forced to work with no official status, but still operating on behalf of the nation.

Bauer retains access to law enforcement tools via loyal analysts still inside government agencies such as Chloe O'Brian (Mary Lynn Rajsckub), who is introduced in season three as his technical wizard who goes rogue too at his direction. Her skills are as inspirational as they are troubling, able to override the trigger of a suicide bomber's vest or hack into an FBI security grid so she can warn Bauer in real time how to avoid dozens of

agents swarming a crime scene. Throughout the series, Bauer gets help from others inside the government that retain faith in his instincts, which is certainly a problem when Bauer is the one framed as the enemy in need of capture. In the final moments of the series, it is Bauer and O'Brian who share the spotlight. After she is kidnapped (again), Bauer makes one last act of sacrifice, agreeing to turn himself over to the Russians in exchange for her freedom. After reaching his Russian captor, Bauer warns, "I've taken you at your word, if anything happens to her or my family, your entire world will come apart and you won't see it coming."³ Perhaps it was meant to leave open the chance for another season or just a comforting reminder that Bauer will never be off duty.

The basic plot of each season included two intertwining types of threats to national security that unfolded over a 24-hour period, and which usually took 24 episodes to play out. The first type is a "foreign" or external enemy that Bauer personally vanquishes or plays a key role in neutralizing. They included a Bosnian war criminal who wants revenge on Bauer whose botched Kosovo mission killed the criminal's wife and daughter; Bauer eventually traps him but rather than arrest him, decides to outright kill him.

The Russians were frequently involved in nefarious plots, including two former Soviet satellite nations (both with predominantly Muslim populations) who produce terrorists that release a nerve gas in a Los Angeles shopping mall, later threatening to deploy another biological weapon on other American targets. The Chinese were another recurring enemy, especially Cheng Zhi (Tzi Ma) whom Bauer eventually decapitates to avoid global war. Bauer is eventually turned over to the Chinese for violating the sovereignty of the Chinese consulate in Los Angeles (and for the consul's death he is framed for). In the scene in which Bauer's boss reluctantly hands over the rogue hero, he notes, "We'd be burying a million Americans right now if it wasn't for Bauer."⁴

There were also rebel fighters from the fictional African nation of Sangala armed with a biological weapon, and who raid the White House to kill the US president and stop her military strikes on their homeland. Open Cell, a transnational group of international "hacktivists"—an exaggerated resemblance to the real-world WikiLeaks—was one of the more

inventive enemies of the state, with its professed commitment to the open flow of information, including classified US government documents.

Nearly every season also included a Muslim terrorist—their motivations rooted in acts of revenge or, as one noted, as payback for American imperialism. Among them was one who stole a few nuclear suitcase bombs to exact revenge on Bauer who tortured his brother to death; another a Turkish sleeper agent who worked in a technology company and planned to wake up cells hiding in suburban Los Angeles; also, the widow of a terrorist who blamed another US president for killing her husband with a drone strike. This latter threat took place in London where Bauer was living in exile, this time bypassing CIA orders instead of his usual Los Angeles-based CTU—or Counter Terrorism Unit.

24's Homegrown Enemies and Domestic Threats

The other type of threat Bauer faces is homegrown, from ineffectual bosses and petty bureaucrats to greedy industrials and pernicious moles inside the fictional CTU or within the Secret Service, CIA, and FBI. Most of Bauer's official bosses, similar to those of previous Hollywood rogues, are depicted as inept and inefficient at best; and at worst, they are guilty of being politically and professionally ambitious, which explains their apparent corruption.

In the first season, Bauer tranquilizes CTU Deputy Director George Mason (Xander Berkeley) so he can buy time to confirm how “dirty” Mason is, soon finding hidden offshore accounts. While Bauer denies his own behavior is lawless—only the temporary but necessary suspension of rules to solve another “ticking time-bomb” crisis (the familiar ends justifies the means)—he abhors those who break the rules for personal gain. After a colleague warns him that what he is doing to Mason could put him in prison, Bauer clarifies why “dirty” (rather than rogue) is so dangerous: “You can look the other way once and it’s no big deal. Except it makes it easier for you to compromise the next time.”⁵ Mason, not understanding Bauer's special purpose, describes him as “a loose cannon ...



Fig. 8.1 Jack Bauer (Kiefer Sutherland) takes aim at a terrorist threat in the series 24. Screen shot from Season 2, episode 24, on the Fox Network

rules don't apply to Jack Bauer."⁶ Thus, while Bauer's actions are deployed for the greater good, Mason's lawlessness is "dirty," which is what renders him unfit to protect the nation. Bauer would have rejected the "dirty" in Dirty Harry, viewing him as a fellow redeemable rogue.

In later seasons, in an infamous torture scene, Mason watches as Bauer engages a member of a terrorist unit implicated in an imminent bomb threat—now in witness protection in exchange for testifying against the unit's leader. Instead of interrogating the informant, Bauer kills him then asks for a hacksaw to cut off his head; he wants to go undercover and take it to the crew leader as proof of his loyalty. Noticing a horrified Mason, Bauer snarls, "That's the problem with people like you, George, you want results but you never want to get your hands dirty."⁷ Mason proves just how expendable he is as he later dies from exposure to a lethal dose of radiation (Fig. 8.1).

One of the initial homegrown traitors in the series is his former lover and trusted second in command at CTU, Nina Myers (Sarah Clarke), who turns out to be a double-agent, killing Bauer's wife in the first season but given immunity for valuable information in the second. In season three, after Bauer finds her in a stand-off with his daughter, he initially wounds Myers, then after voicing his vengeance, kills her in cold blood. In season two a group of oil industrialists with links to military and spy agencies creates a phony recording that implicates three (unnamed)

Middle Eastern countries for planning to attack Los Angeles with a nuclear weapon. The group had hoped to profit from a war in the Middle East, with its mastermind arming a cell of Muslim extremists to carry out the deed, unaware of the cabal's ulterior motives.

After Bauer fakes his own death at the end of season four to avoid a Chinese prison (at least for the time being), season five finds him uncovering the penultimate internal enemy: President Charles Logan (Gregory Itzen), who is working with another powerful cabal that is actually after cheap oil in central Asia (under Russian control). Bauer not only averts more terror attacks, but also secures incriminating evidence against Logan. When nothing comes of that, Bauer careens past routine rogue behavior to personally abduct the president, somehow bypassing Secret Service agents aboard *Marine One* along with holding the co-pilot at gunpoint. In a key scene, Bauer threatens to kill Logan but then hesitates, with a smug Logan, noting, "It's right that you can't, I'm the president."⁸ This scenario put at least one limitation on Bauer's behavior, which allowed him to regain some of his patriotic luster.

Yet another conspiracy involving the inner council of a newly elected President Allison Taylor (Cherry Jones) dominates season seven; Taylor's traitors are linked to a private military entity called Starkwood. That company had weaponized a lethal pathogen first used on the Sangalan people in a deal cut with the rebel leaders (noted above), now given to terrorists to set off a crisis on American soil. In one episode, Taylor has Starkwood's Jonas Hodges (Jon Voigt) arrested, calling him "a terrorist and a murderer,"⁹ while he claims his only crime was "trying to protect this country."¹⁰ Hodges also had frame Bauer for killing a US senator, noting the "rogue federal agent"¹¹ had motive because the senator publicly grilled Bauer about torture.

Taylor is talked into bringing back Logan in season eight to negotiate with the Russians, supposedly having invaluable expertise that cancels out his previous treachery. For his part in season eight, Bauer kills a Russian assassin then cuts open his stomach to retrieve a valuable SIM card, which once activated, contains Logan's number, revealing his part in yet another White House conspiracy. In the final episode, Logan takes Bauer's recording to Taylor, suggesting she release it to the media to justify Bauer's arrest, warning her that Bauer will never quit and will sabotage

their “peace agreement.”¹² She offers to “lock him away in a black site,”¹³ but Logan offers a more sinister solution. On the recording, Bauer warns that Russian opposition to the treaty was silenced by Logan and accuses her of covering it up. “This peace is fraudulent,”¹⁴ Bauer says. “And I cannot in good conscience allow the people that lost their lives today to go unspoken for.”¹⁵ Even as president, and perhaps because she is a female one, she starts to cry, having to be schooled by Bauer on how to do the right thing. In the closing scenes, Taylor tells Bauer she is resigning to face the consequences of her actions, adding, “you will have to do the same.”¹⁶ She says she betrayed her principles and “If I had listened to you, none of this would have ever happened.”¹⁷

Like previous rogues, Bauer is a reluctant hero who is also unable to be domesticated. Most of his family relationships end badly: his father kills his brother before the government kills his father for threatening to start a world war. His romantic relationships are equally as doomed because of his devotion to duty. Upon finding his wife dead, he breaks down crying, muttering how sorry he is that he could not rescue her. For the remainder of the series, he spends a great deal of time rescuing other female loved ones, including fellow agents who often became damsels in distress despite being trained operatives.

Bauer’s major love interest after his wife is Audrey Raines (Kim Raver), a policy analyst who is kidnapped in season four along with her father, Secretary of Defense James Heller (William Devane), later president. In one of their break-up scenes, Raines tells Bauer, “We both know that you belong here, Jack, at CTU doing what you do best ... and thank God there are people like you who can deal with that world.”¹⁸ Raines returns for later seasons, even remarries another homegrown enemy when she thinks Bauer is dead, and must be repeatedly rescued; she is also shot, tortured and left suffering from post-traumatic psychosis before finally being killed off in season eight by Bauer’s enemies. Heller, whom Bauer considers a father figure, often questions Bauer’s claims. His doubts are well-founded after learning Bauer broke into the American embassy in London, inadvertently shot two protestors outside, locked himself in a secure room (while holding the staff at gunpoint), and sent classified data to O’Brian to confirm his theory about a drone over-ride device.

Bauer finds another girlfriend in season seven, FBI agent Renee Walker (Annie Wersching), who quickly adopts Bauer's interrogation methods, much to the chagrin of her FBI boss. After a lecture by Bauer on having to live with her choices, in a subsequent scene, she tortures a suspect in his hospital bed, sounding a lot like Bauer when she asks a straight-arrow staffer for help, pleading, "Thousands of lives are at stake here. We either bend the rules a little bit right now or we lose this chance forever."¹⁹ When her victim refuses to cooperate, she shoves her gun into his wounds to convince him. He even taunts her as she walks away, reminding her that as FBI she has to respect his rights, prompting her to return to his bedside to squeeze his breathing tube and cut off his air. Unlike O'Brian, whose action sequences rarely go beyond pounding on a keyboard and grimacing into a glowing monitor, Walker at least has the opportunity to join Bauer in the field to chase down suspects and shoot terrorists. She remains a rare but short-lived female rogue as committed to the larger mission as her male counterpart, until she is mortally wounded by a Russian assassin.

America Asks: What Would Jack Do?

The show's season five was its most critically acclaimed, winning Emmys for Sutherland, an episode's director, and the show itself for Outstanding Drama.²⁰ It also became a cultural and political juggernaut, especially resonating with conservatives, many of who applauded Bauer as a "one-man army," a "comforting fantasy," and the "first post-9/11 action hero."²¹ The series no doubt earned most of its attention for its depiction of torture and Bauer as its expert practitioner, tapping into the national dialogue on CIA torture at the time being applied to the War on Terror and under review by Congress for its apparent excesses (e.g., Abu Ghraib).

In the season seven opener, Bauer is being publicly grilled by Sen. Blaine Mayer (John Quinn) about his harsh methods. Bauer argues that his tactics are justifiable, at one point telling the senator that the man he tortured was going to kill a bus full of innocent people. Mayer counters, "So, basically what you're saying, Mr. Bauer, is that the ends justify the means and that you are above the law."²² Bauer argues that the people he

deals with “don’t care about your rules,”²³ and offers to be judged by the American people: “I will let them decide what price I should pay.”²⁴ Audiences at the time may have already digested the 2004 report by the CIA’s own inspector general who challenged the legality of torture, and the 2006 Supreme Court ruling that reversed Bush’s earlier executive order to exempt al Qaeda and Taliban captives from the Geneva Convention’s ban on “mutilation, cruel treatment and torture.”²⁵

National Review writer Ben Shapiro penned one of his columns, “Where’s Jack Bauer when you need him?” to discuss how the benefits of torture outweigh its harms, adding, “[it] is not only justified, it is morally right.”²⁶ Conservative writer Cal Thomas also devoted several columns to recapping *24* plots to support his pro-torture argument. Laura Ingram told Bill O’Reilly in 2006 “the average American out there loves the show *24* ... they love Jack Bauer ... that’s as close to a national referendum that it’s okay to use tough tactics against high-level al Qaeda operatives as we’re going to get.”²⁷ That same year Rush Limbaugh hosted a Heritage Foundation panel about the show that included Michael Chertoff, the Secretary of Homeland Security. “I am literally in awe of the creativity ... [and] brains behind the program,” Limbaugh offered, adding that former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld was also “a huge fan.”²⁸

While fans and detractors of the show debated whether torture works on enemies of the state, many episodes of *24* reveal how torture fails to work on Bauer. The first episode of season six shows a ravaged Bauer, having spent 20 months in Chinese custody, with evidence of torture visible in the deep scars left crisscrossing his back. The Chinese, though, confirm that Bauer never divulged any information during his ordeal. In many scenes throughout the series in which Bauer is tortured, he manages to break free, turn the tables on his captors, and escape. Bauer’s celebrated (and fictional) resilience lends credence to public pronouncements such as presidential candidate Donald Trump’s controversial remarks in 2015 that Sen. John McCain was only a hero because he was captured, adding, “I like people who weren’t captured.”²⁹ McCain had spent more than five years in a North Vietnamese prison and subjected to repeated torture, later emerging as one of its most harsher critics, even after the events of 9/11. He urged that this is not just a “utilitarian debate ... this is a moral debate. It is about who we are.”

Others, including some in the military, thought the show was downright dangerous, with American operatives at Guantanamo Bay being accused of “devising interrogation techniques [that] were inspired by the exploits of Jack Bauer.”³⁰ News reports detail a trip by US Army Brigadier General Patrick Finnegan and several associates to meet with the show’s producers to tell them that their show encouraged illegal conduct and negatively affected the training of American soldiers. “I’d like them to stop,” Finnegan insisted. “They should do a show where torture backfires.”³¹ That backlash, including torture’s ability to be used by the enemy as a recruiting tool, is one of many counterarguments that followed in the wake of the CIA’s 2004 internal report, which could not verify any imminent threat thwarted by such techniques.

Ali Soufan, an FBI agent and Arabic speaker, who was among the first to question Abu Zubaydah (still being held at Guantánamo), recalls that the detainee was on life support after being shot in the raid that caught him.³² Soufan used a process he likens to “dating,” in which the interrogator builds a rapport with a prisoner, in this case, cleaning Zubaydah’s wounds and changing his bedding. As a result, Zubaydah gave up critical information to Soufan that confirmed the scope of the 9/11 plot, but the CIA thought Zubaydah knew more, Soufan asserts, later waterboarding him up to 83 times,³³ but learning nothing substantially new—a point forcefully corroborated by the 2014 Senate so-called “torture report.”³⁴

There is also the issue of torture yielding false intelligence. The lynchpin of pro-torture arguments often rests on the “ticking time bomb” scenario (the dramatic device frequently used in *24*). The most flagrant and consequential real life case involved a detainee who when tortured confirmed that al Qaeda was working with Saddam Hussein and that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction—both used to sell the Iraq War to the American people; that same detainee later admitted he lied to stop the torture.³⁵

During this post 9/11 period, it seems the CIA itself had gone rogue, with some legal cover provided by the Bush administration, but with the agency hiding the extent of its tactics along with where the interrogations were taking place. In its response to such criticism, the CIA concedes that “serious mistakes” were made and that it “was unprepared ... to undertake an unprecedented program of detaining and interrogating suspected terrorists around the world,” concluding that it “did not always live up to

the high standards that ... the American people expect of us.”³⁶ It denies, though, misleading Congress—a claim that McCain found unconvincing, publicly singling out a series of CIA directors for their “lies.” He also praised the report—the type of oversight that Bauer and his fans would find gutless and annoying—but one McCain believed ultimately “strengthens self-government ... and America’s security and stature in the world.” The CIA’s so-called torture program was shut down by President Obama’s 2009 executive order.³⁷ Karen J. Greenberg, in her 2016 book, *Rogue Justice: The Making of the Security State*, also praises the Senate report, but warns, “Even after the rogue policies were discovered and exposed, the few people inside and outside government who sought to rein them in fell short of this goal. To this day, the government continues to overreach in the name of keeping the nation safe.”³⁸

Jennifer Weed, who edited a collection of essays by experts who debate the ethical and psychological impact of aspects of the TV series *24*, notes, “In many cases, the series depicts the tragic implications (personal and political) of doing what is thought to be necessary to maintain an apparently fragile national security.”³⁹ Joel Surnow, the show’s co-creator (with Robert Cochran), explains that the torture scenes, which range from electrocutions to suffocations, are used to maximize the show’s appeal. “Certainly we’re trafficking in fear. That’s the point. If the show’s not scary we haven’t succeeded.”⁴⁰ Surnow argues that perhaps less extreme measures work but “America wants the war on terror fought by Jack Bauer,”⁴¹ especially by the most extreme measures, much as 1970s audiences craved *Dirty Harry*’s rogue approach to law and order.

Yet, Sutherland, the show’s star, told a reporter he was against “waterboarding and electric torture and anything of that ilk,” and surprised anyone could confuse what happens on a television show with reality, especially when “historically [torture] is not proven to be very effective,” especially for a country with “a moral responsibility to set the standard of what is acceptable and appropriate.”⁴² Both Surnow and Sutherland resort to the “just entertainment” defense, which attempts to distance Hollywood products from the same ideologically rich mythologies they simultaneously leverage to appeal to mainstream audiences.

Equally as troubling are Bauer’s relationships with American presidents on the show. As this book argues, rogue characters have long been

exploited by presidents to enhance their political capital and to tap into the people's embrace of popular culture icons and their associative meanings. With presidents such as David Palmer (Dennis Haysbert) and Taylor, it is Bauer who exploits *them*, as they serve as his alter ego. Moreover, it seems more than coincidental that the presidents most willing to yield to Bauer are those who represent Americans still struggling for equal footing—a (white) female (who resigned) and an African American male (finally assassinated after two failed attempts). Compared to Bauer's freedom to dispense with the rule of law (with impunity), these presidents are impotent, despite being the so-called leaders of the free world.⁴³ As such, it is Bauer who represents the more dependable figure—more than elected officials, seasoned generals, and other highly trained law enforcement agents who inhabit the series. In other words, to be effective, the idealized American patriot must work outside the very system he is charged with defending and often wage war on his own government—one depicted as increasingly at odds with its “we the people” foundations.

It is a corrosive contradiction that relies on a perennial state of emergency capable of eroding democratic processes and fostering an ever-escalating disrespect for the rule of law. In so doing, such fictions make a mockery of the very American values rogues like Bauer profess to be willing to die defending. Rather than rooted in the exigencies of dire circumstances, Bauer and his behaviors risk becoming the new normal. During the series' peak, Bauer's approach was reminiscent of the oft-misquoted expression reportedly uttered by an American major during the Vietnam conflict, noting how he had to destroy the village to save the village.⁴⁴ That village, though, Bauer was shown both burning and saving risked ultimately boxing the Hollywood rogue into a corner, from which he (and the America that loves him) may never recover.

Racism in America: Police and Homegrown Terrorism

While Bauer was off saving America from foreign terrorists and homegrown traitors, the American homefront remained terrorized by racism. Like Dirty Harry's San Francisco of the late 1960s, Los Angeles, especially

starting in the 1990s, represented a symbolic and literal battleground that pitted the LAPD against an increasingly agitated African American community. After an all-white suburban jury found four white LAPD officers not-guilty in 1992 of using excessive force on black motorist Rodney King—whose beating was caught on videotape—riots erupted in South Central Los Angeles. Following three days of violence, more than 50 people were dead, roughly four thousand injured, 12,000 arrested, and roughly \$1 billion in property damage. As with previous insurrections, most of the damage occurred in the city's already beleaguered neighborhoods, with “echo” riots rippling across other inner cities around the country, making clear the conditions that sparked the late 1960s riots had remained essentially unchanged.⁴⁵

This rupture was followed by the O.J. Simpson trial in 1994, which again exposed duplicity within the LAPD, along with shining a spotlight on the nation's perennial problem with racism.⁴⁶ After the Simpson trials (a later civil trial found him culpable), a Gallup poll reported that roughly three-quarters of both blacks and whites remained pessimistic about race relations in America, which reversed the optimism that surged in the wake of the civil rights movement two decades earlier (polls conducted in 2018 suggest such attitudes have only slightly improved).⁴⁷

Another blow came with the Rampart scandal of the late 1990s, again implicating the LAPD and involving a group of elite anti-gang squads that were investigated for their astounding success, eventually revealed to have relied heavily on falsifying reports, framing innocent people, drug dealing, and seriously brutalizing suspects.⁴⁸ Although up to eighty officers were involved, in keeping with Hollywood's penchant for telling the stories about lone heroes and isolated monsters, the Hollywood products that emerged in the 2000s reduced the list of suspects to a chosen (and highly racialized) few. While the Rampart scandal included many Latino officers, two of the stories below feature two WASP heroes and one black villainous cop, who becomes the personification of evil—perhaps not a coincidence given their post 9/11 timing and the valiant return of the white knight. Like the *Traffic/Traffick* stories in the last chapter, a comparative analysis of these three Rampart-related stories is the most efficient and revelatory way to tease out what the stories share and where they diverge, especially with respect to the characters' racial identity.

***Dark Blue's* White Knight**

Dark Blue (2003) tracks the ordeal of white cop Eldon Perry (Kurt Russell), a rogue detective with an elite unit of the LAPD charged with investigating high profile cases. Convinced he acts in the service of a higher order of justice, he routinely plants evidence, fabricates records, and violates suspects' rights, doing the dirty work he thinks the bureaucrats and courts refuse to do. Once Perry discovers that his white boss and surrogate father, Jack Van Meter (Brendan Gleeson), also his father's former partner, is deploying Perry's methods simply to make himself rich, Perry embarks on a mission to expose Van Meter and make things right, even if it means going to prison himself. Their showdown plays out against the backdrop of the 1992 Los Angeles riots.

Early in the film a nervous Perry listens to news reports about the trial of the four LAPD officers. Even a pair of low-level criminals, the black Darryl Orchard (Kurupt) and the white Gary Sidwell (Dash Mihok) discuss the trial before holding up a Korean-owned market, where they kill four people. Their crime is intercut with a police review board listening to the false testimonies of Perry and his white rookie partner, Bobby Keough (Scott Speedman), who shot and killed a suspect. After the meeting, Perry assures Keough, (also Van Meter's nephew), that what really matters is that "the bullets were in the bad guys."⁴⁹ Arthur Holland (Ving Rhames), a high-ranking black police official, sits on the board and asks the toughest questions, revealing his scorn for Perry as Van Meter's goon, and eventually declaring war on both of them. While driving around the city, despite the smoky haze from fires and looters crisscrossing the road, Perry spots Orchard and Sidwell in a car, then watches as the white Sidwell is dragged out and beaten to death on the street. Orchard runs off but Perry eventually catches up with him and threatens to kill him unless he confesses to working with Van Meter.

Rather than a shoot-out, the film's finale features Perry's public confession and indictment of Van Meter—his last-minute turn toward serving the greater good. The context is a ceremony to promote Perry to lieutenant, occurring despite the city's security breakdown. Perry begins his speech by congratulating his "four fellow officers" on their acquittal, the camera catching both clapping hands and the glares of mostly officers of

color. In what director Ron Shelton calls a “wonderfully messy cathartic act of redemption,” Perry paints a stark portrait of an underappreciated, overworked cop, who “is the last person a civilian wants to see until some shitbag shoves a gun in his face.”⁵⁰ The department was his “family’s business since Los Angeles was a frontier township,” with Perry recalling his grandfather’s stories about bringing horse thieves and rustlers back from the mountains on the back of his Appaloosa. After the advent of squad cars and traffic signals, his father joined the force, and “preyed on the predators that preyed on the city.”⁵¹ There was never a question that Perry would be a cop, a teenager during the 1965 Watts riots, he recalls how he watched his father take “potshots” at looters with a deer rifle, with Perry having “winged” one who ran back into the burning building just before it collapsed, most likely burning alive. “I was raised up to be a gunfighter by a family of gunfighters,” he confesses, ashamed but still boastful.⁵²

While Van Meter desperately tries to stop Perry’s tirade, a reporter, long suspecting the collusion, promises to print Perry’s speech “word for word.” In the film’s closing moments, after Holland has escorted a handcuffed Perry outside, the two notice parts of the city burning in the distance, with a close-up of Perry’s face expressing utter despair. Perry’s final, long-winded confession comes too late to save the man, but arrives in time to salvage the moral hero he personifies and the myths he supports. Like Ethan Edwards, Perry is the fall guy and the ugly American who must perform the “unpleasant tasks so that the majority of people are free to perform pleasant ones.”⁵³ The words belong to Van Meter but aptly voice the rationale that Perry, another incarnation of the rogue, lives (and falls) by.

The film’s race consciousness also goes well beyond a single character, permeating the smallest details to the most sweeping themes, including having the riots serve as the dramatic backdrop. Racially charged language laces many scenes, including one in which Perry speculates about Holland’s possible departure to Cleveland as its chief, predicting that the LAPD has to “pin his stars on another brother or the community will go ape shit.”⁵⁴ This theme of animals recurs, including Perry’s shout out to a black male he wants to interrogate: “Hey, you, in the gorilla suit.” Another example is Van Meter’s lie to Perry, telling him that two “coloreds” committed the Korean market crimes to deflect attention away from his

black-and-white thugs. Perry responds by calling the crimes “monkey-shines,” before heading to South Central to “rattle some cages.”⁵⁵

Perry critically re-establishes himself as a force of good, but which does little to erase the accumulation of racist references that remain largely uncontested. Shelton, better known for his sports films (e.g., *Bull Durham*), asserts that “the story doesn’t really have anything to do with the Rodney King riots, [but] it actually has everything to do with it. You’re talking about a corrupt LAPD scandal [and] that’s why the city’s on fire.”⁵⁶ However, like marauding natives in a western, beyond their symbolism as threat, further specificity is left out and racialized rage remains the story’s “straw man.” Even Shelton concludes, “this is not a movie about civil rights, it’s a movie about Eldon Perry.” The factors of his identity, though, are no more an accident than the gender and race of the rioters.

Although the beating of King is the event that sparks the violent chain of events, his ordeal is reduced to a snippet of video at the film’s start, while Sidwell’s gruesome death restages a horrifying incident in which several black men viciously beat a white man dragged out of a vehicle—in reality, truck driver Reginald Denney.⁵⁷ Shelton describes the scene as “hard to watch,” but hoping it captures the lunacy of riots that he describes as having descended from justifiable social rage into madness. In Shelton’s view such “madness,” then, is best captured by recreating just one example of black-on-white violence. Shelton, who intended to indict the corrupt system that spawned Perry, also praises Perry’s methods, noting, “there are things [Perry] will do that we would never do but that help make the world safer.” Key to both his and Russell’s participation in the film, they explain, was that there be “a good guy there,” who has “just gone wrong,” but still available for redemption.⁵⁸

In scenes involving Perry and officers of the court, Shelton wanted to depict the insidious nature of how “the real violence of the system’s corruption” takes place behind the doors of “a bureaucratic office [and its] white walls.”⁵⁹ Such an exposé would represent a profound intervention in Hollywood and American storytelling, but that intent gets hopelessly lost in the romantic framework of the western tropes that Shelton employs. Even he concedes, “If you took out the cars it could be ... 1870 in Tombstone.”⁶⁰ The 1992 riots not only frame LA as an untamed frontier environment, but as he suggests, even a “third world city” engaged

in a “civil war” that resembles “Beirut or Bosnia.”⁶¹ With these metaphors in mind, the film’s cinematographer searched for “the ugliest places in Los Angeles” that could best convey an urban apocalypse begging for a gunfighter to remedy and Perry becomes that “gunfighter cop in the Wild West of LA.”⁶²

As film critic Ty Burr notes, “[T]he problem with movies like *Dark Blue* is that they willfully ignore the systemic, historical, cultural, and class causes of racism in favor of pinning it all on a few bad apples. Sure, that’s entertainment. It’s also a lie.”⁶³ Shelton too invokes the “just entertainment” defense, telling one interviewer, “I don’t take a particularly morally superior view in all this, I’m just a storyteller.”⁶⁴

***Training Day’s* Black Menace**

The next film, *Training Day* (2001), features a similarly Rampart-inspired LAPD cop, Alonzo Harris, as portrayed by Denzel Washington. While Perry is available for redemption, despite his criminality, Harris is killed in the end by his white protégé, Jake Hoyt (Ethan Hawke)—an ambitious rookie who initially wanted to learn from Harris, but eventually discovers Harris to be less a crimefighter who uses criminal means to attain a noble end and more an ignoble criminal who has crossed the thin blue line forever.

Like Perry, Harris is protected by potent (and white) political and departmental accomplices known as the “three wise men,” including a well-placed detective, a captain, and a member of the district attorney’s office. The film also includes mention of what Harris terms that “Rodney King shit,” but also how the Rampart scandal has made it “open season on misconduct,” with one of Harris’s protectors warning him not to end up “on the front page like those other assholes.”⁶⁵ While Perry takes down the most corrupt department official, Harris is the only criminal cop who pays for such sins. Along the way, Hoyt balks at Harris’s methods that include stealing a drug dealer’s cash and claims that he became a cop “to put away ... the criminals, not to be one.”⁶⁶ Sounding eerily similar to Roosevelt’s advice on how to defeat a savage (and Alejandro’s wolf in *Sicario*), Harris explains, “I walk a higher path, son,” and “to protect the sheep, you got to catch the wolf. And it takes a wolf to catch a wolf.”⁶⁷



Fig. 8.2 Det. Alonzo Harris (Denzel Washington), an redeemable criminal rogue. Screen shot from *Training Day*, Warner Bros

One of *Training Day's* producers, Jeff Silver, explains that the film's central theme asks: "Which do we want more: effective police or police who follow the letter of the law?"⁶⁸ echoing the arguments forwarded by Shelton and Russell with *Dark Blue*. *Training Day* similarly invokes (then sidesteps) the fallout from the public's insistence on law and order, but which often means tolerating more aggressive police—a theme first forcefully invoked in *Dirty Harry*. Since *Training Day* hit theaters almost simultaneous to the events of September 11, director Anton Fuqua also notes that Hoyt's "mission" is now more important than ever, with Harris as a metaphor for terrorism, whether foreign or homegrown (Fig. 8.2).⁶⁹

Although Harris is remarkably similar in deed and action to Perry, with both screenplays written by David Ayer, Harris is outcast from the ranks of previous rogue warriors who were sanctioned to perform such dirty tasks, as he is depicted in *Training Day* as more black than blue—the betrayal of his badge making it possible to reject him, and by extension, reinforce America's long-standing rejection of his race as well. In contrast, Perry, despite ending up in handcuffs and admitting to a heinous string of crimes, is assumed to be a hero at his core.

Another similarity to Shelton's aim for *Dark Blue* is Fuqua's search for the most ravaged locales to approximate an uncivilized Los Angeles on the brink of war, with Harris's inner city haunt called "the Jungle," while Hoyt's home is situated in the comfortable suburbs. Also like Sheldon, Fuqua was interested in capturing an urban story in the spirit of the western; and like Peckinpah's western, he describes Harris's crew as his own "wild bunch,"⁷⁰ including rapper Dr. Dre as Paul, another black cop with a violent temper.⁷¹ Fuqua admits he was "drawn to the script because it reminded me of the great cop dramas of the seventies."⁷²

Many reviewers also mention the film's nod to its cinematic ancestors, with one calling it "dirtier than Clint Eastwood's *Dirty Harry*."⁷³ The white savior pitted against the black deviant, though, did not go unnoticed when *Training Day* was prescreened for the National Association of Black Journalists.⁷⁴ It is most likely not the intent of filmmakers to tell stories that compound racism, especially given that Fuqua is African American. Rather, as mentioned above, it is the case that these films follow a well-worn path, littered with established mythologies, and which are themselves racially skewed. Although these above representations and the fates of these specific black and white characters seem highly individuated, they follow a familiar logic—one steeped in the larger social context and that fit neatly along a value-laden historical continuum, which is essentially mapped onto these characters along with suggested interpretations of their actions.

***The Shield's* Unredeemable Rogue**

Finally, the LAPD Rampart scandal inspired the television series, *The Shield*, with producer Shawn Ryan attesting to having followed news reports of "these awful things the CRASH unit was doing in the Rampart district," and thinking they would make an interesting series. The series opens with media reports about the city's most dangerous district now experiencing declining crime rates, with Vic Mackay (Michael Chiklis)—another Scotch-Irish everyman—and his crew of white males given credit for the results. Quickly on display is Mackay's contempt for Capt. David Aceveda (Benito Martinez), who demands Mackay's reports on his desk

the next day. A smug Mackay fires back, “I don’t answer to you ... not even on Cinco de Mayo,” taking a racist jab at the captain’s ethnicity, along with chiding the ambitious Aceveda for his media appearances taking credit for the unit’s success. Mackay claims to answer to someone more powerful in the department, publicly disrespecting the captain for having no street experience and having been promoted, as the captain sums up the rumors, for being “the right color at the right time.”

The plot also includes the struggle to find a young girl who has been sold to a child molester by her crack addict father—already being questioned by a competent but traditional detective. The captain scraps that approach and brings in Mackay who beats up the suspect who then reveals vital information, as is the custom in Hollywood storytelling; this also makes Aceveda complicit in Mackay’s coercive tactics and foils his attempt to rein in Mackay. Rather than settle for depicting Mackay as a redeemable rogue whose good deeds outweigh his methods in “emergency” situations, the show takes a much darker turn, with the episode also showing the FBI’s effort to nab Mackay, whom Aceveda once described as “Al Capone with a badge.” To others in the precinct, Mackay seems untouchable, as Det. Claudette Wyms (CCH Pounder) explains how little anyone cares as long as crime is down and if that means “some cop roughs up some spic or some nigger in the ghetto, well, as far as most people are concerned, it’s don’t ask, don’t tell.”⁷⁵ When Det. Terry Crowley (Reed Diamond) joins Mackay’s crew, whom Mackey suspects is the FBI snitch that he is, Mackey behaves in a way no redeemable rogue had done before: he kills Crowley as casually as he killed a drug dealer just seconds before. To show the act’s premeditation, Mackay makes sure to use the dealer’s gun to kill Crowley.

Reviews for the show’s premier episode ranged from “a stunning piece of television about a rogue cop” to liking it to “a cop version of *The Sopranos*.” One pegged it as “darker than *NYPD Blue*” and the Rampart scandal without “the indictments.” Moreover, as the show’s producer admitted in an interview, once the first episode showed Mackay as a cop killer, he too wondered where to take the story after that, admitting that he and his writers deliberated about “where the line could and should be” for Mackay’s subsequent actions. Given the character’s popularity, how-

ever, “It almost didn’t matter what we had Vic do, people had just decided that they liked him and wanted to see what he could get away with.” Ryan explains that 98 percent of the time Mackey is “doing the right thing—it’s the other two percent that makes us sit up and say, ‘whoa, that’s not right.’”⁷⁶

Earning critical notices and strong ratings, the show lasted seven seasons, with Chicklis winning an Emmy in 2002 for his embodiment of Mackay. Knowing the series was coming to an end, Ryan concedes that he and his FX network boss wanted to present the finale as a Shakespearean tragedy, returning to the “original sin” committed in the pilot meant to expose the “rotten core” of these “urban cowboys.”⁷⁷ In the series finale, crew member Shane Vendrell (Walton Goggins) kills himself but not before poisoning his pregnant wife and young son—a murder-suicide that even rattles Mackay. As Mackay’s fate grows dim, he first tries to cut a deal with Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE, to deliver a notorious drug dealer in exchange for immunity for his past actions (committing acts quite similar to those of the actual Rampart officers). After Mackay’s ex-wife and children are taken into witness protection in exchange for her cooperation, Mackay is further devastated, having been shown as a doting father to his three children—two of them dealing with autism.

The most harrowing blow, though, and a daring move on the part of the show’s creators, is to depict the consequences when Mackay’s plea deal plays out. The final episode shows him reporting to work for ICE but learning he will not be on the street but confined to a cubicle producing detailed reports on case files. “This is not what I signed up for,” he rails. “I don’t do desks.” In the closing moments, having traded in his leather jacket for an off-the-rack suit, he lines his desk with framed pictures of his kids while another stack of files is dropped on his desk. He looks gutted, tears welling up in his eyes, following the sound of a distant siren to the window, where he looks out at a city he once thought of as his turf, run his way. It seems a fitting albeit tragic end for a cowboy cop whose last act is to grab the gun he has hidden in his desk, stare at it, then stuff it in his waistband on his way out—either to continue his way of doing things or to realize its irrelevance in his new role.

Notes

1. “Transcript of President Bush’s Address,” *CNN*, September 21, 2001. Available online.
2. *24*, Season 1, episode 24, “11:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.,” directed by Stephen Hopkins, aired on May 21, 2002.
3. *24*, Season 9, episode 12, “Day 9: 10:00 p.m.–11:00 a.m.,” directed by Jon Casser, aired on July 14, 2014.
4. *24*, Season 4, episode 24, “Day 4: 6:00 a.m.–7:00 a.m.,” directed by Jon Casser, aired on May 23, 2005.
5. *24*, Season 1, episode 1, “12:00 a.m.–1:00 a.m.,” directed by Stephen Hopkins, aired on November 6, 2001.
6. *24*, Season 1, episode 4, “3:00 a.m.–4:00 a.m.,” directed by Winrich Kolbe, aired on November 27, 2001.
7. *24*, Season 2, episode 1, “Day 2: 8:00 a.m.–9:00 a.m.,” directed by Jon Casser, aired on October 29, 2002.
8. *24*, Season 5, episode 24, “Day 5: 6:00 a.m.–7:00 a.m.,” directed by Jon Casser, aired on May 22, 2006.
9. *24*, Season 7, episode 18, “Day 7: 1:00 a.m.–2:00 a.m.,” directed by Brad Turner, aired on April 13, 2009.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*
12. *24*, Season 8, episode 19, “Day 8: 10:00 a.m.–11:00 a.m.,” directed by Michael Klick, aired on April 26, 2010.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *24*, Season 8, episode 24, “Day 8: 3:00 p.m.–4:00 p.m.,” directed by Brad Turner, aired on May 24, 2010.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Ibid.*
18. *24*, Season 4, episode 24.
19. *24*, Season 7, episode 24, “Day 7: 7:00 a.m.–8:00 a.m.,” directed by Jon Casser, aired on May 18, 2009.
20. Television Academy, “58th Emmy Awards—Nominations and Winners,” 2006, <http://www.emmys.com/awards/nominees-winners/2006>.
21. Blair Marnell, “15 Years of *24*: The Legacy of Jack Bauer,” November 6, 2016. Available online at nerdist.com.
22. *24*, Season 7, episode 1, “Day 7: 8:00 a.m.–9:00 a.m.,” directed by Jon Casser, aired on November 11, 2009.

23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. Scott Shane, "Terror and Power: Bush Takes a Step Back," *The New York Times*, July 12, 2006. Also see the U.S. Supreme Court case, *Hamdan v. Rumsfeld*, on which the article is based. Available online at supreme-court.gov. Also see "Summary of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and Their Additional Protocols," *International Humanitarian Law*, April 2011. Available at redcross.org.
26. Brendan Dougherty, "What Would Jack Bauer Do?" *The American Conservative*, March 12, 2007.
27. See [youtube.com \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LrsQPK-GrDw\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LrsQPK-GrDw); and discussed in Mike Dillon, "Bauer Power: *24* and the Making of an American," *Reconstruction*, 11, no. 4.
28. Asawin Suebsaeng argues that *24* could also be framed as a "liberal narrative." The second season was an "anti-war, anti-racism saga," depicting the fallout if Muslim-American communities were interned in camps. Other seasons featured the impact of bogus intelligence to justify military action and critiques of defense contractors. Asawin Suebsaeng, "Torture-Heavy *24* was Actually a Pretty Damn Liberal TV Show," *Mother Jones*, May 2, 2014.
29. "Presidential Candidate Donald Trump at The Family Leadership Summit," July 18, 2015. Available online at c-span.org, October 28, 2015.
30. Dan Froomkin, "Duped About Torture," *Washington Post*, April 21, 2008.
31. Tom Regan, "Does '*24*' Encourage US Interrogators to 'Torture' Detainees?" *The Christian Science Monitor*, February 12, 2007.
32. Ali Soufan, "I Interrogated the Top Terrorist in US Custody. Then the CIA Came to Town," *The Guardian*, December 14, 2014. Available online.
33. Ibid.
34. Report of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Committee Study of the Central Intelligence Agency's Detention and Interrogation Program, December 9, 2014. Available online at intelligence.senate.gov.
35. International Committee of the Red Cross, "ICRC Report on the Treatment of Fourteen 'High Value Detainees' in CIA Custody," February 2007. Available online at <http://www.nybooks.com/media/doc/2010/04/22/icrc-report.pdf>.
36. Central Intelligence Agency, "CIA Fact Sheet Regarding the SSCI Study on the Former Detention and Interrogation Program," December 9, 2014. Available online.

37. Government Publishing Office. Available online at govinfo.gov. Executive Order EO 13491, January 22, 2009.
38. Karen J. Greenberg, *Rogue Justice: The Making of the Security State* (New York: Broadway Books, 2016).
39. Jennifer Hart Weed, Richard Davis, and Ronald Weed, *24 and Philosophy: The World According to Jack* (Blackwell Publishing, 2008).
40. John Patterson, "We're Trafficking in Fear," *The Guardian*, January 22, 2007.
41. Jane Mayer, "Whatever It Takes: The Politics of the Man Behind '24,'" *The New Yorker*, February 19, 2007.
42. Jen Yamato, "Kiefer Sutherland: 'I'm Very Much Against Waterboarding,'" *Daily Beast*, February 18, 2016. Available online at thedailybeast.com.
43. The 25th Amendment is invoked three times in the series against the fictional presidents David Palmer, his brother Wayne Palmer, and John Keeler.
44. Peter Arnett, reporting from Vietnam during the Tet Offensive, claims a military officer uttered the phrase. The phrase, whether factual or contrived, has entered the American lexicon about the illogic of war and is frequently used as a metaphor for military overreach that does more harm than good.
45. See "Understanding the Riots: Los Angeles Before and After the Rodney King Case," *Los Angeles Times*, 1992 and James D. Delk, *Fires & Furies: The Los Angeles Riots of 1992* (Palm Springs, CA: ETC Publications, 1995). The federal government eventually convicted the four officers of violating King's civil rights. I worked for the *Los Angeles Times* at the time and share in the Pulitzer Prize awarded the newspaper for its spot news reporting of the riots.
46. During the trial, the anger of black jurors (and their nullification of prosecutorial evidence) focused on exposing a larger truth about recurring patterns of racial bias in the LAPD, which the prosecution arrogantly dismissed and much of white America ignored.
47. According to a *CNN/USA Today*/Gallup poll reported by CNN, "Pessimism Grows Over Race Relations," October 4, 1995. Available online. For more recent reports, see "Poll: 64 percent of Americans Say Racism Remains a Major Problem," *NBC News*, May 29, 2018. Also see a March 2018 Gallup poll, "Race Relations." All available online.
48. See "The Rampart Scandal," *Frontline*, WBGH Educational Foundation, March 18, 1997. Available online.
49. *Dark Blue*, DVD, directed by Ron Shelton (MGM Home Entertainment, 2003).

50. Ron Shelton, Director's Commentary, *Dark Blue*, DVD.
51. *Dark Blue*, DVD.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid.
56. Ron Shelton, *Dark Blue*.
57. In the Denney case, several black bystanders attempt to come to his aid and eventually call emergency services.
58. Quoted in Jack Foley, "Dark Blue—Ron Shelton Q & A," 2003. See http://www.indielondon.co.uk/film/dark_blue_sheltonQ&A.html.
59. Shelton, Director's Commentary, *Dark Blue*, DVD.
60. Ibid. Also, Russell starred in *Tombstone* (1993) as Wyatt Earp—another reluctant sheriff called to duty.
61. Shelton, Director's Commentary, *Dark Blue*, DVD.
62. Ibid.
63. Ty Burr, "Good Cop/Bad Cop: *Dark Blue* Gives Pale Portrayal of Racism," *Boston Globe*, February 21, 2003, C6.
64. Quoted in Foley, *Dark Blue*.
65. *Training Day*, DVD. For a comprehensive account of the Rampart scandal, see *Los Angeles Times*, March 30, 2001. Also see Earl Ofari Hutchinson, "Black Cops No Antidote to Police Violence," *New Journal and Guide*, November 9, 2000, 1. Hutchinson explains that the government attributed its lack of prosecutions to the blue "code of silence" shared by Latino and black cops, who are no more anxious to report misconduct than white officers.
66. Ibid.
67. Ibid.
68. "Training Day: Production Information," Available online at cinema.com.
69. Fuqua, Director's Commentary, *Training Day*, DVD.
70. "Training Day: Production Information," Available online at cinema.com.
71. Kenneth Turan, Review of *Training Day*, *Los Angeles Times*, October 5, 2001, available at *Los Angeles Times* <http://www.calendarlive.com/movies/reviews>.
72. "Training Day: Production Information," Available online at cinema.com.
73. Michael Wilmington, "Review of *Training Day*," October 4, 2001. Available online at movies.zap2it.com.

74. See Jay Boyar, "Less Than Role Model," *Houston Chronicle*, September 30, 2001, 10.
75. *The Shield*, Season 1, episode 1, "Pilot," directed by Clark Johnson, aired on March 12, 2002, FX Network.
76. Derek Lawrence, "The Shield: Creator Shawn Ryan on the Possibility of a Revival," *Entertainment Weekly*, March 14, 2017.
77. Ibid.



9

Recruiting the Other as Globocop

*This isn't the arrangement we made, Carrie ... you weren't supposed to ...
take matters into your own hands, break the law.*

Reda Hashem

I'm sorry, Reda, I fucked up.

Carrie Mathison, *Homeland*

As the theme of global terrorism continued to dominate crime stories in Hollywood, eventually the Other was called to duty by the early 2010s, including those Americans who differ from the white male norm by race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and/or sexual orientation. Many of these new globocops were often perceived outside US borders as Americans first, their “difference” minimized despite its persistence back home. Such an apparent embrace of diversity also helps to justify America’s claims to world stewardship and reaffirm its commitment to what Roosevelt once dubbed a new American race. This chapter investigates how far the ethnic or gendered Other can go in embodying rogue agents in the same environment that nurtured last chapter’s Jack Bauer or Eldon Perry.

Vin Diesel: The Multicultural Globocop

Vin Diesel had been singled out in the early 2000s as part of “a nascent constellation of stars whose melting-pot backgrounds and features seem to [be] resonating deeply with young moviegoers of all colors. Hollywood has seen the future of the action hero, and it’s multiethnic.”¹ Diesel, who insists on cloaking his racial-ethnic makeup, has enough “color” to be perceived as a racial Other, while being white enough to make him acceptable as an American action hero. Latino marketing specialist Santiago Pozo proclaimed in 2002, “In the past, John Wayne and Jimmy Stewart were the face of America . . . Today it’s The Rock or Vin Diesel.”² Diesel describes himself as “multicultural,”³ and his insistence on ambiguity (even calling his production company *One Race*), has not stopped others from obsessing over his identity, some suggesting he is black as well as Italian, perhaps even Latino.⁴ Diesel’s refusal to define himself also irritates many minority communities that wish to claim him as one of their own.⁵ Kobena Mercer warns that attempts to transform former racial and ethnic identities into some politically amorphous blend does little to disturb existing hierarchies of identity that continue to produce “othering.”⁶ Like Garcia, Diesel has also portrayed nearly as many Italian American characters as those deemed “brown,” enabling whiteness to compromise without being wholly supplanted. Before making *XXX*, Diesel had played an Italian American soldier in *Saving Private Ryan* (1998) and another Italian American character, Dominic Toretto, in the mega-hit, *The Fast and the Furious* (2001).⁷

Diesel took his turn as the American-outlaw-turned-crimefighting-hero, Xander Cage (Vin Diesel), in the hit 2002 film, *XXX*, which expanded his star power and earning him (and his character) inclusion in this book.⁸ The film tells the story of Cage’s entrée into government service, having first earned international fame as an action sports outlaw, and now deemed the ideal candidate to stop a Prague-based terrorist group plotting a global attack. G-man Augustus Gibbons (Samuel L. Jackson) first “recruits” Cage by blackmailing him with a prison sentence for stealing a car belonging to a right-wing politician.⁹ After Cage passes a series of tests to verify his intelligence and moral character, he

successfully infiltrates a band of former Russian soldiers by posing as an American importer of stolen cars (they traffic in). The terrorists call themselves “Anarchy 99,” referring to the year they deserted their army’s losing battle in Chechnya. Using Prague as a base, they intend to launch a fierce biological weapon to set off a global war, counting on each nation-state to blame each other and bring about mutually assured destruction. The group has tricked a group of Russian scientists into developing the weapon—a binary nerve agent called “Silent Night” for the ability to kill millions of people silently and bloodlessly. Gibbons, having already lost three agents, believes Cage’s inherent lawlessness is better suited to best such an unpredictable foe. As Gibbons puts it, deploy one of America’s “best and . . . brightest . . . from the bottom of the barrel.”¹⁰

Since Cage is not a trained agent, with shooting experience limited to video games, he must master a cache of lethal weapons, and his ability and audacity to shoot a perfect “splatter” dart at a Czech cop is what convinces Anarchy 99’s leader that he can be trusted. But Cage also demonstrates a degree of restraint to avoid needlessly killing, prompting one reviewer to note that although Cage is presented as a “brute,” he also has “no urge to kill” until after he appropriately shifts “from nihilist to patriot.”¹¹ Like rogues before him, if the end goals are deemed noble, any means—legal or otherwise—are justified. Once Cage witnesses the biological weapon used on the very scientists who perfected it, he is properly horrified and becomes a killing machine, transforming from a social outcast to the nation’s (and the world’s) defender.

In promotional interviews, *XXX* director Rob Cohen, who also directed Diesel in *The Fast and the Furious*, explained how Cage represented America’s favorite type of reluctant hero—“not a patriot” at first but convinced in time of his country’s need for him. When first approached by Gibbons for such a dangerous mission, Cage initially balks, noting, “Look at me. Do I look like a fan of law enforcement?”¹² But Gibbons presses on, explaining to Cage (whom he describes to others as “dangerous . . . and uncivilized”) that “this is your chance to pay back your Uncle Sam for all the wonderful freedoms you enjoy.”¹³ Having a black G-man be the one to remind Cage of their unified mission—and how it is the cost to maintain “freedom”—helps perpetuate the myth of a united (or post-racial) America, one no longer obsessed with race when faced with

global terror and away from home. Given the film's timing, within a year of the events of September 11, Cohen also asserted, "The spy adventure movie is aligning correctly with the zeitgeist of our time," with Cohen predicting that such "intelligence agents" and heroes like Cage "will become more important" in the future.¹⁴

Female Spies as Globocops

White female crimefighters, too, were soon called to duty, especially as spies and agents to help combat global terrorism. Like Diesel, their gendered difference becomes somewhat minimized when dispatched across US borders, where they can be clearly marked as Americans with the chance to perform the nation and represent its security interests abroad. Although such roles discussed below indicate a measure of forward progress and an expansion of the scope and depth of female representations, their effectiveness is again contained by several familiar limitations, including the need to be physically attractive and to remain overly concerned with issues related to the private versus the public sphere.

Television, in particular, was generally first to embrace the appeal of "secret agent women," offering *Alias* (2001–2006), the hit television show on ABC that made Jennifer Garner a star for her portrayal of Sydney Bristow,¹⁵ a graduate student recruited by SD-6—a criminal operation that defected from the CIA. After the group kills her fiancé, she seeks revenge by going to work for the CIA, which is targeting SD-6 but also employing her father; a further wrinkle is her mother as a long-time KGB operative. Besides revenge being more a motivating factor than patriotic duty, several reviewers also offered his or her own iteration of the show as "action escapism." In the first episode, Brostow is disguised in a red wig and being tortured and interrogated by Chinese operatives, leading *Slate's* June Thomas to ask: "Danger, deception, foreign travel—what's not to love?"¹⁶

A later television offering, this time for the USA Network, is *Covert Affairs* (2010–2014), featuring CIA operative Annie Walker (Piper Perabo), who works for the clandestine Domestic Protection Division and poses as a curator and researcher for the Smithsonian. Jeff Stein of

the *Washington Post* credited the series for its “conscientious effort to portray the tricks of the intelligence trade with greater verisimilitude than ... the cartoon-like 24.”¹⁷ The greater emphasis, though, is on its lead character’s attractiveness, whose appeal is as much rooted in her stellar wardrobe and Louboutin heels as her crimefighting skills.

Kathryn Bigelow’s Action Films

Director Kathryn Bigelow created a much more significant female CIA operative in the Oscar-nominated film, *Zero Dark Thirty* (2012), but she had already earned respect for earlier actions films, including *Point Break* (1991) with Patrick Swayze, *K-11: The Widowmaker* (2002) with Harrison Ford, and *The Hurt Locker* (2010) with Jeremy Renner. The latter film showcased the harrowing work of an elite bomb squad during the Iraq War that earned Academy Awards for Best Picture and Best Director, with Bigelow the first female in Hollywood history to do so. Her resume also included an earlier portrait of a female cop in the 1991 film, *Blue Steel*, putting the director’s gender and that of her protagonist in the spotlight for its further disturbance of the male-heavy genre on both sides of the camera.

Blue Steel is about rookie cop Megan Turner (Jamie Lee Curtis), who, on her first patrol, kills a man holding up a grocery store. Commodities trader Eugene Hunt (Ron Silver) witnesses the shooting while taking cover on the floor, where he also finds the thief’s weapon that he keeps for himself. Since no weapon is found at the scene, Turner is suspended for using excessive force against an unarmed man. The psychotic Hunt, who hears troubling inner voices, uses the thief’s gun to kill random targets, with police finding bullet casings at crime scenes etched with Turner’s name, thereafter enlisting her as “bait” to catch the killer. Meanwhile, an unsuspecting Turner meets Hunt, who begins romancing her, until he incriminates himself during an intimate embrace, sparking the first of many attempts by her to arrest him—all failing for a lack of evidence and her word compromised by having dated him. After killing Turner’s best friend and shooting her lover, he also rapes Turner, who then methodically tracks and kills him in a violent, western-style shoot-out.

Bigelow includes interrogations of Turner's relationships with men as a steady source of betrayal: an abusive father, a boss who doubts her fitness as a cop, a detective assigned to her (given the literal surname of Mann) who fails to protect her, and her intimate tormenter who stalks her using a Dirty Harry-style Magnum. The film's opening credits and several scenes fetishize Turner's gun and blue uniform—both traditional symbols of masculine authority. Yet, Bigelow's film disappointed some scholars looking to a female director to create more of what Christine Gledhill terms a feminist universe.¹⁸ They questioned Turner's violence against Hunt, which ultimately invited comparisons to the Dirty Harry model of male behavior.¹⁹ Bigelow concedes that *Blue Steel* was meant to be a cross between *Fatal Attraction* and *Dirty Harry*,²⁰ with several mainstream critics noting the homage, dubbing Turner a "female Dirty Harry."²¹ As discussed in Chap. 5, such expectations engage a type of essentialism that limits the range of female behaviors, especially within crime films. My criticism is not with Turner's use of violence, but her motives, seeking revenge more than justice. Hunt is dangerous but appreciably different from Callahan's Scorpio, who kills at random and selects targets from among the same social outcasts whom Callahan is dispatched to protect, however reluctantly. Hunt, on the other hand, is isolated from social cause or cultural excuse, which by extension, strips Turner of her moral license and mythological cover. By ignoring the thin blue line separating rogue from vigilante, and opting to stress the latter, Bigelow forfeits her character's sense of higher purpose. No doubt, as discussed earlier, this line is often drawn on shifting sands, but there is usually a space dusted off for the white male rogue to find firm enough ground to take a stand, turning private darkness into public light.

Zero Dark Thirty

At the time of its release, Bigelow's *Zero Dark Thirty* represented one of the first major Hollywood productions by a male or female director to tackle the story of Osama bin Laden's demise. It is told from the perspective of a CIA operative known only as Maya (Jessica Chastain), whose dogged pursuit of a lead—who turns out to be bin Laden's courier—is

what enables the agency to finally locate bin Laden's post 9/11 hide out; once found, bin Laden is assassinated there by Special Forces. Recruited by the CIA right out of high school, Maya spent the next 12 years obsessing over bin Laden.

The film opens with her arrival in 2003 at a CIA “black site”—a secret prison set up by the CIA to interrogate suspects outside American jurisdiction. It is her first time in the field and she squeamishly watches a prisoner being tortured by Dan Stanton (Jason Clarke); she is even asked to fill up a bucket for Stanton to waterboard a detainee. Stanton later asks the station chief in Pakistan, Joseph Bradley (Kyle Chandler), if Maya may be “a bit young for the hard stuff,” but Bradley assures him, “Washington says she’s a killer” and more than up to the task. The agency’s head of counterterrorism, known only as The Wolf, is responsible for sending her into the field, with Maya getting comfortable enough over time to later ask Stanton to do an “enhanced interrogation” of another detainee (Fig. 9.1). He declines, explaining how he is headed home, having seen “too many guys naked.”



Fig. 9.1 CIA analyst, Maya (Jessica Chastain), who relentlessly pursues Osama bin Laden by any means necessary. Screenshot from the 2012 official trailer for *Zero Dark Thirty*, Sony Pictures

Maya is shown working tirelessly, reviewing tapes of other interrogations at other black sites, and showing little interest in any creature comforts outside of minimal sleep and food. After Maya meets up with the CIA chief for Camp Chapman in Afghanistan, only identified in the film as Jessica (Jennifer Ehle), their lunch is interrupted by an explosion that rips through the Marriott restaurant, leaving them both shaken but all the more determined to get bin Laden. In earlier encounters, Maya deferred to Jessica's rank and experience, but eventually challenged her "pre-9/11" thinking about al Qaeda behavior, which Maya pointed out was better suited to the Cold War than the War on Terror. Jessica later gets killed after she and her crew trust a Jordanian doctor willing to cooperate for a large sum of money. Although vetted by the Jordanians, once the informant arrives at a "neutral" site, he detonates a suicide vest that kills Jessica and several others.²² When al Qaeda takes credit for the bombing and subsequent attacks, agents face mounting pressure to make progress, also triggering Maya to push harder for her theory about Abu Ahmad as the key to finding bin Laden—stop him and the attacks stop.

Eventually Maya secures enough evidence of Ahmad's "tradedcraft" to be invited to a meeting with the CIA director (James Gandolfini), who remains nameless in the film. Maya is told to sit along the wall while others at the conference table debate how best to move forward with her intelligence. When the director asks for specifics on the compound, and Maya speaks up, he asks who she is. "I'm the motherfucker that found this place, sir," surprising everyone with her audacious answer. Once the mission is a go, she preps the Navy SEALs, although one asks why she is so sure when previous intelligence proved so disastrously wrong. "Quite frankly, I didn't even want to use you guys," she blurts out. "But people didn't believe in this lead enough to drop a bomb, so they're using you guys as canaries ... [and] if bin Laden isn't there, you can sneak away and no one will be the wiser." She adds, after a pause, "But bin Laden is there and you're going to kill him for me."²³ The final part of the film depicts their arduous and dangerous mission to breach the compound to kill bin Laden, who is brought back in a body bag so Maya can confirm his identity. In the final scene, she boards a military transport on which she is the

only passenger. Out of relief or sadness or simple fatigue—and perhaps faced with having to find a new purpose—she quietly sheds a few tears.

Maya: A Portrait of American Obsession

In reviews of the film, few found Maya's tearful exhaustion rooted in her tireless service to the nation, instead viewing her emotion through the lens of gender. Yet, she may be the very personification of an America that finally caught the terrorist behind 9/11, but which hardly ended the War on Terror—some might argue, merely serving as another recruiting tool for those who thought the United States had gone rogue. As one reviewer wrote, the “uncritical embrace of assassination as a tool of statecraft should have passed entirely unremarked in the brouhaha surrounding [the film] tells us a good deal about the new normal in an era of secret kill-lists and escalating drone strikes.”²⁴ Although perhaps implausible and impractical, officials never considered bringing bin Laden to trial, whether in a US court or before an international tribunal, as was done with Milošević for his “crimes against humanity” in Kosovo.

When Bigelow and screenwriter Mark Boal (with an Oscar for writing *The Hurt Locker*) reportedly had the screenplay reviewed by the CIA, the only changes the agency requested were scenes in which Maya participates in waterboarding and the use of dogs during interrogations.²⁵ In general the film was found to be historically accurate except for “unknowable, intimate moments” that such dramatizations include, Bigelow explains.²⁶ She wrote in the published shooting script that she had hoped the film would “spark a conversation about the shadowy lives of those in the intelligence community, the price they've paid for their work, and the murky deeds that were done over this dark decade in the name of national security.”²⁷ Those “deeds” refer to the CIA's program of enhanced interrogations—or use of torture—discussed in the previous chapter.

Unlike Bauer's exaggerated and often contrived techniques, *Zero Dark Thirty* recreates—however sanitized—most methods detailed in the Senate's so-called torture report, with Stanton subjecting detainees to force feedings, sleep deprivation, confinement in a small box (with insects inside), contorted stress positions, and being led around chained to a dog

collar.²⁸ Once Stanton is back in Washington, sporting a suit and tie, he shows no lingering effects from having “interrogated” more than a hundred detainees; it defies the conclusions of many studies that report how psychologically and emotionally damaging the experience can be for those who administer torture.²⁹

While some viewed the film as a harsh critique of America’s obsession to get bin Laden by any means necessary, others found it too apolitical, even complicit in glorifying the mission—the scenes of torture later eclipsed by Navy SEALs risking their lives.³⁰ Sen. Diane Feinstein, the former chair of the Senate Intelligence Committee (responsible for the 2014 report about CIA interrogations), publicly criticized the film’s inference that bin Laden was found with information gleaned through torture.³¹ Marouf A. Hasian offers what he deems a postcolonial interpretation, asserting that merely deconstructing the film’s depiction of torture misses its underlying “military orientalist ideology.”³² Maya, dubbed by *The Economist* as America’s “Joan of Arc,”³³ is a composite character but who represents dozens of men and women involved in the CIA’s interrogation program, with “her dedication to her job ... emblematic of exceptional American willpower and abilities,”³⁴ Hasian asserts. In keeping with Edward Said’s concept of orientalism,³⁵ Maya learns just enough about Middle Eastern cultures to weaponize such knowledge as another tool of war. The detainees she engages remain one-dimensional villains with few reasons for their radicalization—mere objects of scorn from places too irrational or backward to investigate further—a frame similarly used in *24* and continued in *Homeland* below.

Manohla Dargis suggests the audience must participate in the art of “filling in the blanks, managing narrative complexity and confronting their complicity.”³⁶ It is that “filling in” process that is most revelatory—the nation’s mission and its links to American exceptionalism is what gets filled in, allowing both conservative and liberal reads of the specifics, but summarily, it is about the ends justifying the means. One can argue about whether the means (torture) is justified, but that misses the larger point about the need to interrogate what “ends” the nation is achieving. Other criticism leveled at Bigelow, similar to that discussed above with *Blue Steel*, focuses on her failure to present a more “feminist” perspective, or an exploration of how a female could “soften the tactics of war and investiga-

tion [and] to lend controversy a feminine morality.”³⁷ Another reviewer also thought a female protagonist should have helped to “humanize” the subject matter, disappointed that Maya is presented as a “creature of destiny rather than human being.”³⁸

Maya is thinly developed as a character, representing a type of empty signifier open to various interpretations. On the one hand, she is a symbol of female empowerment as a lead character who holds her own, demonstrating the same steely resolve and obsession as her male counterparts. On the other hand, Maya is framed as a failure for not presenting an innate sense of nurture or “difference” to contest such macho methodology. The former is problematic given that Bigelow has earned a reputation for making successful action films that are purposely ambiguous about gender. The latter dismisses Maya as a female crimefighter who fails to soften the nation’s attitudes about torture. As noted in Chap. 5 about the agency of female characters, Bigelow’s female heroes are capable of matching the skills and motivations—however flawed—that exist in their workplaces and the larger national and cultural environments that produce them.

What is progressive is Bigelow’s choice to depict a female protagonist who becomes acculturated within a CIA that betrayed its own *apolitical* charter, becoming tethered to the Bush administration’s aggressive agenda—with dire consequences for the agency and for the nation it serves.³⁹ One can quibble with the film’s lack of political backbone, if Olive Stone-like didacticism is desired, but it seems narrow-minded to hold Bigelow responsible for producing a primarily feminist view of police, military and spy agencies, when it remains unclear such a consensus can or does exist.

Carrie Mathison: Protecting the Homeland

Like Bauer and Maya, Carrie Mathison (Claire Danes) of *Homeland*, which premiered in 2011 on Showtime, is a brilliant but flawed CIA agent who persistently pursues her hunches despite disbelieving bosses and institutional obstacles—just another adrenaline junky and tireless patriot. Mathison’s “difference” as an attractive white female and epitome

of the female standard-bearer is similar to that of Diesel's Cage and Maya, in that once abroad, especially in the Middle East, she is clearly coded as American, with her blond hair barely covered by a hijab and occasionally contrasting with other females in full burkas.

Similar to my disclaimer for *24*, rather than recap the details of every season's plot twists and sprawling cast of characters, below is a general outline of the show's main trajectories that enable an examination of Mathison's fit along the continuum of female crimefighters,⁴⁰ especially those deemed to be rogue. She also is examined as a fellow counterterrorism agent alongside Bauer and Maya—all dealing with the unfolding and enduring War on Terror.

The first season of *Homeland* quickly introduces Mathison as a study in exaggerated contradictions. As her creators explain, they imagined her as both “unbalanced and confident at the same time.”⁴¹ Her extremes quickly unfold as she becomes suspicious of a decorated Marine, Nicholas Brody (Damian Lewis), who recently returned home after eight years in an al Qaeda prison. To Mathison's trained eye, she perceives enough clues to believe Brody to be a potential terrorist who came home a sleeper enemy agent. Although ultimately correct about Brody, she is unable to convince her CIA bosses, who fire her for her obsessive, even pathological tracking of Brody and harassment of his family. After Brody successfully runs for Congress, he vows to carry out acts of terror for his former captor, Abu Nazir (Navid Negahban).

In season two, Mathison becomes involved in a sexual relationship with Brody and convinces him to flip on Nazir. Brody, though, becomes complicit in the vice president's death and suspected of a bomb that explodes at the vice president's funeral, killing hundreds—the latter act not of his doing. Mathison, convinced of his innocence, smuggles him out of the country, vowing to clear his name.

In season three, she convinces her former mentor, Saul Berenson (Mandy Patinkin), now the CIA director, to offer Brody a chance at redemption by having him seek political asylum in Iran in order to assassinate a key general. When the mission falters, Berenson assumes Brody betrayed them and orders him killed. Near the close of season three, Mathison, now pregnant by Brody, and still believing him to be a hero (he killed the general after all) is convinced the CIA is coming to extract

them both; instead Brody is arrested by the Iranians and she watches him hang before fleeing the country.

Season four finds Mathison as the CIA station chief in Afghanistan, where she orders a drone strike on a Taliban leader who survives; she later recruits his nephew as an asset to track down the leader. In season five she leaves the CIA for a post as the security chief for an NGO in Berlin, but which ensnares her in battles with ISIS, Hezbollah, and fallout from drone strikes from the previous season. Similar to *24*'s formula, the season also includes a sinister homegrown enemy in the form of Allison Carr (Miranda Otto), a Russian double-agent but also the CIA station chief in Berlin.

Seasons six and seven explore the political fallout from a newly elected president who, after facing two assassination attempts, grows paranoid, becoming suspicious of her own intelligence community and reacting with a frightening abuse of executive authority that sparks a constitutional crisis. Also included in both latter seasons is a look at the effects of “fake news” on exacerbating an already divided country, and which threaten to ignite a homegrown rebellion by extremists.

Spy Games: Sex, Motherhood, and Mental Illness

When gender is ignored, the superspy Mathison is a solid match for her male screen counterparts—not afraid to go rogue when she deems it necessary. Like Bauer, Mathison “twists arms and breaks rules to follow her instincts, and no personal relationship ranks above her work.”⁴² She is Bauer-esque in her futile attempts to walk away from government service, as in season two, among other examples, she tries to live as a private citizen but is soon called to service when the former wife of a Hezbollah leader will only speak to Mathison, who recruited her as an asset when stationed in Beirut (Fig. 9.2).

Unlike Bauer, though, Mathison is never given the benefit of the doubt about her motives; she bears the burden of proof to make clear her actions are on behalf of national security. Although she is not the first female character to be depicted on screen as a “hot mess,”⁴³ she is given the added burden of a mental illness—a bi-polar condition first blamed for her wild



Fig. 9.2 Carrie Mathison (Claire Danes), securing the homeland as a fearless but reckless CIA operative at work in the Middle East. *Homeland* on Showtime. Screenshot from Hulu

accusations about Brody. Berenson, among others, routinely dismisses her Rainman-like observations as irrational, manic ramblings. In the first season, her erratic behavior puts her CIA career in jeopardy, enough for her to attempt suicide that she herself aborts. Worse yet, it is implied that her fabled skills and mastery of CIA tradecraft are linked to her condition, with Mathison frequently refusing treatment, believing that during a manic phase she has heightened powers of observation.

In the episode, “Super Powers,” Mathison purposely skips her medications to think more clearly, which one observer notes, “danced too closely to the implication that Carrie is such a good spy *because* of her bipolar disorder.”⁴⁴ Danes has said in interviews that she considers her character a “superhero,” also explaining how she and the show’s creators thoroughly researched Carrie’s illness.⁴⁵ While many mental health experts applaud such a rare depiction of a character who tries to “own” the illness rather than succumb to its limitations, they also criticize the depiction of its exaggerated highs and lows—not to mention the suggested causality with her reputed brilliance or its role as her “kryptonite.”⁴⁶

Bi-polar dramas aside, many reviewers share the view that it is “hard to overstate the seismic impact” the show had on the TV industry following its first season, winning the Emmy for Best Drama Series (Danes later wins Emmys as Best Actress in 2012 and 2013). Shortly after its premier, the series reportedly became the new “obsession,” even counting President Obama among its fans.⁴⁷ One reviewer describes Mathison as among several recent anti-heroes (e.g., *The Good Wife*) who surpass the *Cagney & Lacey*-era storytelling that often reduced female characters to their work struggles in historically male industries.⁴⁸ In *Homeland*, though, being “female” resurrects several old clichés. In the series premier, Mathison is shown trying to seduce Berenson to get what she wants along with trying (or having) sex with a string of potential CIA assets, “constantly riding a knife’s edge where her gender could be used to disparage her or push her into seemingly unstable behavior.”⁴⁹

When Mathison leaves the CIA in season five (like Bauer a fact that does little to stop her sense of duty or access to government tools), a tweet was sent out by the CIA, noting, “Good Riddance, Carrie Mathison. The real women of the C.I.A. are fed up with the sodden, sexualized reel women” portrayed on screen. Columnist Maureen Dowd reported that the agency “sisterhood” was fed up with Hollywood’s female spies “who guzzle alcohol as they bed hop and drone drop, acting crazed and emotional, sleeping with terrorists and seducing assets,” especially as depicted by Mathison.⁵⁰ Whitney Kassel, a foreign policy analyst, called Mathison a “misogynist,” along with chastising her for “willing to sleep around with anyone and everyone to succeed.”⁵¹

No doubt Mathison’s reliance on seduction trivializes the difficulty actual female agents face, but that could be said of any screen crime-fighter who uses sex as a tool of the trade—if one exempts the British James Bond, who draws few complaints from MI6 agents about his bed-hopping in service to his country.⁵² While hundreds of Hollywood cops, spies and federal agents frequently resort to torture, along with contempt for oversight committees and international laws—making most actual crimefighters look impotent by comparison—it seems inexcusably sexist to isolate Mathison’s promiscuity as a matter of bigger concern. The fact that journalists sought out actual female agents to do the complaining

smacks of a manufactured cat fight rather than a serious warning about the dangers of Hollywood imagery to spies—regardless of gender.

As Amy B. Zegart noted in her research on “spytainment,” with so little information actually available about intelligence operations, fake ones in entertainment media have a disproportionate amount of influence, with “cadets at West Point to senators on the Intelligence Committee to Supreme Court Justices ... referencing fake spies to formulate and implement real intelligence policies.”⁵³ Moreover, Hollywood spies often engage in criminal behavior or are linked to agencies with unlimited budgets, either scenario capable of affecting policymakers along with eroding public trust—outcomes that could profoundly impact national security.⁵⁴

Showtime and other pay cable networks, less restricted than broadcast television beholden to FCC standards,⁵⁵ have created several series that include provocative female characters easily described as “anti-heroines,” including the lead in *Nurse Jackie* or Claire Underwood in *House of Cards*. One reviewer describes both as “competent and reckless, women who were brazenly sexual and refused to apologize for being so, women who lived by their own rules, even if such behavior occasionally caused harm to themselves or people close to them.”⁵⁶ As discussed in Chap. 5, such characters have earned the right to be bombastically deviant and surpass the strict boundaries of the Madonna-whore binary; and in that respect, Mathison stands alone among female crimefighters.

If critics and fans alike were disapproving of Mathison’s manipulative sexuality, they were downright apoplectic over her depiction of pregnancy and motherhood. In one controversial scene, while bathing her daughter Franny, it is clear for a moment Mathison considers drowning her baby but pulls back in time, leaving her horrified by her own capacity for harm. Outrage from viewers and critics was palpable, as one reviewer warned, “it doesn’t get much darker than a woman who’s devoid of motherly love.”⁵⁷

Other scenes show her without any sense of nurture—a betrayal of a preeminent quality baked into every female crimefighter before her. Although fascinating to see the limitations of her pregnant body clash with her dedication to duty (similar to Marge Gunderson in *Fargo*), once her daughter is born, Mathison is faced with two solutions: one she

chooses and the other is chosen for her. In seasons four onward, she frequently chooses to leave Franny with her sister; by season seven she is forced to give up custody to her sister, having to settle for visitation rights. In between, she had discovered her nurturing side, which makes the resolution all the more tragic. In the season three finale, when Mathison is still grappling with her unexpected pregnancy, she tells Peter Quinn (Rupert Friend), her semi-love interest and government assassin (who seems more sensitive than she is), “I can’t be a mother. Because of me. Because of my job. Because of my ... problems.”⁵⁸ After CIA Director Andrew Lockhart (Tracy Letts) tells her she is being “recalled” back to Langley, then half-heartedly adds, “you’ll get to spend time with your kid.”⁵⁹ It seems an insincere afterthought that aptly captures what happens to many professional women who temporarily choose to be stay-at-home moms only to find their once promising careers permanently jettisoned.

Mathison does no better than Bauer and the majority of male crime-fighters when it comes to having lasting relationships or dependable lovers. Besides Berenson as both her mentor and exploiter, her psychiatrist sister, Maggie (Amy Hargreaves) is her enabler (monitoring her sister’s various experiments with medications), but also her disciplinarian, to little effect. The closest Mathison comes to a soul mate is Quinn—a Black Ops agent with a soft-spot for Mathison that leads him to perilously put her ahead of his job. As one reviewer notes, “Quinn is the assassin with the heart of gold, his superhuman powers of shadowy Warcraft undercut by boyish and very selectively applied notions of right or wrong.”⁶⁰ His moral compass, despite killing on orders, pointedly seems the most developed in the series. In one episode, Mathison, using intelligence from the station chief in Pakistan, orders a drone that Quinn says “feels different,”⁶¹ and turns out to be at a wedding, at which many innocents are killed as “collateral damage.”⁶² She dismisses the wedding claim as Taliban propaganda, asserting, “We’re bullet proof on this ... nobody is going to go in and verify ... deep in tribal territories.”⁶³ Her worry about covering the agency more than fretting about dead civilians alarms Quinn.

In season three it is Quinn who reminds her that a baby is a gift; he also cautions her against taking advantage of the vulnerable nephew of the Taliban leader the drone strike was meant to kill. She ignores his

advice and seduces the virginal Afghani college student, Aayan Ibrahim (Suraj Sharma), the drone strike's only survivor and whom she promises to help escape Pakistan (a lie she tells him posing as a journalist). Instead, she uses him to locate his uncle, who ruthlessly kills his nephew, an act she witnesses via live satellite. She then orders a drone strike to kill the uncle, but which would also kill Berenson, who had been taken prisoner. It is an order Quinn and others disobey, while Mathison argues that Berenson would want this outcome—an assumption Berenson later confirms, preferring to kill a high-value target than be used by a terrorist as a human shield.

One reviewer concluded that Mathison's "defiantly unmaternal coldness" is a way to make her "more like one of the boys."⁶⁴ But this misses the larger point that America's dependency on rogue crimefighters (male or female) who often live outside normal society—as well as beyond the control of their state-sanctioned institutions—may reveal a larger flaw in American thinking. Just as Bauer's homegrown enemies are often more dangerous than jihadists, *Homeland* delves into the inner workings of the intelligence communities and the politicians who try to use them, especially in the protracted War on Terror; unlike Maya, who represents a "mission accomplished," Carrie represents the debunking of any such conclusion. "Her ambiguity forces us to question our mission and doubt our method and suggests that we are a long way off from resolute accomplishment,"⁶⁵ notes Irene Shih. If *Zero Dark Thirty* hints at pro-torture and post-torture approaches linked to the Bush and Obama administrations, respectively, *Homeland* suggests it is not so clear-cut, with drone strikes during the Obama era not without dire and lasting consequences.

***Homeland's* Muslim Problem**

Homeland also garnered considerable criticism about its reliance on Muslim-as-terrorist stereotypes. Laila Al-Arian, who acknowledges a similar problem with *24*, points to *Homeland's* Brody as "insidiously Islamophobic." The show suggests Brody has been brainwashed by a dangerous and extreme ideology. Once back home, he is shown practicing his new faith, which is depicted as deviant and "dangerous." His wife talks of

his “crazy” faith and throws his Koran to the floor, reducing a sacred text the equivalent to “nothing more or less than terrorism.” The series suggests he can be a Muslim or an American, but not both. Al-Arian also notes that the series cements the idea of a one-size-fits-all Muslim identity hell bent on representing an amorphous threat as imprecise as the unspecified end goals of the War on Terror. It seems more an “orientalist nightmare” with Sunni extremist al Qaeda and Shia Hezbollah joining forces when in actuality they intensely distrust each other and unlikely to form any such cooperative.

Homeland's creators, who wrote and produced many episodes of *24*, remember similar criticism of an episode of *24* in which a Muslim family in Los Angeles turns out to be a sleeper cell, leaving the impression that American suburbia is rife with terrorists. Howard Gordon, former *24* writer and co-creator of *Homeland* (with executive producer, Alex Gansa), says he regrets the above storyline, especially after seeing the network's advertising on a billboard with the tagline: “They could be next door.” Although the writers and producers were not party to the promotional campaign, he says they “quickly put an end to it and realized how potentially incendiary such associations could be.”⁶⁶ In an attempt to show “good” Muslims, an imam is included in a later episode to remind a prisoner that the bomb he refuses to locate will kill millions of people and “the Koran clearly forbids the killing of innocents”; the imam is there to insist that the detainee is “twisting the words of the prophet.”⁶⁷

Homeland creators go a step further and hire a frequent critic of the show, Ramzi Kassem, also a Muslim attorney, who figures as consultant to the show, he could “limit the damage.”⁶⁸ Kassem noted, for better or worse, “[T]he show matters [as] decision makers watch the show. People of all stripes get their information about security issues, about Muslims, about the Middle East, from the show. It's a hugely influential show.”⁶⁹ Series co-creator Gordon admitted he had “the dawning sense that there's a responsibility not to just traffic in these not-helpful stereotypes,” but then, at the same time, “you have the conundrum that the show is about counterterrorism,” with such characters inevitably included.⁷⁰

To perhaps make good on *Homeland's* “crisis of conscience,”⁷¹ a young American Muslim named Sekou (J. Mallory McCree) was added to season six. As Mathison explains to him, “this whole country went stupid

crazy after 9/11 and nobody knows that better than I do.”⁷² Sekou, though, tests the limits of free speech, posting videos that denounce the American government and praise jihadists.⁷³ Sekou is then blown up in episode four while working in a delivery van rigged to do so by government traitors to either “justify dubious ongoing investigations into suspected radicals, or to frighten the president-elect sufficiently to deter her from pursuing reforms within the CIA.”⁷⁴ The net effect of introducing a more fully developed Muslim family, shown being hounded by the government, is then negated by making Sekou a mouthpiece for anti-American rhetoric and then punishing him for it.

Besides adding Sekou, Mathison also works in season six for a non-profit organization whose express purpose is to defend victims such as Muslim Americans against unfair attacks. That plot twist enraged Limbaugh, who told his listeners that previously Mathison was “the number one warrior on the march trying to end militant Islamic terrorism ... But she now ... runs a center to help people understand Islam and Muslims.” He lamented that Mathison had done a “180,” concluding that “political correctness and the leftist view of this story finally permeated the writing room.”⁷⁵

Mathison Performing the Nation

In the latter seasons of *Homeland*, with Mathison’s strengths and weaknesses now firmly established, the show’s writers had room to explore the consequences of spy culture and its interplay with politics. Like Bauer, Mathison’s enemies want her dead “for the sins of the past.”⁷⁶ By the end of season seven, one reviewer suggested that “Carrie ... neatly stands in for America itself—trying to atone for some of the most awful things it’s done, but sloppily, and mostly to cover its own ass.”⁷⁷ As Berenson notes in season four, the nation has fought what should be a “one-year war waged 14 times in Afghanistan.”⁷⁸ It is an opinion nobody at the private security company he now works for is interested in hearing, as his firm’s goal is to acquire lucrative contracts that such a prolonged conflict makes possible. As the former director of the CIA, Berenson’s head (and perhaps his heart), though, is still invested in the long game of national security.

The character also galvanized viewers who believed him to be anti-Semitic, while others claimed he proved the show's pro-Israel sympathies.

In season five, Berenson considers defecting to Israel after the US intelligence community suspects him of passing on information to Israel, while Berenson grows suspicious of Israeli actions when a high-placed intelligence officer warns Berenson what might happen if he is no longer "a good friend of Israel."⁷⁹ By season seven, Berenson visits his estranged sister in the West Bank (there to secretly meet an asset beyond the Israeli border). It is a contentious visit in which the siblings expose their differing opinions about the Jewish settlements on disputed land. He accuses her late husband of being a "fanatic," and says her "presence here makes peace less possible." She counters, "I have a life here filled with faith and purpose. What do you have, Saul?"⁸⁰

Gansa, the show's co-creator, also thought seasons six and seven should include the current fallout from the existence of "fake news" and "how people can be manipulated by it," presenting the Brett O'Keefe character clearly modeled after the controversial radio talk show host, Alex Jones.⁸¹ More tellingly, the election of Donald Trump significantly impacted seasons six and seven, as Gansa believed the show to be "in a very unique position to comment on it."⁸² President Elizabeth Keane (Elizabeth Marvel) is certainly infused with Trump-like suspicions about the intelligence community. The writers also wanted to depict how a president-elect's ideas can change during the post-election transition, especially after receiving high-level briefings; after all, Gansa explains, Obama modulated his criticism of drone warfare during that period.⁸³ Gansa predicts that the eighth and final season of *Homeland* (to premier in 2019) will abandon the Trump tie-ins and possibly return to its Israeli roots, as *Homeland* was first inspired by the Israeli show, *Hatufim*, about returning prisoners of war.⁸⁴ That may also exacerbate the charges of its so-called Islamophobia,⁸⁵ as Joseph Massad, an expert on Arab politics and history, contends that the show is already reflective of "American and Israeli fantasies."⁸⁶

As Mathison's "difference" no doubt will continue to guide future plot-lines as a daring, intuitive and deliberative spy who is also reckless, obsessive, and often amoral, Mathison may also be the ideal metaphor for the nation's current state of mind. As a reviewer for *Variety* offers, "as [Carrie's]

mental condition deteriorates, so does the condition of the country.”⁸⁷ Perhaps her whiplash behaviors and mood swings have not only come to replace Bauer’s clear-eyed fanaticism. It may also present a more suitable metaphor for a nation currently cleaved by a Keane-like president—one who lays bare America’s enduring interplay of politics and popular culture, along with a reliance on facts trumped by fictions increasingly producing a Baudrillard-inspired state of an unreal hyperreal.

Notes

1. Jess Cagle, “The Next Action Hero,” *Time*, August 2, 2002.
2. Pozo quoted in Cagle; Pozo is CEO of Arenas Entertainment, catering to the US Latino media marketplace.
3. As quoted in Cagle.
4. *Jet* magazine put Diesel on its cover in 2002, claiming he was the next rising African American movie star; and *Ebony* magazine in November 2002 asked: “is he Black or not?” Finally, *Gentlemen’s Quarterly* put Diesel on its August 2002 cover, dubbing him “Hollywood’s first multi-racial action hero.”
5. Other mixed race celebrities have been pressured to openly declare themselves black. New York Yankee Derek Jeter, who has a white mother and black father, told *60 Minutes* in 2005 that he received death threats for dating women on both sides of the color line. Maria P.P. Root, who studies multiracial identities, notes that until 1989, only infants born to two white parents were officially white, according to federal directives that determine birth statistics; in contrast, an infant born to one white parent took the race of the parent whose race was non-white. After 1989, an infant’s race is recorded as the same as its birth mother. See Maria P.P. Root, ed., *The Multiracial Experience: Racial Borders as the New Frontier* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1996), 637.
6. Mercer notes that simply embracing multiculturalism as a panacea to existing hierarchies of identity does little to interrogate the inequities that endure. Some groups have responded by re-appropriating the racial ideologies once used against them. Mercer notes that a shift back to “black” from “ethnic minority” among British people of color “demonstrated a process in which the objects of racial ideology reconstituted themselves as subjects of social, cultural and political change, actively making history.” Rather than compete for their individual voices in the

public sphere and be reduced to an incoherent drone, Asians, Caribbean, and African peoples pulled together to embrace their shared common experiences under British racism, explains Mercer. See Kobena Mercer, "Identity and Diversity in Postmodern Politics," in *Theories of Race and Racism: A Reader*, eds. Les Back and John Solomos (New York: Routledge, 2000), 510.

7. In the latter film, Toretto is a gang member and former street racer helping an undercover cop—not surprisingly, an Irishman named Brian O'Connor (Paul Walker)—who wants to infiltrate and stop a renegade band of street racers terrorizing truckers on Los Angeles freeways. Diesel describes his character, another criminal turned crusader, as someone who must go rogue and operate "outside the law." From an appearance on *The Tonight Show* with Jay Leno (NBC Television Network), August 5, 2000.
8. The film did \$142 million in domestic box office and more than \$135 million in overseas gross, earning back nearly four times its original production costs of \$70 million. Data is compiled from imdb.com (professional version).
9. *XXX*, DVD, directed by Rob Cohen (MGM Home Entertainment, 2003).
10. Ibid.
11. Bruce Westbrook, "Review of 'XXX,'" *Houston Chronicle*, August 9, 2002.
12. *XXX*, DVD.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. June Thomas "Secret Agent Woman," *Slate*, November 17, 2011. Available online.
16. Ibid.
17. Jeff Stein, "Covert Affairs Stretches for Spy-World Reality," *Washington Post*, August 24, 2010.
18. Christine Lane was an early writer of Bigelow's films and saw in them a "feminist orbit," using Christine Gledhill's term, as they engage "feminist politics and encourage spectators to ask questions about gender, genre, and power." See Christine Lane, "From 'The Loveless to Point Break': Kathryn Bigelow's Trajectory in Action," *Cinema Journal*, 37, no. 4 (1998), 77.
19. See Harriet E. Margolis, "Blue Steel: Progressive Feminism in the '90s?" *Post Script*, 13, no. 1 (1993).

20. According to Jay Carr, "Why is Hollywood Bashing Women?" *The Boston Globe*, March 25, 1990.
21. Johanna Steinmetz, "The Director's Chair: Five Women Talk About Their Changing World," *Chicago Tribune*, November 4, 1990, 20.
22. The incident is historically accurate and resulted in nine dead, including seven agency personnel. See Richard A. Oppel, Jr., Mark Mazzetti, and Souad Mekhennetjan, *The New York Times*, January 4, 2010.
23. *Zero Dark Thirty*, directed by Kathryn Bigelow (Columbia Pictures, 2012), Amazon Prime.
24. Daniel Joyce and Gabrielle Simm, "Zero Dark Thirty: International Law, Film, and Representation," *London Review of International Law*, 3, no. 2 (September 2015).
25. Adrian Chen, "Newly Declassified Memo Shows CIA Shaped Zero Dark Thirty Narrative," *Gawker*, May 6, 2013. Available online.
26. Paul Kendall, "Zero Dark Thirty: Fact vs Fiction," *The Daily Telegraph*, January 23, 2015. Available online at telegraph.co.uk.
27. "Introduction by Kathryn Bigelow," in *Zero Dark Thirty: The Shooting Script*, ed. Mark Boal (New York: Newmarket Press, 2014).
28. 113th Congress, "Report of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Committee Study of the Central Intelligence Agency's Detention and Interrogation Program," S. Report 113–288, December 9, 2014. Available online at <https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/sites/default/files/publications/CRPT-113srpt288.pdf>.
29. See Jean Maria Arrigo, "A Utilitarian Argument Against Torture Interrogation of Terrorists," *Science and Engineering Ethics*, 10 (2004), 543.
30. Naomi Wolff, "A letter to Kathryn Bigelow on *Zero Dark Thirty's* Apology for Torture," *The Guardian*, January 4, 2013. Kate Stanton, "Kathryn Bigelow Denounces Torture, Defends 'Zero Dark Thirty' Torture Scenes in Essay," upi.com, January 16, 2013.
31. Press release available online at feinstein.senate.gov, December 19, 2012.
32. Marouf A. Hasian, Jr., "Military Orientalism at the Cineplex: A Postcolonial Reading of *Zero Dark Thirty*," *Critical Studies in Communication*, 31, no. 5 (2014).
33. "American Night: The OBL Thriller Has Landed," *The Economist*, January 5, 2013.
34. Hasian, 472.
35. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994).
36. Manohla Dargis, "By Any Means Necessary," *The New York Times*, December 17, 2012.

37. Irene Shih, "Existential Heroines: *Zero Dark Thirty* and *Homeland*," *Harvard Kennedy School Review*, 2013, 99.
38. Hanna Rosin, "The Auteur of Unease," *The New Republic*, February 11, 2013, 8.
39. The CIA defines its "primary mission is to collect, evaluate, and disseminate foreign intelligence to assist the president and senior US government policymakers in making decisions relating to the national security. The CIA does not make policy; it is an independent source of foreign intelligence information for those who do." See <https://www.cia.gov/about-cia/faqs/?tab=list-10>.
40. *Homeland*'s co-creators, Howard Gordon and Alex Gansa, both involved with *24* as writer-producers, assert that the switch from *24*'s Fox Network to Showtime (as pay cable) was significant, offering greater freedom with respect to language, dramatic complexity, and not having stories be "broken up by commercials every 10 minutes." It enabled them to indulge in multiple facets of Carrie's motivations. In Hamed Aleaziz, "Interrogating the Creators of *Homeland*," *Mother Jones*, November 4, 2011. Further, Carrie is vastly different from Maya in terms of platforms, as *Zero Dark Thirty* only had 157 minutes to tell her story compared to twelve one-hour episodes spanning seven seasons to chart Mathison's evolution.
41. Ibid.
42. Shih, 99.
43. Ibid., 101.
44. Todd VanDerWerff, "*Homeland*'s Carrie Mathison is the Most Influential TV Character of the 2010s," *Vox Media*, November 11, 2015. Available online at vox.com.
45. Nolan Feeney, "*Homeland*: The Case Against Calling Carrie a Bipolar 'Superhero,'" *The Atlantic*, October 7, 2013. Available online.
46. Ibid.
47. VanDerWerff, *Vox*, November 11, 2015.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.
50. Joanna Robinson, "The C.I.A. is Delighted that *Homeland*'s Carrie Mathison will No Longer Work There," *Vanity Fair*, April 5, 2015.
51. Whitney Kassel, "Carrie Mathison is a Misogynist," Available at foreign-policy.com, December 2, 2014.
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53. Amy B. Zegart, "'Spytainment': The Real Influence of Fake Spies," *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, 23, no. 4 (2010), 600.
54. *Ibid.*, 601–605.
55. Sarah Banet-Weiser, Cynthia Chris, and Anthony Freitas, *Cable Visions: Television Beyond Broadcasting* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 255–260.
56. Gary Susman, "The Meteoric Rise of the TV Anti-Heroine." Available at moviefone.com, June 19, 2015.
57. Sara Stewart, "The Mother of All Bad Guys: *Homeland* Returns." Available at indiewire.com, October 9, 2014.
58. *Homeland*, Season 3, episode 12, "The Star," directed by Lesli Linka Glatter, aired on December 15, 2013, Showtime.
59. *Homeland*, Season 4, episode 2, "Trylon and Perisphere," directed by Keith Gordon, aired on October 5, 2014, Showtime.
60. Mike Hogan, "Why Season 5 of *Homeland* Might be the Show's Best Yet," *Vanity Fair*, December 20, 2015.
61. *Homeland*, Season 4, episode 1, "The Drone Queen," directed by Lesli Linka Glatter, aired on October 5, 2014, Showtime.
62. *Ibid.*
63. *Ibid.*
64. Sophie Gilbert, "A Whole New *Homeland*," *The Atlantic*, October 5, 2015. Available online.
65. Shih 100.
66. Aleaziz, *Mother Jones*.
67. In February of 2005, the Fox Network consulted with the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) to air a special public service announcement, read by Sutherland, in which the network (and Sutherland) reiterated their belief that not all Muslims are terrorists. Asawin Subsaeng, "Torture-Heavy *24* Was Actually a Pretty Darn Liberal TV Show," *Mother Jones*, May 2, 2014.
68. PRI's The World, March 24, 2017, "How a Muslim Lawyer and Critic of Showtime's *Homeland* Became a Consultant for the Show."
69. *Ibid.*
70. Melena Ryzik, "Can Television be Fair to Muslims?" *The New York Times*, November 30, 2016.
71. Gilbert, *The Atlantic*.
72. *Homeland*, Season 6, episode 4, "A Flash of Light," directed by Lesli Linka Glatter, aired on February 12, 2017, Showtime.

73. Cynthia Littleton, "'Homeland' Season 6 Comes Home to Eye of Political Storm," *Variety*, January 14, 2017.
74. Gilbert, *The Atlantic*.
75. Carol Glines, "'Homeland' Takes a Left Turn? New Season Focuses on Muslim Civil Rights, Female President-Elect's CIA Battles," foxnews.com, January 20, 2017.
76. Todd VanDerWerff, "The Series Veers Toward Quiet Intimacy—and Suggests Nobody's Hands are Clean," *Vox Media*, December 22, 2015. Available online.
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78. *Homeland*, Season 4, episode 1, "The Drone Queen," directed by Lesli Linka Glatter, aired on October 5, 2014, Showtime.
79. *Homeland*, Season 5, episode 4, "All About Allison," directed by John David Coles, aired on November 22, 2015. Showtime.
80. *Homeland*, Season 6, episode 3, "The Covenant," directed by Lesli Linka Glatter, aired on January 29, 2017. Showtime.
81. Debra Birnbaum, "'Homeland' Boss on Season 7's Trump Inspiration, Alex Jones and RIP Peter Quinn," *Variety*, February 5, 2018.
82. Ibid.
83. Ibid.
84. Ibid.
85. Max Greenwood, "'Homeland' to Drop Trump Allegories in Next Season," *The Hill*, April 19, 2018.
86. Joseph Massad, "'Homeland,' Obama's Show," October 25, 2012. Available online at Aljazeera.com.
87. Birnbaum, *Variety*.



10

Policing the World: The Last (White) American Standing

What do you do for them [the CIA]?

Sandrine Arnaud, a French police captain

I'm an analyst.

Jack Ryan, CIA officer

I think you have everyone fooled. I think you are a wolf. A wolf who plays at being a sheep.

Arnaud

The enthusiasm and predictions in the early 2000s that multicultural actors like Vin Diesel would soon unseat Hollywood's white male crime-fighter has yet to come to pass. Rather than sustain a new trend, Diesel, along with Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, now 52 and 47, respectively, remain exceptions, with few younger versions of themselves waiting in the wings. They both have enjoyed enormous success, and Diesel, in particular, able to reap incredible financial benefit from the *Fast and Furious*

franchise, begun in 2001 and now comprising eight films, with a ninth due out in 2020.¹ The same can be said of the *XXX* films, with Diesel now owning the collective rights to the franchise.²

Diesel opted out of the 2005 sequel, *XXX: State of the Union* (2005), which starred rapper Ice Cube as Darius Stone that performed poorly at the box office, some attributing its failure to the absence of Diesel and/or Ice Cube's limited appeal.³ Diesel returned to the franchise in 2017 with *XXX: The Return of Xander Cage*—the character lured back from his self-imposed exile to help rein in diabolical forces inside the nation's intelligence services. Indicative of the new normal, the film features a corrupt CIA director as the ideal homegrown enemy. After all, in addition to *24* and *Homeland* leaving the impression that the agency is awash in ubert-raitors, another CIA operative of the era, Jason Bourne, was forced to stay on the run to hide from his former employer (out to contain or kill him) in that franchise's five films.

Audiences have been increasingly conditioned to suspect not only governmental and political bureaucracies, but also other social institutions—any entity slow to act versus Hollywood's best action heroes. As Robert Jewett and John Shelton Lawrence assert, "Careful deliberation, knowledge of law, and mastery of book learning are usually presented in mono-mythic materials as indicators of impotence or corruption."⁴ While American audiences may interpret the rogue "outsider" as the epitome of individuality and autonomy, international audiences (often responsible for the lion's share of the earnings for the above franchises) may "read" these films as confirmation of long-held suspicions about American behaviors.

Since these homegrown enemies are usually in league with the foreign threat of the moment, for most of the past two decades that has been represented by a Muslim or Middle Eastern terrorist. What happens, then, when those identities are woven into the American crimefighter on screen? Besides prompting intense cognitive dissonance, it also engages a reaction similar to what impacts African American crimefighters discussed earlier; to have existed in American and Hollywood history for so long as the deviant Other in need of arrest, it seems challenging to then trust a black crimefighter to vanquish the nation's Others. An American crimefighter with identities linked to the Middle East or Islam triggers

similar suspicions about his or her ability to represent a nation that so often perceives him or her as the national security threat most in need of containment or eradication. Such an outcome occurred in *24*, just one of numerous examples among Hollywood stories, in which CTU analyst Nadia Yassir was immediately suspected of being a mole given her Arabic last name—an impression exploited by a hacker who left clues on her computer to trigger such a reflexive response.

Arabs, Persians, and Muslims as Crimefighter Heroes

As 9/11 fades further into the collective memory, Hollywood storytellers have gradually introduced what Rolf Halse terms “counter-stereotypes” and Evelyn Alsultany describes as “simplified complex representations.” Both terms describe the attempt to create “good” characters to counter-balance the terrorist stereotype. Such characters, though, often lack dimensionality and merely become the “difference that makes no difference.”⁵ Such supporting characters in crime stories range from a victim of a hate crime that warrants police action or a refugee struggling to adjust, as in *Homeland*, but included in the other numerous films and TV shows under review. Such characters, though, are merely presented as further opportunities for the normative hero to right a wrong, but which still relegates the Other to the margins in his or her own conflict. Alsultany asserts that even positive representations meant to offset historically harmful ones—from the orientalist exotic to the prevailing terrorist—can produce meanings that often maintain the continuance of exclusion.⁶ As Ella Shohat and Robert Stam note, such a representation of the Other “leads to the treatment of complex political issues as if they were matters of individual ethics.”⁷ That translates into either the “model minority” serving as an exemplar who rises above harrowing circumstances or the heroic efforts of a crimefighting hero to ameliorate the Other’s suffering, with either scenario doing little to disturb the larger social or political burden.

There are profound differences of how Muslims practice their faith—as varied as there are interpretations of Christianity or Judaism. Similarly, the Middle East is a vast region of diverse cultures once ensconced in the blanket and pejorative descriptor of “the Orient.” Any discussion here is not meant to compound its use as a one-size-fits-all descriptor of such characters in Hollywood history but to understand *why* it is so often used as a convenient shorthand. Too few American viewers may know that Iranians are not Arabs or that not all Arabs are Muslims.⁸ Such prevailing reductionism was made worse in the wake of President Trump’s 2017 executive order, dubbed the “travel ban,” for people entering the United States from seven Muslim-majority countries.⁹ Trump referenced the 9/11 attacks in part as justification even though none of the hijackers came from the listed countries; moreover, more contemporary threats such as ISIS exist in the countries that he exempted (arguably for political and/or business reasons).¹⁰

One notable exception to the track record of such one-dimensional portraits appeared in *The Siege*, the 1998 film briefly discussed earlier, featuring a Middle-Eastern FBI agent who had to contend with the frightening reality of a modern-day internment camp for people of Middle Eastern backgrounds. Like Agent Frank Haddad (portrayed by the Lebanese American actor, Tony Shaloub), the majority of those interned were American citizens but whose loyalties had come under suspicion. Haddad’s dilemma of having to straddle two cultures is evident in two key scenes. One involves an exchange between him and a Middle Eastern prisoner, a suspected terrorist, who calls Haddad a “woman” (meant as an insult) for shirking his “duty” to his people, to which Haddad fires back, “Someday, I’ll tell you what your people did to my village.”¹¹

The second scene involves Haddad’s rage after learning that his son has been put into the camp, confronting his boss: “My wife told them who I was. How many times did I put [my life] on the line,” referring to his service to the nation. “We’re American citizens . . . [yet] they knocked her down, they took him out of my home!”¹² Vowing to stay inside the camp with his son, he refuses his boss’s request to come back to work, noting defiantly, “This is where I belong,” adding that he refuses to be the bureau’s “sand nigger” any longer.¹³ Later, when circumstances change, he

proves himself to be a dutiful cop who helps combat the nation's "foreign" enemies, along with an overzealous American major general.

In the immediate political climate following 9/11, the idea of a repeat performance of an American crimefighter who is Arab, Muslim, or with any link to the Middle East became even harder to imagine. Hollywood was so resistant that it seemed reminiscent of the darkest days of McCarthyism, when fear drove studios to blacklist writers, directors, and producers without much proof other than the mere suggestion of a communist affiliation, usually from frightened others who "named names."¹⁴ However, more recently, several shows have begun to feature a handful of Middle Eastern or Muslim crimefighters, as in *Quantico*, briefly discussed in Chap. 6. *NCIS: New Orleans* added an Iranian (or Persian) character to the cast.

Another notable series featuring such a character is *FBI*, which CBS launched in 2018 and is still in production. Omar Adom "OA" Zidan, portrayed by Zeeko Zaki, is a Muslim agent whose family emigrated from Egypt—a fact that replicates the actor's own biography. His partner is also a rarity, the white female, Maggie Bell (Missy Peregrym), although Bell and Zidan remain rather thinly developed characters, owing more to the show's creator, Dick Wolf, whose track record includes *Law & Order* and several other similar TV procedurals that emphasize crime's prosecution more than three-dimensional characters. Bell is supposedly a grieving widow and a competent agent, while Zidan is known to have previously spent two years as an undercover agent with the DEA but now warned, "you're no longer undercover tracking terrorists making your own rules."¹⁵ He is also particularly eager to show how serious he is about catching criminals, especially if they are Muslim, as in episode two when he aggressively hunts down a terrorist who recruits vulnerable female teens through social media, with Zidan complaining that he sees his faith too often "weaponized."¹⁶

The actor portraying Zidan argues that the mere existence of a high-profile Muslim crimefighter on a hit TV series is making a real difference. Zaki was in the sixth grade when 9/11 happened and endured the usual backlash experienced by other Muslim Americans, which he countered by being a "model Muslim." Once an actor, he auditioned for the usual array of terrorist roles, knowing that most "protagonists have been writ-

ten as primarily white, straight, cisgender men,” which he says left him out. After Zaki was sent the script for the *FBI* pilot by his manager, who suspected they were looking for a Latino actor, Zaki auditioned and won the role. The character was revamped, Egyptian Arabic was woven into the dialogue along with references to a wise grandfather back in Egypt. Zaki asserts that the “broken practice” of not including enough non-normative characters would be greatly improved “by having more diverse writers,” along with “greater imagination and risk from talent reps, casting agents, directors, producers and studio executives to change their conception of what lead actors look like.”¹⁷

***The Looming Tower* Looks Back (and Forward)**

Another more expansive view of a Muslim crimefighter was showcased in *The Looming Tower*, an original production from Hulu in 2018.¹⁸ The 10-episode series—based on the Pulitzer Prize-winning book by Lawrence Wright (also a co-producer of the series)—prominently features the FBI agent, Ali Soufan (briefly included in Chap. 8), as portrayed by Tahir Rahim, a French actor of Algerian descent. More than a buddy or a token Other without impact, Soufan is essential to the narrative. The series recounts the failure of the CIA to share information that Soufan, among others, could have used to piece together the al Qaeda plot, perhaps preventing the 9/11 attacks. Soufan’s FBI boss and mentor is John O’Neill, portrayed in the series by Jeff Daniels; O’Neill is killed on 9/11 just after leaving the FBI to take over security for the World Trade Center. Martin Schmidt (Peter Sarsgaard) is supposedly a composite character, although multiple sources claim he is the real-life CIA officer, Michael Scheuer.¹⁹ Scheuer is also married to the CIA official, Alfreda Frances Bikowsky, often dubbed the “Queen of Torture,”²⁰ apparently the model for Diane Marsh (Wrenn Schmidt), who continues to communicate with Schmidt even after he is removed from his post.²¹ At times Schmidt and Marsh serve as much as the series’ antagonists as the terrorists, and replicate many of the behaviors detailed in the 9/11 commission’s findings about CIA culpability.

While O’Neill and Schmidt are locked a power struggle, the series shows how Soufan, an Arabic speaker—the only one in the New York



Fig. 10.1 FBI Agent Ali Soufan (Tahir Rahim) hunting down suspected terrorists. Screen shot from *The Looming Tower*, Hulu

office and one of eight in the entire Bureau—was hand-picked to investigate the 2000 suicide bomber attack on the USS Cole that killed 17 sailors aboard. Wright’s 2006 profile of Soufan for *The New Yorker* notes that O’Neill referred to Soufan, then only 28, as a “national treasure,” with Wright also characterizing Soufan as having been “America’s best chance to stop the attacks (Fig. 10.1).”²²

In the series Soufan forcefully argues for an expanded role in other investigations, given his understanding of Arabic and the cultural environment that might foster al Qaeda loyalty. Early scenes depict Soufan’s tepid relationship with his Lebanese culture and Muslim faith, as he expresses surprise at seeing his sister now wearing a hijab; he also is romancing a Caucasian special education teacher rather than the Lebanese nursing student his mother would prefer. As the series progresses, Soufan begins praying at mosques while abroad and being increasingly disturbed by what he perceives (at a London mosque) as a lecture about turning

outward to rid the world of impurities. While *24* and *Homeland* embraced a dismissive portrait of Islam as a whole, Soufan strives to balance the religion's inherent goodness with its perversion by extremists; it is similar to Klansman dishonoring Christianity when they burn crosses before perpetrating violence against African Americans.

When Soufan is shown confronting Abu Jandal, a Yemeni member of al Qaeda, he exposes the fact that many jihadists have never even read the Koran. Soufan then brings his own copy and reads passages to Jandal, including one that instructs how the taking of an innocent life is akin to killing mankind. The readings eventually move Jandal, who begins to cry and agrees to cooperate, subsequently providing vital information. In this manner, such characters are also able to educate viewers about their "difference," and in Soufan's case, one that is not only vital to thwarting threats to national security, but also that embrace him as a crimefighting hero who risked his life in the line of duty. Soufan embodies that rare commodity in Hollywood of being both the Other and an American patriot.

As series' producer Dan Futterman notes, "The prospect of making a show about a Muslim-American hero—a teenage immigrant from Lebanon who probably these days would have a hard time getting into the country and who is one of the most patriotic people that I know—was irresistible to me."²³ The Jewish Futterman admits to being captivated by how "Soufan was working so hard to rescue his religion from people who are hijacking it."²⁴ Soufan, also one of the series' producers, calls it a "public service."²⁵ While Soufan's inclusion represents a step forward in representations of the Middle Eastern or Muslim Other, several critics argue that the series also wipes out much of the deeper perspective of Wright's book. The series moves away from the book's primary focus on who planned the attacks, which also meant omitting "decades of Arab history," and shifts the focus to the American intelligence officials who failed to stop them.²⁶

White Males Still Take the Lead

Despite the small steps forward that the above portrayals might represent, let alone the experiments and pioneering efforts of dozens of black, brown, and female crimefighter characters covered in this book, the white

male remains the enduring titan of most Hollywood storytelling, especially in roles as cops, agents, spies, and other enforcers—before and after 9/11. This is particularly true of shows on broadcast/network television, which is most susceptible among delivery systems to having to meet the popular demands of mainstream audiences and achieve consistent ratings to stay “on the air.” As such, there is a tendency to continually repeat a winning formula from the past, especially among the proliferation of cop dramas and spy sages that dominate Hollywood storytelling, regardless of platform.

Reboots abound to provide familiar characterizations with vaguely updated conflicts or cosmetic, contemporary makeovers. The Sipowicz character from *NYPD Blue*, discussed in Chap. 3, is being revived for late 2019 with a reboot that features the original’s son, Theo (Fabien Frankel), trying to earn his detective shield by solving his father’s murder. Theo Sipowicz will reportedly be another “hard-drinking, hard-headed and quick-witted cop.” Another familiar face—the white male half of the hit series *Castle*—Nathan Fillion is starring in another Dick Wolf series on CBS, *The Rookie*, with Fillion as a character who uses a mid-life crisis to reinvent himself as an LAPD cop.

Dick Wolf is also responsible for the show, *Chicago PD*, which premiered on NBC in 2014 and is still in production. It features a Dirty Harry knockoff as its central character, Hank Voigt (Jason Beghe), who dispenses the familiar brand of street justice—no longer as a temporary solution but his go-to methodology—perhaps an apt fit in a post-Bauer universe, along with its particular performance of white masculinity. Voigt has a ready-made cage in the bowels of the precinct where he frequently beats up suspects to yield confessions, rarely showing any other interrogation skill beyond intimidation and brute force. Unlike the “ticking time bomb” trope that drove Bauer to extremes or the inner demons that informed the action of *Shades of Blue*’s Wozniak, Voigt is pure reaction; a paper cut-out of a thug with a badge. As in the season three finale, after Voigt hunts down his son’s killer, he has the killer dig his own grave—and despite urgent pleas from a colleague to stop—he sends her away, shoots the killer, and buries him in the freshly dug ground. Rather than Voigt charged with murder after the body is discovered, another colleague takes the blame (and is later killed in prison, the secret lost with

him). The show is one of the network's major hit series, which testifies to its ability to satisfy many viewers' cathartic need for vengeance at the expense of justice. Given the Chicago setting, Voigt's use of violence to fix a city whose South Side is overrun with gang violence seems contradictory and gratuitously exploitive. Rather than show any background or context that might include grinding poverty, systemic racism, or the nation's failed War on Drugs—themes investigated in the HBO series, *The Wire*, discussed below—*Chicago PD* falls short of even Bauer's formula. While Bauer behaved badly chasing down terrorists, Voigt is shown punishing street criminals who anger him or intrude on his turf, with little "policing" in defense of the larger society or nation.

Another long-running franchise that continues the reign of white male protagonists is *NCIS*, which stands for Naval Criminal Investigative Service.²⁷ The original version was launched on CBS in 2004 and is now in its sixteenth season (having reached 350 episodes). Mark Harmon (also the show's executive producer) is Special Agent Leroy Jethro Gibbs—a post-9/11 character and a former Marine sharpshooter. In its premiere episode, meant to introduce the characters and the show's style, Gibbs takes charge, overruling a Secret Service agent aboard Air Force One and hiding a body from FBI agents (who call Gibbs and his crew "cowboys"), as the FBI is wrongly convinced the deadly poisoning is a terrorist act by al Qaeda.

The first spin-off was *NCIS: Los Angeles* (2009-present), with "G" Callen, the senior (white) agent played by Chris O'Donnell paired with his black partner, Sam Hanna (LL Cool J). Yet another spin-off, *NCIS: New Orleans* (2013-present), showcases Dwayne Pride (Scott Bakula), who is frequently in the crosshairs of bosses who regularly disapprove of his rogue methods. As mentioned above, this show recently added a Middle Eastern agent, Hannah Khoury (Necar Zadegan), but whose "difference" has been largely unexplored or lived up to the show's initial advertising of her as "a seasoned agent who specialized in international counter-intelligence."²⁸ If anything, she has thus far been depicted as a nurturing figure to match Pride's role as the crew's mentor and father figure. Capturing the spirit of the rogue's approach, Pride congratulates an agent's first time in the field, telling Sebastian Lund (Ron Kerkovich), "I'm proud of you, Sebastian ... you risked your life to save others [and]

I heard you even threatened to go a little rogue.” Sebastian takes that as a compliment, noting, “Guess that means I’m finally becoming a real agent!”²⁹

Another long-running show, *Blue Bloods*, debuting in 2010 and now in its ninth season, attests to the staying power of its “comforting” portrait of the Reagans, a multigenerational Irish police family.³⁰ The show’s main star is Tom Selleck as Frank Reagan, a wise, benevolent potentate of a police commissioner, who keeps a portrait of Teddy Roosevelt on his wall for inspiration—fittingly as Roosevelt created the office of commissioner as one of his last acts as New York’s governor. The show also features his father, also a former commissioner, along with his crimefighting offspring. The youngest son, Jamie Reagan (Will Estes) is a uniformed Ivy-Leaguer who chose to don a blue uniform than practice law, and who often plays the supporting cast member to the foregrounded battles between his sister, Erin Reagan Boyle (Bridget Moynahan), a rising star of an assistant district attorney, and their frequently rogue detective brother, Det. Danny Reagan (Donnie Wahlberg), who prefers street justice over adhering to the rules. Like most other rogues, he often dominates the show’s emotional core and most plot trajectories.

Pay Cable and Quality TV Experiments

After *Homicide: Life on the Street*, the critically acclaimed show from the 1990s covered in Chap. 6, no show has garnered more praise for its honest and multifaceted depiction of big city crime than *The Wire*—launched by HBO in 2002 and ending in 2008. The show used each season to investigate a particular aspect of the social and political ills that victimize Baltimore, especially its hardest hit populations, along with spotlighting the failure of the institutions that exist to contain or correct such problems. While subsequent seasons explored troubles from broken schools to inefficient city government, the first season was devoted to the workings of a handful of police characters pitted against an entrenched, organized drug-dealing network ravaging the city’s west side. Novel for a crime series, the cops’ time is split between the street and their desks, pouring over tedious paperwork necessary for wire taps and warrants, which

remains an essential element of actual police work. Its lead character is a troubled, divorced Irish homicide detective, James McNulty (Dominic West), who is familiar yet more complicated than his brethren still populating most broadcast and pay cable TV crime shows. Moreover, McNulty is also surrounded by people who better reflect the contemporary realities of an urban police department, with African American bosses whose characterizations are developed beyond mere tokenism.

The series included a black-white buddy team, but its white cowboy is evenly matched with a more savvy and smarter black partner—both throwbacks to their kick-ass ancestors but whose methods often do more harm than good. The team's apparent leader is a street-wise and methodical black female, Kima Greggs (Sonja Sohn), whose agency is not tempered by the usual gendered limitations, and her lesbian relationship is shown to be a source of love and support instead of previous representations' portrait of deviance. She and her cohorts are allowed the occasional rogue act, as in one scene in which they pummel a particularly noxious drug dealer who spewed enough vile epithets at them, pushing them beyond their usual restraint.

The Wire also showed the layers of urban neglect and bureaucratic corruption as constant, while a few tenacious and dysfunctional cops who, as McNulty admits, love their jobs despite the personal costs, wanting to do the right thing through small, tactical moments rather than grand (and often hollow) gestures. Even the show's drug dealers are nuanced and varied, from young, compromised teens who could be engineers or doctors if circumstances were different; they are shown being lured to dealing drugs for the steady flow of cash, but which does little to change their circumstances—not living long enough to enjoy the fruits of their labor. One mid-level drug dealer is shown sneaking off to a college microeconomics class to better himself, while another street dealer is glimpsed taking care of neighborhood kids and helping them do their homework—as much victims of the interlocking systems of racism, poverty, as the cops are hamstrung by budgetary problems. Unlike most network crime shows, though, *The Wire* provided no catharsis for good toppling evil and included enough characters of color to reorient what constitutes the normative perspective, making space for “difference” that could chal-

lunge the white gaze amid a battered environment equally disturbing to both cop and criminal alike.

The series was created by David Simon, a former police reporter, and Ed Burns, a former homicide detective. Simon has been described as an “authenticity freak” who insisted the show be shot on location in Baltimore, along with using non-actors to heighten the sense of realism.³¹ Such an approach was not meant to fetishize the city’s decay for a white knight to clean up, but to provide an unvarnished portrait of cops and criminals locked in a dark and frustrating stalemate. As Laura Miller and Rebecca Traister note, the show “indulges in neither sentimentality nor moral goading.”³² Although one of the most critically acclaimed shows on American television, they concluded that it was “not very American,” as “American culture is a perpetual pep talk, trafficking in tales of personal redemption and the ultimate triumph of good over evil. We don’t do doom.”³³ Such a conclusion may help explain why the series, although an immense critical success, had limited mainstream appeal.

A series for network TV that tried to imitate *The Wire* was *Southland* of the early 2010s and briefly discussed in Chap. 5 with Regina King’s feisty female detective. The show also featured three white male colleagues that were familiar but with some complicating twists. The well-heeled Ben Sherman (Ben McKenzie) joined the LAPD to make a difference but gradually becomes the most jaded and corrupt; John Cooper (Michael Cudlitz) becomes addicted to painkillers and tries to keep his gay identity under wraps; and Sammy Bryant (Shawn Hatosy) is a cop torn between his conscience and lawlessness as an approach to the mean streets. The show struggled to find a home and consistent audiences, abruptly canceled by NBC prior to the airing of its second season, then picked up by basic cable’s TNT Network from 2010 through 2013.³⁴

Continuing the experiments begun by HBO in the 2010s, platforms known primarily as delivery systems to house or stream previously released content were increasingly creating original content. Netflix’s *Narcos* and Hulu’s *The Looming Tower* attest to such experiments in more complicated characters and less predictable storylines. Amazon too is currently offering its version of a more complex LAPD detective with its original production, *Bosch*, an adaptation of the detective fiction of Michael Connelly, who also serves as the series’ scriptwriter. Harry Bosch’s

biography sets him apart from most detectives as the son of a prostitute who was brutally killed, and which left him struggling in the foster care system. Executive producer Henrik Bastin describes Bosch, portrayed by Titus Welliver, as having had the darkest of childhoods. “As he grows up and becomes a man, Harry could have become a criminal [but] he chose to go toward the light and save other people,” relentlessly pursuing justice for all types of victims, including those society often discounts or discards. Welliver describes his character as a “hunter” who “plays to his own drum”—the epitome of the lone wolf. Connelly, who created the character also describes him as a “warrior,” but also acknowledges that he must also be a rogue, noting, “There’s a noble bargain to police work. It’s very hard to play by all the rules and still get your man,” or so it seems in Hollywood.

And the Jacks Keep Coming

Three years after the series *24* concluded in 2014, a new version premiered, *24: Legacy*, but proved less successful without Bauer in the lead role. The new show featured an African American hero, Sgt. Eric Carter (Corey Hawkins), an Army Ranger whose unit killed a terrorist leader, forcing him and the other rangers to assume new identities to protect them from retaliation by al Qaeda. In the series Carter joins forces with CTU’s former director Rebecca Ingram (Miranda Otto) to prevent another imminent terrorist attack on US soil. The show was abruptly canceled, however, with one reviewer suggesting the political mood had shifted and the show’s premise no longer relevant. The timing of the original *24* in the fall of 2001 was more in tune with a nation that had just experienced 9/11, but by early 2017 when the sequel aired, viewers were perhaps still digesting Trump’s provocative week-old travel ban. “A nation once united by fear is now sharply divided, with a least half the country ardently opposed to any ‘Muslim ban,’” and “its implied links between Muslims and terrorism.”³⁵ As of mid-2018, though, several former producers from both the *24* and *Homeland* were reportedly working on a new “prequel” that is intended to showcase the adventures of a young Bauer just starting his career; although the politics have changed, the

show's original white hero is apparently still worthy of resurrection after all.³⁶

Another iconic white rogue who demonstrates persistent staying power is John McClane, with the 2013 version of *Die Hard* ending with the phrase, "it's hard to kill a McClane."³⁷ Nearly a dozen years after the third sequel, McClane, still embodied by Bruce Willis, returned in *Live Free or Die Hard* in 2007. This version focuses on cyber warfare, or "virtual" terrorism, as described by the hacker, Matt Farrell (Justin Long), who becomes McClane's nerdy sidekick and the love interest of McClane's daughter. The plot pivots on a former defense department programmer who tried to sound the alarm about the nation's vulnerability to the 9/11 attacks, claiming that after he threatened to go public, the defense department tried to destroy him. In the end, McClane and Farrell stop the homegrown terrorist, with action sequences more than a coherent plot dominating the story.

Box office was strong enough to bring McClane back in 2013 for *Good Day to Die Hard*, which makes references to his endurance as an "American cowboy," now in Russia to support his estranged son Jack (Jai Courtney) who is on trial there. The son is actually a covert CIA agent working on "a matter of national security," which he and his father then tackle together, vanquishing a handful of double-crossing Russian scientists and greedy oligarchs. The fifth sequel is currently in production, announced in late 2018 with the title of *McClane*,³⁸ and with its storyline set to bounce back and forth between a present day McClane and his younger self.

Another popular Jack belongs to Tom Cruise, as in the title character from the 2012 film, *Jack Reacher*. It tells the story of an ex-military cop whose help is enlisted by a Pittsburgh homicide detective to help track down a former military sniper who has already killed five random targets. The film's character is the brainchild of British novelist Lee Child, who has written 23 novels in the Reacher series—the films having been adapted from two additional short stories.³⁹ The sequel, *Jack Reacher: Never Go Back* (2016), is about Reacher helping Army Major Susan Turner (Colby Smulders), who is framed for treason by a government conspiracy that prompts them to work together to exonerate both of them as fugitives of the law. As one reviewer notes, "Reacher is one of

those enigmatic, borderline mystical types who surface out of the haze to handle villainy with boundless intelligence, weapons mastery and annihilating violence.”⁴⁰ Much of the mystery about Reacher is rooted in his nomadic existence—he has no home, family, job, or even a change of clothes, as he literally “rides off in a white T-shirt,” working odd jobs until the next dark crisis needs his special skills. As John Lanchester explains, Reacher “fights on behalf of the good,” but his penchant for violence brings him “very close to being a bad guy.”⁴¹ For the purposes of this book, however, Reacher, being totally detached from any formal law enforcement or government agency, is more akin to *The Equalizer* films or *Ray Donovan* (the Showtime series), who are professional “fixers” and “clean-up” crews—more mercenary than dispatched agent as an extension of nation.⁴²

The success of the first Reacher film could also be attributed to its timing, released in the wake of Cruise’s box office hit, *Mission Impossible: Ghost Protocol* (2011), the fourth film in the *Mission Impossible* franchise, with Cruise as Ethan Hunt. There have been six films to date with two in the works slated for 2021 and 2022 premiers, respectively.⁴³ The first film, *Mission Impossible* (1996), picked up the basic premise of the original television series, which ran from 1966 through 1973; the film transforms the independent spy agency known as the Impossible Missions Force into a US government entity. In *Mission Impossible: Rogue Nation* (2015), the unit is disbanded, given its “total disregard for protocol” and unorthodox methods. After US and British intelligence agencies are rife with the usual cadre of self-serving bureaucrats and traitors, Hunt and his crew must destroy the Syndicate—an experiment set up by an MI6 chief that went terribly wrong, with an ex-agent now after billions to fund a global “terrorist superpower.” The former CIA director, first trying to contain Hunt, then after being promoted to IMF boss, warns Hunt in the next installment, *Mission Impossible: Fallout* (2018), not to “go rogue” again.

Jack Ryan: The CIA’s Captain America

Another influential and enduring screen Jack is Tom Clancy’s quintessential Cold War hero, Jack Ryan, who has also been described as “an enduring feature in American culture.”⁴⁴ Like Reacher, Ryan too is

adapted for the screen from best-selling novels. Ryan's screen debut was in *The Hunt for Red October* (1990) with the same director as *Die Hard* and with Alec Baldwin in the lead role, having to grapple with a dangerous threat that the US Navy must repel. But only Ryan grasps the truth: that a Soviet submarine commander is not trying to unleash missiles at US targets but to defect and bring his advanced submarine with him.

Patriot Games followed in 1992 with Harrison Ford as Ryan, an ex-CIA analyst now working as a professor, but drawn back into service to help stop IRA attacks on the British royal family as well as his own. Ford starred again as Ryan in *Clear and Present Danger* (1994), but now as the acting CIA director who gets embroiled in a secret (and illegal) paramilitary operation to take down a Colombian drug cartel (a thinly veiled Medellín). Ryan's efforts also expose a conspiracy involving a greedy businessman, a treacherous national security adviser, a duplicitous CIA underboss, and a president who tries to cover it all up. Ryan defies the president and vows to testify about what he knows before the Senate oversight committee.

In *Sum of All Fears* (2002) Ben Affleck is Ryan but made young again, this time battling to stop neo-Nazis from detonating a nuclear bomb at the Super Bowl that would provoke a war between the United States and a post-Soviet Russia. The last feature-length film was *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit* (2014) with Chris Pine as the character whose biography is completely rewritten to move beyond Clancy's Cold War roots. This time he is a financial genius who completes his doctorate in economics at the age of 19 before joining the Marines after 9/11, later injured in Afghanistan. He then joins the CIA as an analyst, soon uncovering a nefarious plot by a Russian oligarch to engineer a run on US banks that would plunge the nation into economic chaos.

Despite the disappointing box office of the 2014 film,⁴⁵ Ryan was deemed worthy of resurrection in 2018, this time as an original series for Amazon Prime, officially titled, *Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan*, featuring John Krasinski in the lead role. Like *Narcos*, the story of the two opposing forces is told in parallel structure until their paths eventually cross and a showdown ensues. In this case, the story toggles back and forth between Ryan's indoctrination from mere CIA "analyst" to an action-oriented field operative as well as the journey of Mousa bin Suleiman (Ali Suliman),



Fig. 10.2 An updated Jack Ryan with John Krasinski as the venerable cultural hero in the 2018 production from Amazon Video. Screen shot from the official trailer

who slowly transforms from a child in a war-torn country to a radicalized terrorist (Fig. 10.2).

In all his incarnations, there are some elements of Ryan's characterization that remain intact. This new Ryan maintains the character's trusted moral standards, being accused by a former Wall Street colleague of being a "self-righteous boy scout." Even his boss, James Greer (Wendell Pierce), chides Ryan for his earnestness and "merit badges." Ryan balks at Greer's sidestepping the rules to "borrow" Suleiman's phone from collected evidence, as Greer instructs, "Sometimes you got to break a few rules just to get the job done." Ryan, though, like Hollywood crimefighters before him, is not above breaking the rules but for reasons he considers worthy, as in sweet-talking a colleague into freezing Suleiman's bank accounts against Greer's orders. On another occasion Ryan ignores another order to shut down online communication with Suleiman, as Ryan is convinced it is better to string him along.

Ryan is shown to have learned empathy that had been missing from most CIA characters of the past, first to show compassion for refugees and victims caught in the crossfire. While Bauer tortured detainees, Ryan leaves such tasks to others, remaining unsullied by such malicious behaviors. While at a detention center in Yemen, Ryan hears whimpering from a prisoner on the other side of a steel door he passes in the hall but

tries not to notice. When he has his first chance to interrogate his own detainee, whom he thinks is a mere bodyguard (but later turns out to be Suleiman), Ryan congenially shares his meal with his subject. Shadowing Ryan throughout the first season, however, is the more familiar CIA “interrogator,” Matice (John Hoogenakker), a gritty Texan who dons a *shemagh* instead of a cowboy hat and is the one to kidnap, interrogate, and kill on the nation’s behalf, putting a bullet in one of the last co-conspirators in the season finale.

The first season also ends with Ryan eschewing a promotion to replace Greer who is headed to Moscow as deputy station chief. Ryan had already proved to be no careerist, having already walked away from a lucrative Wall Street career to dedicate his life to serving his country. He aptly eschews this type of ambition, which has proven time and again to be an unattractive quality for any American everyman hero. In the season finale, he considers accepting the plane ticket left by Greer to join him in Moscow, which also sets up season two (due to premier in late 2019). Greer may be Ryan’s boss, but he is also his screen “buddy.” Compared to Ryan’s idealism, Greer is a cynical, wise-cracking, former station chief who is not happy to be back at Langley. Greer tries his best to contain Ryan’s exuberance; although a brilliant analyst, Ryan is much too eager to share his theories and bypass agency protocols. Greer, though, is on hand to also help Ryan transition from nerdy desk jockey to the story’s action hero.

A novel aspect of Greer’s character is his conversion to Islam, which he initially did for his ex-wife but now slowly reconnecting with his faith, including to pray over the dead body of a suicide bomber who nearly killed him and Ryan. The two men bond by eventually divulging their closely held secrets. Greer’s is rooted in Karachi where he stabbed and killed a Pakistani army official who was threatening to imprison him, the fallout having sent him home to head up Ryan’s group of fellow analysts—quite a comedown for a man of action. Ryan’s secret dates back to when he was a Marine in Afghanistan, having befriended a local orphan whom he included in an evacuation flight out of the village; once on board the helicopter, though, the boy pulled a pin out of a grenade, killing all the Marines on board except Ryan.⁴⁶

A more complicated subplot involves the French police, as they chase Suleiman’s brother to his childhood home in Paris. One officer complains

to Greer that France cannot keep absorbing Muslims into their society, as they are taking over his country “from the inside,” which prompts Greer to conspicuously get out his prayer beads. The implication is that the French are struggling with change, while Greer is an African American male who has overcome racism to become an officer in the CIA *and* a recent convert to Islam—another American able to adapt and reinvent himself. Spending time with Ryan is the French police captain, Sandrine Arnaud (Marie-Josée Croze), who explains that her country has an entire generation of Muslims with no jobs and no prospects, with Ryan wondering out loud how the educated Suleiman would choose such a dark path. She reminds Ryan that a piece of paper does not change how Muslims, despite being French citizens, are viewed in France as the Other. In America, she says, one can be an African and an American; or she adds, a Mexican American, Italian American, or Chinese American. “In France, there are no hyphenates, you are either French or not,” she explains.⁴⁷ Both of these French views—the xenophobic and the empathetic—capture prevailing sentiments in France, but the deeper legacy of France’s colonization of Muslim North Africa is rendered here in a reductionist shorthand that only exists to set up the American context as progressive by contrast.⁴⁸ Greer and Ryan not only have short memories, but also as highly individuated characters bear no culpability for their nation’s othering; in this way, they are able to service as avatars for America’s best intentions.

Moreover, rather than a post-racial universe, those hyphenated American identities Arnaud lists are laden with hidden hierarchies of inequities, which her character, as a foreign observer, is set up to admire from the outside. But Ryan and Greer pretending not to know better is meant to advance the notion of America as a united front, when the inconvenient truth tells a different story. While some of the ethnicities Arnaud mentions have been absorbed into the mainstream, as discussed in Chap. 6, rendering obsolete the need for a hyphenated identity (other than for the sake of cultural pride), others have not, with a hyphenated difference often assigned *to* them to mark them as the Other.

Finally, Ryan is that everyman who knows better and senses more than his superiors. After a Sarin gas attack in France, the American defense secretary concludes that it does not directly threaten the United States,

thus, dismisses any action. Engaging another common trope of unfeeling bureaucrats versus intuitive and righteous foot soldiers like Ryan, he argues, “This is not a French problem, this is a world problem.”

What Jack is Telling America (and the World)

The original Clancy creation presented as a national savior was not lost on Reagan,⁴⁹ and 35 years later, the new series remains similarly invested in American exceptionalism. As a reviewer for *The Atlantic* notes, Ryan remains “a Cold War fantasy,” adding, “If Superman stands for truth, justice, and the American way, Jack Ryan stands for capitalism, the family unit, and a strong skepticism when it comes to politicians of any stripe.”⁵⁰ Similarly, presented as a “clash of civilizations,” another reviewer criticizes the show’s refusal to “challenge the narrative of noble American involvement and intervention abroad.”⁵¹ Arguably, the show includes several moments that both affirm and contest such assumptions. As Marouf A. Hasian noted about Maya in *Zero Dark Thirty*, this Ryan series is similarly “ideologically sutured together as a vehicle for American exceptionalism.”⁵²

Ryan remains as beloved as McClane and as durable as Bauer, but with more profound connections to the nation’s best intentions and what it thinks it should be. McClane was its most casual defender, the hapless everyman cop—a revamped Adam for a New World—an American hero his European (and Old World) foe seriously underestimated. Bauer on the other hand, was a character that matched the trauma of 9/11 for many Americans, acting on behalf of a wounded nation out for revenge, mired in paranoia about us versus them, and often forsaking the long-standing goals of openness and a vow to progress. While Bauer was the American crimefighter on the edge of ruin, the new Ryan is here to make him likeable again by returning to his rightful roots and recovery of innocence—if not for the CIA, then for the agent who represents the nation’s best intentions and that forgives its worst mistakes. A dangerous world still threatens the homeland and the globe, but the 2018 Ryan seeks to regain his senses and return to posing as the reluctant defender who patrols the world answering cries for help or helping without doing harm, at least not

on purpose. Like classical Hollywood figures, the Amazon version is a throwback, but also a step forward. In always looking to the next frontier, Ryan walks a path embodied by similar American heroes dating back centuries, and as always individuals severed from context.

The familiarity of these characters who adapt to changing domestic pressures and shifting geopolitics is what Hasian called a Foucauldian “effective truth, a constitutive nationalist ‘truth.’”⁵³ Although Hasian was describing Maya, the concept can be applied to rogue crimefighters dating back to Dirty Harry, who already walked a well-worn path first established and expanded by the hundreds of frontier heroes and reckless cowboys who came before him. It is a reassuring, looping narrative that affirms the nation’s ideals, but also a story devoid of documented history or alternative remembrances. In the end, and despite Ryan’s perfect blending of a soldier’s scars, a scholar’s doctorate, and a patriot’s dedication to duty, he represents only what America wants projected to the world. It is unfortunate that this latest makeover does not re-engineer Ryan to use his moral courage and intelligence to interrogate and learn from a much more complicated and checkered past.

Superheroes for a Superpower

If mere mortal crimefighters ever fail to guard the nation, then a slew of American superheroes are increasingly available to do the job. Given their enhanced powers, though, which defy the American everyman approach baked into the redeemable rogue character, most are beyond the scope of this book, except for one: Captain America. Like a Jack Ryan with a shield, his alter ego, Steve Rogers, was an everyman before he was a superhero—the personification of a globocop whom borders cannot contain; he is ever polite when he has to hurt someone and a defensive player who avoids being belligerent. Captain America was engineered to be a super soldier by genetically modifying the scrawny and very human Steve Rogers into a secret weapon to be used against the Axis powers during World War II. He was armed with super strength and an invisible shield—emblazoned with a white star surrounded by white and blue rings that protects his body and doubles as a lethal projectile.

By the 1950s he was redrawn again within the comic book universe to battle the communist-inspired Red Skull. Although the continuity of his character in the confusing maze of the Marvel universe is complicated and also beyond the scope of this book, aspects of his history are undeniably linked to the other more human crimefighters under study here. Moreover, unlike Superman or Mickey Mouse who remain unchanged by design, never growing old or out of style, Captain America is ever reimagined to tackle the latest threat to America—now the incessant and uncontained War on Terror. Similar to ordinary American crimefighters, Steve Rogers/Captain America too is a reluctant hero, never an aggressor or bully looking for a fight, but ever-responsive to pleas for justice and ready to fight on behalf of those vulnerable *others*.

In *Captain America: The First Avenger* (2011), the story traces the creation of the character (portrayed by Chris Evans) and his service in World War II, which ended when his plane crashed, leaving him in frozen animation until found and transported to a modern-day New York. At the film's close, he is greeted by the director of the superspy agency⁵⁴ that soon puts him back to work saving the world. In *Captain America: Civil War* (2016), he joins a band of other superheroes, only this time rather than the obedient soldier, Captain America goes rogue. Some of the Avengers' missions have righted wrongs but also killed innocents and left a wake of destruction. As a "group of US-based, enhanced individuals who routinely ignore sovereign borders," warns US Secretary of State Thaddeus Ross (William Hurt), they must be put under greater supervision and agree to an accord that will determine when their services will be dispatched.⁵⁵ As Ross explains to them, they are certainly owed an "unpayable debt" for risking their lives to rid the world of threats, but while some see them as heroes, "there are some who would prefer the word vigilantes."⁵⁶ Tony Stark/Ironman (Robert Downey, Jr.) thinks the Avengers should be reined in, "if we're boundaryless, we're no better than the bad guys."⁵⁷ Rogers/Captain America boldly disagrees, claiming the United Nations is run by people with agendas, and agendas change. "We may not be perfect, but the safest hand is still our own," he concludes.⁵⁸ In this way, Rogers/Captain America echoes the decades-long debate among American politicians, with "America first" sympathizers accusing the UN of fostering a global government that could supersede or impair



Fig. 10.3 Captain America (Chris Evans) leading the Avengers in battle. Screen shot from the 2011 official trailer for *Captain America: First Avenger* from Marvel Entertainment

US directives. On the other hand, the UN was built on American soil, and established the United States as one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council with impressive powers (and a track record) that attest to its hegemony.⁵⁹

The civil war among the Avengers begins, with the rest of the members having to choose sides, battling each other for most of the film. They eventually discover that their preeminent enemy has engineered such a rift so they would destroy each other and leave him the last super villain standing. In the final scenes, Stark/Ironman listens to a message left by Rogers/Captain America, who vows to carry on alone if necessary, and still refusing to sign the UN accord that was intended to control him (Fig. 10.3).

Many scholars have studied Captain America and whether he still adheres to the blind patriotism that inspired his creation in the 1940s, or if he has evolved into a superhero who simply hates bullies. As the above 2016 film implies: he dislikes politicians, ignores bureaucrats, and acts at his discretion, convinced he knows what is best for the nation, and by

extension, the world—much like every other American rogue crime-fighter under review in this book. J. Richard Stevens asserts that Captain America “has been reborn each time to epitomize an updated sense of patriotism, American society and power.”⁶⁰

Robert Jewett and John Shelton Lawrence see a more comprehensive relationship, one less reflective of a prevailing zeitgeist and more didactic and consequential. Along with other popular culture titans, Captain America is representative of a type of “American civil religion,” which is capable of inculcating Americans and the nation’s allies (those who accept the concept of America as “leader of the free world”) into absorbing American priorities. What they call the “Captain American complex,” includes “employing non-democratic means to achieve democratic ends,”⁶¹ and those ends are being accomplished by someone who must “transcend the legal order.”⁶²

Moreover, as Jewett and Lawrence assert, “like the gods, they are permanent outsiders to the human community.”⁶³ Working off Joseph Campbell’s archetype analysis of world mythology, the authors see the roots of this new monomyth of American popular culture dating back to the nineteenth century cowboys. They also point out that a previous hero such as Superman or the Lone Ranger traditionally apprehends his miscreant then “delivers the evildoers to the police rather than killing them or dishing out his own punishment.”⁶⁴ Similar to Jewett and Lawrence’s warning that the monomyth’s escalating distrust of those entrusted with power, my book argues that the American rogue crimefighter is frequently the judge, jury, and executioner, as government and other institutional leaders are increasingly suspect, as are legal or scientific experts, to name a few, with extensive training and verified experience. The effect is similar to what Jewett and Lawrence warn about the system’s unraveling if further erosion to democratic processes continues—and whether perpetrated by superheroes, globocops or US presidents.

The example of Jack Ryan above, however, shows a retreat from such a fatal trajectory as a matter of self-preservation—a purposeful correction within the hegemonic process. Bauer risked going one step too far, while a new Ryan is back to restore the reliability and moral compass of the white knight who can obscure the regenerative violence so coded into the DNA of the rogue crimefighter. To that end, his white, male privilege and embodiment of a nation can maintain its dominion by once again hiding in plain

sight. Just as Ryan denies being anything more than an analyst, the US foreign (and domestic) policy he represents can continue claiming to be only about benevolent policing on behalf of the national and global greater good.

The Last Rogue Standing

Thus, for better or worse, Hollywood's rogue crimefighter continues to be perceived as the nation's "fictional" guardian, protecting the invented collective, or to borrow Anthony Giddens's phrase, the "bordered power-container" with "demarcated boundaries ... sanctioned by law," which confers on cops and other authority figures the control over "the means of internal and external violence."⁶⁵ In an ever-volatile world of strained geopolitics and the failure of the nation-building experiments related to the Bush Doctrine, America's rogue crimefighter continues to be dispatched to sketch out new lines in the sand, especially in the Middle East, where the so-called "clash of civilizations"⁶⁶ is most evident. Carl Boss and Tom Pollard draw a similar conclusion, noting that with the lack of an ambitious state propaganda apparatus, popular culture often does the heavy-lifting, embracing what they call "military virtues" and transmitting them "not only through movies but TV and video games," which are "today more deeply entrenched in American society."⁶⁷

The existence of a "rogue" mentality within a wider national context has not gone unnoticed by a variety of authors, commentators, and Hollywood storytellers, which keep churning out rogues or that seize on the currency of the "rogue" label, as in *Mission: Impossible—Rogue Nation* or *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* another. In *Rogue Nation: American Unilateralism and the Failure of Good Intentions*, the former Reagan administration economist, Clyde Prescowitz, argues that the nation's rogue behavior after 9/11 undermined its image as the global "good guy," with its roots in "our mythology and the dominance of our culture," which he dubs a "peculiar ... brand of 'soft imperialism.'"⁶⁸ Law professor Karen J. Greenberg, author of *Rogue Justice: The Making of the Security State*, sounds a similar alarm about American overreach. Still others warn about the nation's reliance on go-it-alone scenarios that they believe threatens rather than ensures the global peace—a mindset that undergirds American popular culture, which in turn informs and influences political rhetoric and behavior, as this book has stressed.

Collectively, they are worried about a system gone increasingly rogue and one now in the hands of a president routinely described as a rogue himself. Trump boasts of his status as an outsider to government, although he is not the first to leverage this popular approach to running for office. It remains a particularly curious and uniquely American strategy for seeking the government's highest-ranking job: to claim to want to be part of government (at its highest level) while denigrating its very existence or utility; even to boast that one has no interest, no expertise, and no experience in government to prove to American voters how ideally suited one is for the job. While Trump certainly is indicative of many themes examined in this book, it is not any one president or popular culture icon that is the issue. Rather, it is the accumulation of the myths and their deployment on behalf of American hegemony that is the more perennial and pernicious problem. Having these tools in the hands of the current president, in part a popular culture invention as a reality TV star,⁶⁹ only makes the problem more patently obvious, but it is by no means eradicated once Trump is no longer in office.

It is the uncritical acceptance of and preference for rogues as the epitome of an effective American agent—on and off screen—who must forsake the system to make the system work that is most disturbing. Such a contradiction reveals a schism long baked into the nation's operating philosophy and first noticed by foreign visitors as far back as Tocqueville to current international heads of state. Whatever the next turn, the white rogue crimefighter seems likely to endure, given this book's chronicle of how difficult it is for challengers to disturb his dominion. As long as *he* can, he will remain an influential and myth-soaked figure who is best able to capture the strains and moral fog of America's best (and worst) intentions, and whose end goal is to preserve and extend the nation's fabled "exceptionalism," at home and abroad.

Notes

1. Mark Hughes, "Fate of the Furious' Makes Vin Diesel a \$6 Million Man in 2017," *Forbes*, April 26, 2017.
2. Anita Busch, "Vin Diesel, The H Collective Acquire 'xXx' Franchise Rights Before Fourth Installment," *Deadline Hollywood*, April 17, 2018.

3. Unlike the lucrative earnings for the original film, the sequel barely earned back its production costs of \$60 million, according to [imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com), even after accounting for overseas box office receipts, which usually produce reliable profits for action films.
4. Robert Jewett and John Shelton Lawrence, *Captain America and the Crusade Against Evil: The Dilemma of Zealous Nationalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 635–636, Kindle.
5. Rolf Halse, “Counter-Stereotypical Images of Muslim Characters in the Television Series *24*: A Difference that Makes No Difference?” *Critical Studies in Television*, 10, no. 1 (Spring 2015), 54–72.
6. Evelyn Alsultany, *Arabs and Muslims in the Media: Race and Representation after 9/11* (New York University Press, 2012).
7. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 200–201.
8. The Lebanese American entertainer and philanthropist, Danny Thomas, was a devout Catholic.
9. See <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/executive-order-protecting-nation-foreign-terrorist-entry-united-states/>.
10. Kyle Blaine and Julia Horowitz, “How the Trump Administration Chose the 7 Countries in the Immigration Executive Order,” *CNN*, January 30, 2017. Also see Uri Freidman, “What Exactly is Trump’s Travel Ban Supposed to Stop,” *The Atlantic*, February 9, 2017. The ban did not include Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt, drawing intense criticism about Trump’s apparent conflicts of interest, as he has business dealings with these countries. See David G. Post, “Was Trump Executive Order an Impeachable Offense,” *Washington Post*, January 30, 2017.
11. *The Siege*, DVD, directed by Edward Zwick (20th Century Fox, 2000).
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*
14. Patrick McGilligan, *Tender Comrades: A Backstory of the Hollywood Blacklist* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).
15. *FBI*, Season 1, episode 1, “Pilot,” directed by Niels Arden Opleb, aired on September 25, 2018. CBS.
16. *FBI*, Season 1, episode 2, “Green Birds,” directed by Nick Gomez, aired on October 2, 2018. CBS.
17. Zeeko Zaki, “I’m a Muslim American and I Play the Hero in a TV Show. Here’s What My Experience Has Taught Me About How We can Change Hollywood,” *Time*, October 16, 2018.

18. Hulu like Netflix is expanding into producing content rather than just being a repository for recycled shows. See Chuck Tryon, "TV Got Better: Netflix's Original Programming Strategies for Binge Viewing," *Media Industries*, 2, no. 2 (2015).
19. Mike Hale, "Review: *The Looming Tower* Looks at 9/11, but Misses the Big Picture," *The New York Times*, February 27, 2018. See also Liam Matthews, "Who's Who on *The Looming Tower*," tvguide.com, March 1, 2018. See also, Gregory Ellwood, "Peter Sarsgaard on the Possibilities of *The Looming Tower Season Two*," June 21, 2018. Available online at <https://theplaylist.net/peter-sarsgaard-looming-tower-20180621/>.
20. Jane Mayer, "The Unidentified Queen of Torture," *The New Yorker*, December 18, 2014. Also see <https://theintercept.com/2014/12/19/senior-cia-officer-center-torture-scandals-alfreda-bikowsky/>. Other CIA sources responded to the Senate 2014 report implicating Alfreda Frances Bikowsky (her identity classified at the time), one vouching for her al Qaeda expertise, while another officer argued, "She should be put on trial and put in jail for what she has done." Matthew Cole, "Bin Laden Expert Accused of Shaping CIA Deception on Torture Program," *NBC News*, December 18, 2014. Her identity now seems to be common knowledge as her name is listed as having inspired Marsh in the TV Guide character summaries: <https://www.tvguide.com/news/the-looming-tower-character-guide/>.
21. Mayer, *ibid.* Cole, *ibid.* Also see Jennifer O'Mahony, "The CIA, *Zero Dark Thirty* and Me: A Female Agent on Life Under Cover," *The Telegraph*, June 5, 2013. Bikowsky is also reportedly the inspiration for both Maya in *Zero Dark Thirty* and Mathison in *Homeland*. Several accounts refer to the Scheuer's Alec station (named after his son), employing 27 people—most of them women—as "Scheuer's Harem" or "the Manson Family." See also: See Mark Bowden, *The Finish: The Killing of Osama bin Laden* (Atlantic Monthly Press, 2012).
22. Lawrence Wright, "The Agent: Did the CIA Stop an FBI Detective from Preventing 9/11?" *The New Yorker*, July 10, 2006.
23. Danielle Turchiano, "'The Looming Tower' Boss on the Importance of the Muslim-American Hero of the Story," *Variety*, February 22, 2018.
24. Debra Birnbaum, "*Looming Tower*: Showrunner Dan Futterman Breaks Down 'Shocking' Finale," *Variety*, April 18, 2018.
25. Soufan says he remains baffled by the CIA's failure to share information before 9/11 but also the costs of engineered intelligence by some officers to help the Bush administration make the case for the Iraq War. "Look

- at all the blood that we lost in Iraq,” Soufan laments. “Look at how the Iraq War helped al Qaeda both with recruits and financially. It’s tragic.” See *Frontline*, Season 29, episode 20, “The Interrogator,” aired on September 13, 2011, PBS.
26. Sophie Gilbert, “The Gripping History of *The Looming Tower*,” *The Atlantic*, March 2, 2018. Also see Mike Hale, “Review: *The Looming Tower* Looks at 9/11, but Misses the Big Picture,” *The New York Times*, February 27, 2018.
 27. The series of hit shows with CSI in the title, as in Crime Scene Investigation, showcased the role of forensics in solving crimes, and not central to this book’s focus. Its first spin-off, *CSI: Miami*, after its 2002 debut, produced a decade of shows that made the shades-wearing Lt. Horacio Caine a TV icon, portrayed by David Caruso, the former star of *NYPD Blue*.
 28. As quoted on show’s official website, available at: <https://www.cbs.com/shows/ncis-new-orleans/about/>.
 29. *NCIS: New Orleans*, Season 3, episode 19, “Quid Pro Quo,” directed by Alex Zakrzewski, aired on March 28, 2017, CBS.
 30. It is reminiscent of Edward Conlon’s opus about being a Harvard-educated cop from a multigenerational Irish police family who joins the NYPD. The difference between *Blue Bloods* and Conlon’s book, *Blue Blood*, is the latter’s often distressing and jarring portrait of a cop’s daily life, especially one pitted against theory and family folklore—and amid the backdrop of a city devastated by the attacks of 9/11.
 31. Margaret Talbot, “Stealing Life: The Crusader Behind ‘The Wire,’” *The New Yorker*, October 22, 2007.
 32. Laura Miller and Rebecca Traister, “The Best TV Show of All Time,” *Salon*, September 15, 2007.
 33. Ibid.
 34. “‘Southland’ Canceled: TNT Decides Not to Pick Up Cop Drama for Season 6,” *Huffington Post*, updated story from July 10, 2013. Available online.
 35. Joanna Robinson, “How *24: Legacy* Grapples with Trump’s Travel Ban,” *Vanity Fair*, February 5, 2017.
 36. Joe Otterson, “*24* Prequel Series in the Works at Fox,” *Variety*, July 30, 2018.
 37. *A Good Day to Die Hard*, directed by John Moore (20th Century Fox, 2013), Amazon Prime.

38. Nick Romano, "New *Die Hard* Movie Officially Titled *McClane*," *Entertainment Weekly*, September 3, 2018.
39. John Lanchester, "How Jack Reacher was Built," *The New Yorker*, November 14, 2016.
40. Manohla Dargis, "Review: Tom Cruise Has a Familiar Furrow in *Jack Reacher: Never Go Back*," *The New York Times*, October 20, 2016.
41. Lanchester, *The New Yorker*.
42. The second film failed to enjoy the success of the first, especially with both Child and fans of the novels increasingly disapproving of Cruise's depiction of a character described as six-foot-five, as the actor only stands five-foot-seven; interestingly, that did not affect the first film's box office success.
43. Mariah Haas, "Tom Cruises Announces Two New 'Mission: Impossible' Films in the Works," *Fox News*, January 14, 2019.
44. Sophie Gilbert, "Jack Ryan: Reaganite Hero," *The Atlantic*, August 31, 2018.
45. Maane Khatchatourian, "Chris Pine Deeply Regrets Not Getting 'Jack Ryan' Right," *Variety*, December 27, 2014.
46. Pine's Ryan's was also afflicted with PTSD, along with being more politically aware of the agency's controversial past. Pine imagined his Ryan as a "questioning man," aware of "what happened in the CIA with ... water boarding and torture." Eric Kelsey, "Clancy's Cold War Hero Jack Ryan Gets Film Reboot with Familiar Foe," [reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-jackryan/clancys-cold-war-hero-jack-ryan-gets-film-reboot-with-familiar-foe-idUSBRE-A0G1Q620140117), January 17, 2014. See <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-jackryan/clancys-cold-war-hero-jack-ryan-gets-film-reboot-with-familiar-foe-idUSBRE-A0G1Q620140117>.
47. *Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan*, Season 1, episode 3, "Black 22," directed by Patricia Rigger, Amazon Prime.
48. This ignores the vast differences among American identifies, with some ethnicities absorbed into the mainstream, rendering obsolete the need for a hyphenated identity other than for the sake of cultural pride, as may be the case for Italian Americans. Other ethnicities and racial identities, though, have not been accepted as normatively American, and a hyphenated difference is often assigned to them to mark them as the Other. See Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 7. Also see Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

49. See <https://www.c-span.org/video/?404158-1/ronald-reagan-tom-clancy-national-security>
50. Gilbert, "Jack Ryan," August 31, 2018.
51. Sonia Saraiya, "Jack Ryan is a Patriotic Nightmare," *Vanity Fair*, August 31, 2018.
52. Marouf A. Hasian, Jr., "Military Orientalism at the Cineplex: A Postcolonial Reading of Zero Dark Thirty," *Critical Studies in Communication*, 31, no. 5 (2014), 466.
53. *Ibid.*, 474.
54. The agency is known as SHIELD, originally the Supreme Headquarters, International Espionage, Law-Enforcement Division; it was changed in 1991 to Strategic Hazard Intervention Espionage Logistics Directorate; and more recently, Extreme Homeland Intervention, Enforcement and Logistics Division.
55. *Captain America: Civil War*, DVD, directed by Joe Russo (Marvel, 2016).
56. *Ibid.*
57. *Ibid.*
58. *Ibid.*
59. Charles T. Call, David Crow, and James Ron, "Is the UN a Friend or a Foe?" The Brookings Institution, October 3, 2017. Available online at brookings.edu.
60. J. Richard Stevens, *Captain America, Masculinity, and Violence: The Evolution of a National Icon* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2015), 3.
61. Jewett and Lawrence, 445, Kindle.
62. *Ibid.*, 466–467.
63. *Ibid.*, 463.
64. *Ibid.*, 501–502.
65. Anthony Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence: Volume 2 of a Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 121.
66. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 1996).
67. Carl Boggs and Tom Pollard, *The Hollywood War Machine: U.S. Militarism and Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 2.
68. Clyde Prescowitz, *Rogue Nation: American Unilateralism and the Failure of Good Intentions* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), 6.
69. Patrick Radden Keefe, "How Mark Burnett Resurrected Donald Trump as an Icon of American Success," *The New Yorker*, December 27, 2008.

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