Training Day and The Shield:
Evil Cops and the Taint of Blackness

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Abstract
The police detectives of Hollywood’s Training Day (2001) and cable television’s The Shield (2002-), Alonzo Harris and Vic Mackey, represent the newest face of evil in entertainment media. Harris and Mackey are menacing, rough cops who rule their urban beats like the street gangs and criminals who co-exist in the same cement terrain. Training Day and The Shield utilise a discourse that emphasises racial signifiers and class positioning to portray a social environment that justifies the presence of such troublesome policing. Through a critical, cultural analysis of these figures, we explore these sociopolitical themes while expounding upon definitions of evil that begin with describing a war between light and dark, black and white. Our analysis is informed by James McDaniel, St. Augustine, and Nietzsche’s definitions of evil. We argue that, by definition, only the Alonzo Harris characterisation, portrayed by a Black body, in contrast with that of a white Vic Mackey, can be considered truly evil in nature by virtue of his undivided emersion in the “dark” - morally and racially.

Key Words: African Americans, Augustine, ethnicity, F. Nietzsche, police, race, The Shield, stereotyping, Training Day, whiteness

1. Introduction
Racial images in the mass media are infused with color-coded positive and negative moralistic features. -Jannette L. Dates and William Barlow

The dawn of the twenty-first century brings with it a new face of evil in entertainment media. This evil comes in the form of a breed of police detectives who are highly corrupted, often motivated by greed rather than by a sense of justice, and murderous. These cops often wreck far greater counts of bloody havoc on the communities they are to serve and protect than these populations would normally witness amongst their own criminal element. They also prey exclusively upon communities that are poor, urban, populated by people of colour (African Americans, Latinos, Asians, Africans), and teetering on the brink of collapse because of disenfranchising sociopolitical issues. Their general lawlessness permits them to take command of and prey upon such gritty, marginalised neighbour-
hoods with great ease. Additionally, these cops participate in the distribution of illegal drugs, a practice that works to further debilitate the populace. Evil cops, too, know how to work the system; they are adept at exploiting the notion that the justice and legal system, often bound by re-election politics, are ethically compromised to maintain an image of peace-keeping and control, even when none is present.

Such cops, then, are a far cry from sunny Mayberry’s charming “peace officers” of *The Andy Griffith Show* (1960-68) or the straight shooting (literally, and only if they must use a gun), three-piece suit wearing team of Elliot Ness’ Untouchables. Evil cops are not simply “loose cannon” iconoclasts who are willing to compromise the tenets of the law, and even risk their careers, for the more ennobling goal of ridding society of a criminal evil that the justice system seems ill-equipped to handle, as embodied in characters such as Clint Eastwood’s Dirty Harry, Nick Nolte’s Jack Cates of *48 Hours* (1982), and Dennis Franz’s Andy Sipowicz of *NYPD Blue* (1993-2005). These bad-cop portrayals are also very different from the traditional urban cop portrayals embodied by Jack Vincennes of *L.A. Confidential* (1997) and Frank Penbleton of the series *Homicide: Life on the Street* (1993-99), and also from Helen Mirren’s Jane Tennison of *Prime Suspect* (intermittent since 1991) and Robbie Coltrane’s “Fitz” of *Cracker* (1993-95). These more commonplace cop characterisations are defined by heroism, yet without hero worship. They are intuitive and skilled, rather than raw and reckless. They all possess a victim-centred desire for justice. This quest for justice, at times in an unjust society where bad guys sometimes win, makes the traditional cop principled and dedicated, human, and notably humane.

For the evil cop (and he is always male), his transgressions are far worse than hotheadedness and a quick trigger finger. His inner conflicts are never tied to upholding the principles symbolised by his badge or meting out a “special” form of justice for the most abhorrent amongst us: the pedophile, the child murderer, the serial killer of doting middle-class moms, and the like. Instead, such cops are depicted as utterly vile, with their wickedness heightened by pitiless immorality and the virtual impunity that their badges afford.

The police detectives of Hollywood’s *Training Day* (2001) and cable television’s *The Shield* (2002-) portray evil, rough cops who rule their urban beats much like the street-gangs and criminals that are represented as co-existing in the same cement terrain. Michael Chiklis is the actor who, until starring in *The Shield*, was best known as the teddy bear cuddly, amicable police commissioner Tony Scali on the television series *The Commish* (1991-95). Denzel Washington, whose filmography includes memorable roles in *Glory* (which earned him an Oscar for best supporting actor), *Philadelphia* (1993), *Malcolm X* (1992), and *The Hurricane* (1999), is one actor who until *Training Day* did not deviate from the heroic cop with a heart of gold role in films such as *The Mighty Quinn* (1989), *Virtuosity* (1995), and *Fallen* (1998). Together, Chiklis’ and Washington’s celluloid alter egos Vic Mackey and Alonzo Harris, respectively (henceforth, Mackey and Alonzo, as they are identified in their
roles), are, as Mackey puts it in the premier episode of *The Shield*, “a different kind of cop.” Indeed, Alonzo and Mackey are different kinds of cops who relish the no-holds-barred torture of criminal suspects, and even innocent witnesses, who require goading to help solve crimes. To illustrate, Alonzo takes great delight in a sort of ad hoc castration of a Black male rape suspect. (Race, it will soon be evidenced, plays an important role in *Training Day.*) Likewise, Mackey demonstrates how handy he can be with an impossibly thick Los Angeles telephone book against a child abduction suspect.

Though a departure from most popular police portrayals, the emergence of the lauded evil cop - Washington was awarded a Best Actor Oscar for *Training Day* and Chiklis’ performance on *The Shield* landed him an Emmy - is not entirely unexpected. The long-running Fox reality series *Cops* (1989-) has been painting a picture of the urban landscape as inherently dangerous, while desensitising television audiences to police brutality for well over a decade. *Cops* pits “bad boy” criminals, most often the disenfranchised - the poor, addicts, prostitutes, people of colour, who do things like grow marijuana in their backyards, drink too much, and who cannot get along with their girl/boyfriends - against police officers (most often White males) who, “when they come for you,” do things like chase down, tackle, wrestle, and then liberally beat suspects. In his study on media violence, W. James Potter cites research in which the police of *Cops* are shown being aggressive 51 percent of the time v. 19 percent of the time on the part of the criminals.² That *Cops* does not include any post-arrest narrative on how the cases are adjudicated, be the arrestees set free and/or filing police brutality charges, leaves its audience with the message that the police behaviours, including high-speed chases ending in horrific crashes, are all within the law and warranted.

Like *Cops*, *Training Day* and *The Shield* utilise a discourse that emphasises racial signifiers and class positioning to explain the social factors that would allow the rise of such troublesome police. Constructions of the poor and “the coloured” as inherently morally deficient precede the portrayal of the evil cop and thereby justify his excessive use of force. By focusing on and offering a critical, culture analysis of *Training Day*, and by contrasting it with *The Shield*, this chapter seeks to explore these sociopolitical themes while expounding upon definitions of evil that begin with describing a war between light and dark, black and white. Specifically, Nietzsche and St. Augustine are used to provide commentary on, with James McDaniel offering a vocabulary for, a portrayal of evil. We argue that, by definition, only the Alonzo Harris characterisation, portrayed by a Black body, in contrast with that of a White Vic Mackey, can be considered truly evil in nature by virtue of undivided emersion in the “dark” - morally and racially. These moral and racial constructions are intrinsically dichotomous, with the evil dark body also suffering from a dark racial body as well. Fundamentally, the argument here is that the authentically evil individual popular today is perpetuated through the “brutal buck” image, a Black male stereotype that, here, 1) constitutes a credibly evil cop, and 2) sustains our social interpretation of (impure)
black bodies requiring control, and if need be, destruction enacted by (pure) white bodies.

2. **Training Day: “If You’re Black, Get Back”**

*Training Day*’s setting is present-day Los Angeles, California. Alonzo Harris has been assigned police officer-turned-detective in training Jake Hoyt (Ethan Hawke), a White male. The film takes place over a single, sun-up-to-sun-down day in the life of the “traditional cop” trainee. Jake quickly discovers that his career and very life are in the hands of a “wolf” who views L.A.’s disenfranchised, and ultimately Jake himself, as sheep to be, at best, herded and, at worst, slaughtered. The existence of a cop like Alonzo in the popular, though repulsive, is highly specious in the real. As the film’s director Antoine Fuqua intimates, “it is not a movie that everyone is going to accept because it’s the truth. It’s a hard reality.” *Training Day* is offered up within the real-life context of the Rampart Division scandal (subtly referenced in the film) that revealed members of the Los Angeles Police Department had gang affiliations, framed suspects, killed others, stole, dealt drugs, and otherwise engaged in a myriad of serious crimes and misbehaviours. The film is also informed by the similar misdeeds of an LAPD “gang” of officers who called themselves the Oakland Riders. The Riders were a clan of cops that were easily identified by their gang-style tattoos and rolled-up shirt sleeves revealing bulging biceps. The Riders terrorised and reaped the benefits of misconduct until finally being exposed by a rookie informant.

In *Training Day*’s plot line, Alonzo, who often succumbs to fits of rage, beats a Russian mobster to death during a visit to Las Vegas. Alonzo is given one week to compensate the dead mobster’s cronies with one million dollars. Failure to pay means his death. Thus, Alonzo concocts an elaborate scheme to kill his drug lord friend and steal his money to repay the Russians. Alonzo needs the assistance of his trainee, Jake, and it is revealed that for a week prior to their training day together, Alonzo has given careful thought to a plan which entails manipulating Jake to secure his trust and then ensnaring him in a series of crimes that ends, as planned, in the murder of the drug-dealing friend. Unbeknownst to Jake, Alonzo has also planned Jake’s murder. Within the real context of the LAPD, this storyline sounds mundane rather than far-fetched because, additionally, in the real, LAPD officers have been investigated for their involvement in the revenge killing of New York/East Coast rapper the Notorious B.I.G., a.k.a. Biggie Smalls, in retaliation for the murder of California/West Coast rapper Tupac Shakur. Theories have been presented in films and documentaries that focus on members of the LAPD with gang affiliations (the Bloods) as having carried out the murder of the Notorious B.I.G.

These scandals supported a rhetoric of Reagan/Bush-era politics that proffered the idea that a different kind of cop was needed in America’s poorer, urban, largely Black and Brown areas that were fraught with crime due to drug territory wars. It was reasoned: who better to contain such threats from spilling into more illustrious neighbourhoods than toughs born from those purported battlefields, or tough outsider cops who
seemed to come with a set of prejudices and contempt for the communities they were assigned to? If there were skeptics, then George H. W. Bush reminded us of what would happen if the law went soft on just one part of the criminal element; Willie Horton was going to get you. Willie Horton was a dark-skinned African American male who was incarcerated for the lethal stabbing and robbery of a gas station attendant. He served eleven years before he was furloughed from prison on a work-release programme supported by then-presidential candidate Michael Dukakis. While away from the prison, Horton committed another crime, torturing and murdering a man who was waiting for his fiancée to return home. When she finally arrived, hours later, Horton beat and raped the woman, then finally fled the scene in the couple’s vehicle. Bush used the Horton case, and, more importantly, the Horton image - a multitude of Hortons rotating out of a fast-moving revolving door - to strike fear in the hearts of Americans. The campaign implied, “if you don’t vote for me, you will have hundreds of these scary Black men in your neighbourhoods.” The imagination did the rest; Willie Horton was coming to rape and pillage. Big, Black, and brutal, Willie Horton was scarier than Freddie Krueger.

The Willie Horton ad campaign drew upon a long-instituted stereotype used to describe the Black male: the brutal buck. D. W. Griffith’s 1915 epic *The Birth of a Nation* is (dis)credited with being one of the first films to feature the brutal buck, a stereotype associated with the African American male that would forever adversely define Black men in the popular, and in many’s imagination. The brutal buck is depicted as big, black (the darker, the scarier), physically intimidating, and violent. Donald Bogle, author of *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammys, and Bucks*, presents a seminal analysis of the brutal buck stereotype as it emerged from *The Birth of a Nation*. Bogle writes that brutal bucks are

always big, baadddd niggers, oversexed and savage, violent and frenzied as they lust for white flesh. No greater sin hath any black man . . . Griffith played on the myth of the Negro’s high-powered sexuality, then articulated the great white fear that every black man longs for a white woman . . . Traditionally, certain black males have been drawn to white women because these women are power symbols, an ideal of the oppressor. But Griffith attributed the attraction to an animalism innate in the Negro male . . . Griffith played hard on the bestiality of his black villainous bucks and used it to arouse hatred.3

Thus, the brutal buck stereotype is characterised by specific, identifiable tropes. The brutal buck is innately savage, animalistic, hypersexual, destructive, and criminal.

Alonzo Harris can be defined by this quintet of interrelated dispositions. First, he is innately savage, and this savagery is confirmed in several scenes in the film, where to evidence the depth of Alonzo’s cruelty, children are used as fodder for his barbarism. For example, in one
scene a schoolgirl is being sexually assaulted in an alley by two men and while Jake rushes to the rescue, Alonzo, annoyed that Jake is taking the time to help the child, passively looks on. Without Alonzo’s backup, Jake endures a beating by the rapists, but in the end he is able to safely send the girl on her way - an act of caring and heroism that would later save Jake’s life, spoil Alonzo’s plan to murder him, and, ultimately, cost Alonzo his own life. Alonzo, unmoved by the girl’s plight, wholly ignores the welfare of the child. In another example, Alonzo dupes Jake into taking part in stealing a cache of money Crips gang members have stashed away in a home occupied by a woman and her young son. Alonzo has little concern for the boy as the child is held at gunpoint, while Alonzo ransacks the house. Later, as Alonzo’s escape from the house is hampered by Crips members alerted to the robbery, Alonzo is inattentive to the presence of the boy as he engages the gang in an explosive gun battle in front the child’s house. This theme of pitiless disregard for children’s lives within the context of warlike cruelty is accentuated when Alonzo, in the home of his mistress, engages in a gun battle with Jake, while Alonzo’s own son, Alonzito, is caught in the crossfire. Alonzo shoots up the home, imperiling his child and thereby forcing Jake to protect the boy. Alonzo, in making his escape from the home, never checks on his son; he simply flees.

Second, the brutal buck is associated with animalism. Here the animal allusions are far from subtle in Training Day. Early in the film Alonzo self-identifies as a wolf. He then proceeds to howl, and in a bit of manipulation, teaches Jake how to howl properly - a deep, resonating, fear-inducing howl - as well. Alonzo explains that it takes a wolf to rule (“I’m in charge of this piece”) these streets or what he terms the “jungle” because “they’re all animals” whom Alonzo believes will “kill themselves . . . God willing.” Hence, the streets of L.A. become a wild sans the rules and laws of civil societies. This, then, is a land of the untamed and savage, a land that Alonzo is more apt to conquer and rule over because he is, after all, a predatory and powerful wolf. Alonzo brings this final point home when, having a draining battle with Jake and sustaining a shot in the buttocks (a humiliating “comic negro” scene), Alonzo defiantly spews, “King Kong ain’t got shit on me!” Alonzo overtly declares his innate animalism and insists that he is more animal-like than all the other animals of the “jungle,” where he stakes his claim.

Additionally, Training Day features specific manipulation of camera angles when Alonzo is philosophising his approach to the “jungle.” In these instances, the viewer hears Alonzo’s voice but sees only his eyes as they appear in the rear-view mirror. The shots portray Alonzo’s eyes as severed from the rest of his face and create an animal-like, primal stare. Such framing invokes Nietzsche’s “evil eye,” which in On the Genealogy of Morals evidences the “hypnotic gaze of the sinner,” or “the jaundiced eye for all activity.” Such an eye, belonging to the “abominable beast,” thrives on all that is ill and loathsome. And when viewers are subjected to these angles, they are also subjected to Alonzo’s view of the world, characterised by “the will to misunderstand suffering” - in this case
Alonzo Harris (Oscar-winner Denzel Washington) surveys his domain in Training Day. Copyright © 2001 WV Films II.

Black/Brown suffering.4 Alonzo declares his animalistic nature and the cinematography supports the notion.

Third, and closely related to such animalism, is the brutal buck’s unchecked sexual desire. In one infamous scene from The Birth of a Nation, a Black brutal buck, Gus (Walter Long), stalks a young White woman, intent on raping her. Gus is predatory and unrestrained in his pursuit, forcing the woman into a horrific suicide plunge off of a cliff. Nearly one hundred years after Gus, the brutal buck’s threat has evolved in popular culture to pose a more wide-ranging danger. As bell hooks has written of the white-dominated mass media’s collective representation of black
youth culture, “it’s a contemporary remake of Birth of a Nation - only this
time we are encouraged to believe it is not just vulnerable white woman-
hood that risks destruction by black hands, but everyone.”

In Training Day, Alonzo is defined not only by his remorseless
savagery but also by an equally volcanic sexual identity. In one scene,
Alonzo stops by his mistress’ house for a mid-day tryst. He never asks for
sex; rather, he expects she be at the ready whenever he stops in. Alonzo’s
sexual appetite seems insatiable, as his sexual encounter is depicted as
lasting for such a long period that Jake, who is waiting for Alonzo in the
living room with Alonzo’s son, eats a meal and watches Alonzito com-
plete a video game and exhaust a television show before eventually falling
asleep. They awake to Alonzo emerging from the bedroom, his gun now
in hand. The gun remains ominously in the frame, clearly noticeable to his
child until Alonzo and Jake prepare to leave.

A scene deleted from Training Day’s theatrical release but in-
cluded as an extra cut on the DVD accentuates the director’s vision of
Alonzo Harris as a hypersexual brutal buck. The scene features Alonzo, in
the presence of Jake, ogling two young women as they walk down the
street. He yells to them, “I’ll lock you up! I’ll give you ten kids!” Here,
Alonzo’s “gaze” becomes all the more troublesome when coupled with a
contemporary version of the brutal buck stereotype that views Black
men’s unchecked libido as the driving force behind many of his problems.
On the matter of such a gaze, Liesbet van Zoonen offers, “a core element
of Western patriarchal culture is the display of woman as spectacle to be
looked at, subjected to the gaze of the (male) audience . . . . This common
feature of popular and high culture alike . . . suggests that in Western soci-
ety to be looked at is the fate of women, while looking is reserved to
men.” This scene also supports, according to Stuart Hall, a troubling fan-
tasy: that Black men are really better than White men - more endowed,
more sexually powerful - read, more masculine. However, Hall observes,
it would be improper and racist to express the . . . sentiment openly; but the
fantasy is present all the same” that says that Black men are “aggres-
sive, over-sexed and over-endowed.” Defining the Black male in this
manner - as a buck - works to link a specific race’s gender with the aberration
of violent hypermasculinity. Thus, according to Sean Nixon, Black-
ness, Black men’s perceived robust sexuality, and their physical presence
are all pathologised.

Fourth, brutal bucks are not only savage and animalistic but also
destructive. Morally bankrupt, the brutal buck destroys, physically, bodily,
and emotionally, all that he comes in contact with, including, eventually
and requisitely, himself. Alonzo does quite a bit of physical damage in this
single day. He trashes the Crips’ stash house, leaving it in ruins. Bullets
riddle Alonzo’s car - a seemingly expensive, fully tricked-out low-rider
that completes his pimp persona - as he flees the house. Likewise, Alonzo
leaves behind a shot-up neighbourhood. Next, Alonzo, along with a spe-
cial crew of crooked cops he recruited to help him rob his drug lord friend,
takes a chainsaw to his buddy’s kitchen floor to unearth a stash of money.
A shootout instigated by Alonzo, too, leaves his mistress’ home damaged
by gunfire. Bodily, the damage is equally multitudinous. There is a flurry of other destructive behaviours: the castration-by-gun of a rapist in an alley, the paralysing of small-time drug dealer, the murder of his friend, the beating of Jake, and even the purposeful non-lethal shooting of one of his crew to deflect attention away from a murder that is part of the money stealing scheme. Finally, there is also the emotional destruction that Alonzo manifests. There is Jake’s horrid realisation that he has been a pawn in a deadly game. More emotionally taxing for Jake is the realisation that, though he is being used, he must continue to conspire with Alonzo in order to spare his own life. Here, Alonzo is a seductive trickster as he reeks Jake in, bonding with him, only to destroy him by calling for the trainee’s murder. Alonzo subjugates Jake in much the same way he abuses and exploits the Bloods gang members, who must suppress their rage and hate for Alonzo because LAPD retribution can bring jail or worse.

This intimidation is akin to an icon of terror such as the brutal buck. Nietzsche explains that “the ‘evil’ person evokes fear” and may even be characterised by “power and dangerousness, a certain fear-inducing, subtle strength that keeps contempt from surfacing” – even Jake’s contempt, initially. Certainly, one of the things that makes the brutal buck most dreaded is not what he actually does, because the brutal buck most often is not actually afforded the opportunity to rise up and lash out (against Whiteness). Rather, it is the fear of the brutal buck’s violence that is enough to make others dread him and ultimately hunger for his demise. The mere potential for destruction symbolised by the brutal buck intimidates those around him. Indeed, Alonzo produces fear amongst a number of groups and is also savvy enough to dupe Jake, the young “virgin,” “baby nuts” trainee - notably through sexual and phallic disparagement - and thereby keep him under control. Alonzo keeps Jake in check by using his influence as a superior officer and by subjecting Jake to unfamiliar spaces and territory from which Jake needs Alonzo to safely extract him. Alonzo is therefore in accord with Nietzsche’s concept of evil: “Everything that raises an individual above the herd and causes his neighbour to fear him is henceforth called evil.” Through this manipulation - this employing of hierarchy to rise above the herd - Alonzo is able to dominate Jake, not only because he is above Jake, but because Jake accompanies him out of fear. Indeed, Jake is initially simply quite frightened of Alonzo, a man who embraces the thug image (wave cap, black leather, large chain necklaces with medallions, low-rider, and thug talk), is heavily armed, protected by his badge and rank, and easily displays animalistic, criminal, destructive, self-serving behaviours. St. Augustine surmises that evil only affects the unsettled, irresolute individual, “and, even then, the harm done bears witness to the goodness of the natures which suffer, for, unless they were good, they could not suffer the wounds of a lack of goodness.” Because of Alonzo’s evil nature, evidenced by his power and intimidating persona, Jake, as good, suffers not only physically, but emotionally and perhaps even spiritually as well.

The terrifying dangerousness that stems from Alonzo’s evil nature is then buttressed by the emotion denied on the part of Alonzo as he
ignores his son, has little regard for his unseen wife and four children, and as he sexually consumes his mistress with no doting or care. His disaffection renders the citizens as faceless, meaningless objects rather than people who have needs that may stand in the way of his own. In the end, what is known about Alonzo is that he is so destructive that not even his own person is off limits, as he drinks, does drugs, brings financial ruin home, and ultimately, secures his own bloody, fatal defeat.

The final typology is far from mutually exclusive from the previous four: brutal bucks are criminally inclined. In the case of Training Day, Alonzo’s whole day is not only criminal but also predicated on earlier felonious activity, putting him at odds with likewise stereotypical Russian gangsters. Alonzo terrorises a group of White youths, holding them at gunpoint, to steal their recently purchased marijuana. Later, he surreptitiously laces the confiscated contraband with PCP and bullies Jake, at gunpoint, into smoking the spiked marijuana. Alonzo partakes of a six-pack of beer and also imbibes in liquor several times during the day. Alonzo is so reckless that he also does an “in the field” pumping of a disabled drug dealer’s stomach by sticking an ink pen down his throat, forcing him to vomit some swallowed drugs. The incident is pure harassment, as Alonzo leaves the drugs and the suspect behind.

3. The Brutal Buck as Evil

Though wholly problematic, the question remains: does the brutal buck truly represent evil? Does a brutal buck figure such as Alonzo necessitate an evil component? James McDaniel in his essay, “Figures of Evil: A Triad of Rhetorical Strategies for Theo-Politics,” argues that the notion of evil is not under the single purview of theology, even though it is a theological construct. Rather, it is also political and complex. McDaniel advises that we should avoid becoming overly reductive in moralising or theologising the struggle between good and evil, as this can result in a world-view that is “at once too narrow and too ambitious to allow for authentically democratic public determination.” In an effort to extend the civic discourse around notions of evil, McDaniel draws on Sartre’s notion of Being and Nothingness as a template, shifting from Sartre’s theorisings of being, such as being-in-itself or being-for-others to theorising around evil: evil-in-itself or evil-for-others. According to McDaniel, such a shift “re-describes Evil rhetorically without sacrificing the option of also re-describing it morally.” Toward re-describing, McDaniel provides a tripartite elaboration of evil, with, “all three rhetorics of evil operate[ng] simultaneously to compose a complex triad.”

First, McDaniel observes, there exists “evil-in-itself.” Evil-in-itself represents supreme deficiency. It exists, but its existence defies reason as it cannot be logicised or rationalised. It is, according to McDaniel, “a mode of desire we rational beings can’t comprehend except in glimpses.” Those who come in contact with and/or approach understanding such evil are thought to be “touched by evil” or corrupted (e.g., as Jake is by Alonzo and as Mackey is by the brutal buck from his trainee days, discussed below). For Jake and Mackey, their proximities to and
relationships with evil taint both men but do not consume them. Still, few are touched by evil, and what makes evil-in-itself most dangerous is that a failure to understand such evil will make one be ineffectual in countering it. McDaniel provides exemplars for such evil, from moral monstrities such as the character Hannibal Lecter of The Silence of the Lambs (1991) to actual monsters like the Thing in The Thing (1982) or the alien from Alien (1979). These monsters, all, stand out of the reach of good or evil, and beyond such value judgments. They are beyond such reason, McDaniel argues, because they are simultaneously intelligent but unintelligible to us. That which is evil-in-itself cannot be managed because it cannot be approached in comprehensible terms.

Alonzo is not a full embodiment of evil-in-itself; nevertheless, some traits are present. He certainly is not a monstrity beyond reason and understanding, or one that cannot be negotiated with. Rather, Alonzo rests securely within the realm of reason. He is an intelligent, self-serving man facing life-threatening trouble. He has long been a brutal buck (e.g., “you’ve gone too far this time”). However, the level of destruction Alonzo embarks on this day must be co-signed upon by his three White male superiors (a.k.a. the Three Wise Men). Hence, he does not stand outside of the reach of judgment. Alonzo needs some form of approval from these Wise Men before he can complete the largest part of his money heist.

The link between evil and taint, however, is clearer. Jake is, at least initially and temporarily, corrupted by Alonzo’s evil. And, like those who are touched by evil (e.g., Clarice Starling by Hannibal Lecter), he can come to understand it. We may conclude that this intimate understanding of evil can lead to evil’s defeat. Evil figures like Lecter often go undefeated, however, because of the more practical, profit-seeking machinations of the film industry. In addition, Lecter lives because he is refined and charismatic, though aberrant. Importantly, he is not ensnared in a double-bind relationship to darkness through race and behaviour. This bind demands Alonzo’s demise but allows similar evil figures to exist for some time. Still, on this day, Alonzo seems to lean a bit toward evil-in-itself; he cannot be rational or reasoned with because he is motivated by self-preservation and a fear of a more powerful criminal element that he cannot play wolf to. This aspect of his action provides an implicit justification for his actions. Alonzo’s reason or rationale is a self-centred one. He is evil for his own sake; thus he acts with reasons that are not entirely knowable to others.

In this way, he is what McDaniel theorises as “evil-for-itself.” This evil is quite the opposite of evil-in-itself in that those that possess it are aware of their evil. Further, such an evil is recognisable and even logical to others, even as it is wicked. Evil-for-itself, in contrast to evil-in-itself, which is too morally opaque to be reflective and therefore less culpable, may be regarded as far more bodeful due to its purposefulness. Evil-for-itself is rationally reflective about its behaviour and character because there is a sequence of motives that culminate in an ultimately intended deed. For example, when Jake challenges Alonzo about his view that the citizens of L.A. should simply kill each other, Alonzo replies,
“God willing.” Such evil, then, may be seen as worse than evil-in-itself because, though both cannot be reasoned with effectively, evil-for-itself consciously refuses to participate in reason as it stands too much to gain from having a private form of reason - one that others do not entertain.

According to McDaniel, evil’s behaviour as such is “motivated by selfish calculation and greed” (e.g., stealing to cover a murder) via a “disregard for universal ethical principles” and with no “moral injunction.” Standing outside of well-known, “universal” principles, the evil-for-itself persona will assuredly represent an unpopular comportment based on the selfish motivations that accompany evil actions. So, Alonzo spends his day double-dealing and covering the unreasonable plots that he designs because they are primarily self-serving, greedy endeavours. Additionally, unlike evil-in-itself, whose motivations are a symptom of its primal monstrosity, evil-for-itself is born out of increasing unchecked behaviour: “the uncoupling of close communal ties, increasing mobility and intensifying tension among classes,” in McDaniel’s words.11 Alonzo’s evil is also predicated on the fact that he is a solitary figure. His Las Vegas trouble is his alone. Further, it is necessary for both Alonzo and Jake to find themselves negotiating this day virtually alone. Alonzo, it appears, typically patrols the habitat of his “sheep” by himself and without impunity. The film offers no sense that he rides with a regular partner, and no one restricts or governs his behaviour. The film also supports the import of mobility. Alonzo’s “office” is his car, which affords him immediate access to a wide stretch of his territory in a day. Sans fellowship, Alonzo’s solitude in his evil permits boundlessly destructive behaviours, as evidenced in part by his trip to Las Vegas. He rarely operates in situations that require him to regard others humanely; when he is given the opportunity, as with training Jake, his own motives supersede any concern for others.

Finally, according to McDaniel, there is “evil-for-others.” This evil, if it can be concluded that it is evil at all, may be seen in the more traditional cop characterisations. This is an evil fully bound by morality in “a condition of awareness,” and an evil employed when interpreted as being necessary on the behalf of others but not the self. By virtue of this kind of selflessness, and in its service to others, purveyors of this evil possess an activated moral compass, though the exact location of morality is elusive. Unlike evil-in-itself where morality is absent, or in evil-for-itself where such a barometer is willingly ignored, evil-for-others’ behaviours are open to a broad interpretation of what is vile and evil, due to the absence of selfhood. This brand of evil necessarily invokes the views, and consequently, well being, of other individuals. As McDaniel explains, there is a “breakdown of ontological-moral difference on which the judgment of good or evil depends . . . It is an image of progress, though not a pretty one.” It is the absence of this kind of selfless evil that, too, marks Alonzo. He is purely selfish in his motivations. There is no amount of self-doubt about the slippage toward evil that he embraces. In fact, there can be no questioning or negotiating his evil as he chooses to ignore good, that is, or Alonzo cannot slip away from someplace he never rested.12
4. White is Might

Good and evil, and the brutal buck, and even Whiteness are necessarily juxtaposed, even as they are part of a co-dependant relationship. That is, evil - the evil of Blackness - is best revealed when set against its opposite. This relationship organises a teleological dichotomy between Jake and Alonzo, where each man’s body portrays his nature, and his nature is a natural effect of his body (Alonzo’s Black body symbolises his evil and is the cause of his evil). To the extent that Alonzo’s harm demonstrates Jake’s goodness, Jake’s impressionability signifies Alonzo predatory, wolf-like wickedness. Jake is not powerful; he is a trainee. Jake is not dangerous. In his subordinate position, he will not challenge Alonzo. Nor is Jake feared; rather, he is trapped in a situation he has no control over and has no cavalry to call upon for help. Therefore, Jake does not comprise Nietzsche’s standard of evil. He is truly good because he is harmed in the way that St. Augustine describes good being affected by evil. Each man’s nature certifies the other individual’s opposing nature. In the end, Alonzo’s evil ensures Jake’s goodness and Whiteness, while Jake’s goodness corroborates Alonzo’s evil and Blackness.

It is important to note that the brutal buck is seen as most dangerous when he, the dark wolf, preys upon the white sheep. If the brutal buck stays within the Black community, he is of little concern. One savage cannot be overly forceful, or brutal, to other savages. We know that Alonzo has brutalised before. He admits to Jake that he once permanently paralysed a Black male, leaving him in a wheelchair. But in killing a Russian, killing his White friend for his drug money, and planning the murder of his White trainee, Alonzo has gone too far.

Hence, there are a number of reasons that, in the end, Alonzo must die. Racially, the brutal buck is never victorious against Whiteness. That is, quite simply, it is not permissible in either the real or in the popular imagination for a Black man to abuse and/or kill Whites. Those brutal bucks who dare to must be brought down with a great showing of White might. The public nature of the brutal buck’s downfall is of great import (e.g., public lynchings, floggings) as to send a message to other Blacks that Whiteness must not be crossed, not ever. Nietzche provides another reason for the necessary death of Alonzo, and thereby this evil. In his Will to Power, Nietzsche argues that “everything good is the evil of former days made serviceable,” and this serviceability may also be interpreted as permissible regardless of its damaging effects. Hence, the evil of former days does not become good but, instead, allowable. Evil may prevail as long as it is useful in some capacity. Moments of evil in cops - police brutality, attacks on a superior officer, cover-ups, etc. - have been known to prevail because in the end these tactics have been useful or for the greater good in some capacity. For example, brutality may bring to justice an even greater evil that the “system” is ill-equipped to handle with care. In the case of Alonzo, his evil is neither serviceable, because it does not prove useful in some capacity, nor permissible, because it actually proves harmful to Whiteness. Thus, in the end, the goodness of Whiteness is upheld and emphasised by its perseverance and triumph over Black evil.
Black annihilation and White victory manifest quite sensibly. Intersections across theological, moral, political, and historical discussions of good as light and evil as dark construct easily communicable symbols of good and evil. However, this symbolic element of evil, according to Training Day, is also racialised; it is not just darkness but Blackness. In offering such a presentation, the brutal buck image is solidified as the ultimate evil. The implication is that within Blackness - especially, Black masculinity - evil is heightened and thereby requires all of our might to replace/restore the light. While the film resorts to a more cliché battle - good (Jake) v. evil (Alonzo) - Alonzo as representing evil, specifically evil-for-itself, is best revealed when placed alongside a purported evil cop within Whiteness, that of Vic Mackey.

5. The Shield: "White is Right"

Mary Ann Watson, in her book Defining Visions: Television and the American Experience Since 1945, offers a historical chronicling of the battle between law enforcement agents and criminals. Watson recounts that, as World War II drew to a close, Americans were still able to walk down most streets in the U.S. without fear and leave their front doors unlocked. In popular culture, the 1940s Western hero came to the rescue when trouble did arise. As Watson writes, “early Western heroes carried a gun, but didn’t shoot to kill, [they would only] shoot to wound.” This would all soon change, however, as the violent component of “shoot to wound” justice began to multiply exponentially. By the 1950s, when Americans were no longer illusioned by an “age of innocence,” the rise of civil rights movement reminded them that violence was right outside their front doors. Moreover, television brought it right into their homes. Western heroes, too, lost their innocence in their quest for justice, as they shot bad guys without impunity (e.g., The Rifleman, Have Gun Will Travel). The 50s decade ended on a high note of violence as the location for crime shifted back to the urban, and a new breed of law enforcement arose in the form of blood-spilling good guys such as the Untouchables. The 1960s, marked by Vietnam protests and the deaths of John Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert Kennedy, evidenced the need for a different kind of cop in a different kind of America. “The villain’s defeat,” according to Watson, “never proved that brutality was wrong, only that the good guys eventually managed to dish it out in greater force. The real lesson was that violence is the surest solution to the conflict and that might makes right.” Indeed, justified extreme aggression became the template for succeeding generations of law enforcers, such as television’s Kojak and film’s Dirty Harry of the 1970s and John McClane of the Die Hard films that began in the 1980s. It was also during this period that gangster worship re-emerged in such films as Scarface (1983), The Untouchables (1987), and King of New York (1990), with Tony Montana (Al Pacino), Al Capone (Robert De Niro), and Frank White (Christopher Walken) becoming instant cult film icons. Mackey, too, is that cult gangster figure, but with a police badge.
Mackey, however, is not a cowboy struggling to dish out justice in an untamed land. Nor is he a Dirty Harry, forced to operate outside the law because the justice system ties his hands in dealing with those who have no fear of the law. Instead, Mackey takes more than a little glee in beating suspects, planting evidence, stealing from criminals, taking pay-offs, setting up his fellow officers to take the fall for his crimes, and playing ring-around-the-rosy with investigators seeking to uncover his misdeeds; he even lovingly seduces one investigator. And yet, there are a significant number of moments in Mackey’s life where he is driven more by the need to catch the bad guy at all costs than by selfishness. There are plenty of evil-for-others storylines in The Shield for Mackey. For example, he is willing to participate in theft in an effort to get his strike team buddies some loot, even as he does not particularly desire it at that moment for himself. In another theft scheme, Mackey desperately wants ill-gotten money, but for the purpose of sending his autistic son to a special school and getting him a skilled tutor. It should be recalled that this is a denial of self that Alonzo does not evidence as he portrays evil-for-itself.

While, socially, the climate is right for the evil cop depiction, the success of (or blame for) The Shield may be directly attributed to Training Day. Airing on cable television’s FX, which permits a level of violence, attitude, language, and nudity that network television does not, The Shield is the Dirty Harry quintet meets Training Day as a weekly television series. According to Peter Liguori, chairman and chief executive of FX, when “Training Day opened to good reviews and box office revenues, “we saw there was an audience out there who wanted to see a fully dimensionalized representation of the police.” Set in the Black, Brown, and Beige inhabited ghettos of L.A., the series, which was originally titled Rampart, focuses on the daily escapades of Mackey and his strike team who regularly break the law, often in evil-for-others moments.

While The Shield is the next generation of the crime drama (as Mackey says, “good cop and bad cop have left for the day”) and homage to Training Day’s cruelty, Vic Mackey is not, by any stretch of the imagination, Alonzo Harris. As Judith Grant has observed:

True, like Vic Mackey, the lead character in Training Day . . . is both a vigilante and an outright criminal. However, he is not held up as the hero (or even a true antihero) the way that Vic Mackey is on The Shield. The hero in Training Day is an honest rookie cop . . . who upends Denzel’s criminal career . . . In contrast, the honest rookie cop in The Shield is not the hero. He is portrayed as an uptight bible-thumper who is also, by the way, a closeted gay, black man. He has a conscience, but his own struggle with being a gay, which he believes to be a sin, places him dramatically as merely a different kind of hypocrite with a psychological axe to grind.
Hence, it is such an imagination, facilitated by nearly a century of media reminders of the complexion and sexual boundaries of evil that does not allow Vic Mackey to ever approach the evil-of-itself that is Alonzo, the brutal buck. Nor does it allow the Black gay cop, Julien Lowe (Michael Jace), achieve hero status as the White heterosexual Jake does.

While Mackey does commit crimes and does not enforce the law to the fullest extent in some cases, his actions are typically tempered by a higher calling of some perceived greater good or, post-dirty deeds, are tinged with remorse. For example, he executes a fellow police officer; that behaviour is evil. That Mackey does so because the officer was planted on his team by a boss that cares largely about a coming election and the great publicity that a “dirty cop” arrest would bring to his campaign - that execution is suddenly (sort of) good. Later, Mackey is haunted by the killing, which sets him up as not evil but vulnerable and, oddly, even righteous. Nietzsche and McDaniel would agree that this quality makes Mackey complex, beyond good and evil. Moreover, what sets Mackey apart from Alonzo is the balancing act between good and evil that Mackey must play - an act that Alonzo doesn’t see the need to do in the struggle for Jake’s soul. As one reviewer writes, “on film [cops are] represented as being wholly good or wholly bad, and ne’er the twain shall meet. That is the key to The Shield, to explore the ambiguity."

Chiklis describes Mackey as “a guy whose philosophy and attitude have been galvanized from knocking down the worst doors, going into the worst areas and dealing with the lowest common denominator.” However, that does fully reveal Mackey’s initial exposure to, or taint by, evil which is much like that of Jake’s. Joe Clarke (Carl Weathers), an African American training officer with a propensity for exacting extreme brutality on suspected criminals of colour, too, schools Mackey on the ways of the jungle. The similarities between Alonzo and Joe do not stop there. Like Alonzo, Joe has a virulent, violent temper that is displayed through fearsome beatings. Joe, it is revealed, is no longer a member of the police force because of a beating he gave a young Latino and suspected drug dealer. The beating earned the victim a sizable settlement against the LAPD. In the storyline, Joe’s rage against the victim can only be quelled once the young man is dead - a murder that Joe forces Mackey into committing, and an act that Mackey must suffer for. Therefore, unlike Alonzo, and now Joe, Mackey’s crimes are never purely self-serving as he eventually expresses some remorse about the manner in which he has to, or is forced to, to conduct law enforcement. Additionally, Mackey is tempered by his fellowship with his strike team, colleagues, and other more forthright detectives. In the end, it is Mackey’s allegiance to others - his sense of fellowship - that requires him to consistently choose what he believes is the good that serves others rather than himself.

Taken together, the depictions of Vic Mackey and Jake Hoyt in contrast with Alonzo Harris and Joe Clarke suggest an inescapable racial essence with Blackness distinct from Whiteness and, thus, the causal element in making sense of each character’s relationship with evil. Mackey is constructed as a bad cop with good intentions, while Jake is a good cop
trying to remain so in the face of evil (Alonzo). And Alonzo and Joe are bad cops, with no good intentions. They are not only invested in evil, but, as argued here, can be read as the face of evil. Symbolically, the root of Alonzo’s evil stems directly from his Blackness and within his Black body. No other explanation is offered. Put beside Jake, and with no other explanation offered in the *Training Day* text for Jake’s virtue, goodness seems to just spring from Jake’s White body and out of his Whiteness. Similarly, Mackey, as ruthless and hateful as he is, is represented much like Jake, as unable to enter into evil in the manner that Alonzo has. Mackey is corrupted, largely by Joe, but not completely ruined. Therefore, Alonzo cannot be good because he is not White, and more importantly, his evil becomes far more recognisable beside Jake’s Whiteness, and Mackey’s possession of friends, care for consequences, and sense of remorse. Blackness is used, then, in both *The Shield* and *Training Day* as evidence of the root of evil, and each man’s racial construction is offered as a way to facilitate our recognition of goodness or wickedness. Alonzo is wholly evil because of his wholly Black (evil) nature, enveloped in a Black body, while Jake and Mackey are predominately good because of the Whiteness (good) that defines them. Each man’s racialised body symbolises his essence and that essence provides reason for his actions.

Jake and Alonzo’s imagery, their identities, are clearly separable. So, too, are those of Alonzo and Mackey. If Mackey were to be Alonzo (or if Chiklis were to replace Washington in the role), much of the plot of *Training Day* would have to be rewritten to create a believable character within a credible scenario. The race-tinged animal imagery in the film loses its function as well if Alonzo is White. King Kong came from an African jungle, and he preyed on Whites. King Kong’s ultimate destruction (much like Alonzo’s), according to Gail Dines, works to remasculinise the White man. Therefore, “representations of Black men and White men are not isolated images working independently.” The efficacy of terming the ghetto the jungle, Alonzo howling like a wolf, and Jake’s initial inability to identify with the wolf are all uniquely tied to a Black-body situation; none of these conjunctions is applicable to Mackey or a White body. Moreover, if Alonzo were White, he would not be naturally adept in dealing with the savage criminals of the “jungle.” He would not speak the language of the streets and, in one important moment, could not speak a very specific bit of language: “my nigger,” which Alonzo does say.

Within Whiteness, the carnal destruction of a brutal buck is no longer required. In fact, the manner in which Alonzo is executed would be unwarranted, even unsettling, if Mackey were to experience such a fate. For example, in the “Partners” episode of *The Shield*, Mackey is shot by the young Latino who had won a police brutality lawsuit against Mackey’s training sergeant, Joe Clarke (Mackey, at the urging of his mentor, had been involved in a new harassment of this young man). The narrative is one of sadness over the shooting, and though the sergeant is not the person
who had shot Mackey, the blame is placed on his shoulders. Viewers are moved to breathe a sigh of relief when Mackey, after summoning his wife and kids to his side, survives the shooting. Though Mackey has done much wrong, he has not committed deeds so severe that they merit death. Hence, a White Alonzo, if attempted, becomes a poor imitation, even unbelievable, of what the popular imagination says “authentic” evil should look like. Enacting such an imitation would result in great confusion: are not cops, unless they are brutal bucks, at heart supposed to be good, or, at worst, conflicted? How can goodness possibly resemble evil so closely? And, if it does, how are we to know good from evil if they occupy the same space, the same colour, and even the same light?

Whiteness, likewise, cannot become Blackness. For example, Jake’s character cannot be depicted as being Alonzo’s Black partner for the training day. According to the rules of the popular, the language barrier is removed as only Black people get to call others “nigger,” and the like. Speaking of the Blaxploitation movies of the 70s, but evidencing a link between race and place that can be seen today, Donald Bogle wrote, “the tenements as well as the talk, the mannerisms, and the sophistication of the streets . . . appeared to mark a life lived close to one’s black roots. Ghetto residents seemed to have a greater ethnic identity. Eventually, poverty and ghetto life . . . were frequently idealized and glamorized.” Also removed is the gimmick of the trainee’s unfamiliarity with and fear of this

“A bad cop with good intentions”: Michael Chiklis as Vic Mackey in The Shield. Copyright © 2002 Twentieth Century Fox Film Corp.
racially Black and Brown environment. With popular characterisation so over-simplified, a Black partner likely would not be in the completely subjective position of being naïve and unschooled himself. In the imagination of Hollywood, a Black man could not be so “green” about “his” people. There is the assumption that a Black man would likely be intimately familiar with the jungle and its inhabitants, rather than come from outside of the class and urban defined world. Blackness, therefore, is also defined by its inherent connection to the ghetto.

Alternately, if Mackey were not White but Black, he, too, could not be a hero; he would instead simply be the wicked training sergeant. Mackey, within Whiteness, is able to skirt evil when next to Joe, symbolically; Mackey becomes kinder, lighter, Whiter. Whatever goodness Mackey is able to bring forth, in spite of his bad deeds when in the presence of taint and evil, is a consequence of his White body. There is no other explanation, as Mackey and his sergeant would otherwise be the same. Mackey, then, must be White to substantiate the plot and goodness. In the classic allegory of good and evil, Blackness cannot taint other Blackness because the other Blackness is already unclean, impure, and evil.

6. Conclusion
“The great thing,” writes one reviewer, “is race isn’t just a cliché in Training Day. It is the climate of opinion, a toxic haze” so in sync with the popular understanding of Black masculinity that Alonzo Harris is completely credible. Applicable, too, is McDaniel’s analysis that the purest of evil - that which cannot be reasoned with, controlled, or changed - are those “other” worldly beings driven by morally unchecked impulses. Black men are regularly “othered” in popular media as their evil, too, is depicted as being from an unreasonable, unsalvageable place - a Black world and Black body savage and untamable, different and wholly deficient. Worse, they are motivated by an evil for their own personal pleasure. What may be more frightening is the possibility that the hypersexual, pleasure-seeking nature of this evil will multiply, or procreate, thereby producing new evils.

The evil cop, it may be argued, has reached a pinnacle, if one delineates the characterisation by race. The evil cop as embodied by Denzel Washington is presented with the same mastery - and troubling content and social implications - as The Birth of a Nation’s own good-and-evil narrative. Each set a bar that few, if any, have ever been able to reach. There will certainly be many more brutal bucks who will likely be the bane of existence to the Black and the Brown, and whose dark/Black evil will have to fall to the light/White purity. It is important to note, however, that this Black v. White scenario will have to play out in mainstream Hollywood movies, as a Black v. Black plot line falls under the rubric of “Black” cinema or neo-Blaxploitation, a film genre that is consumed less by non-African Americans. Of course, there is the other real evil, that a black film truncates the audience and therefore, from a marketing perspective, the profitability of a film. In such an instance, the White-saviour rhetoric that reassures society that threatening Black men can be con-
trolled and/or disposed of is replaced by a “let the savages kill themselves” message, so long as the violence remains Black on Black - as in, for example, New Jack City (1991), Menace II Society (1993), and Jungle Fever (1991). Therefore, the survival of Black actors often depends on portrayals that feature Blackness destroyed by Blacks, or Blackness controlled or destroyed by Whites.

Within Whiteness, evil often come in the form of some taint or infection - e.g., vampirism in the countless versions of Dracula, invasions of body snatchers, demonic possession such as in The Exorcist (1973). In the role of the innate evil-in-itself, as seen in brutal buck characterisations, Whiteness fails the plausibility test as evidenced by the poor reviews and reception of the film Dark Blue (2002), starring Kurt Russell as Eldon Perry. Dark Blue, written by Training Day screenwriter David Ayer, focuses on Perry, a corrupt cop. However, the role fails, coming off as nonsensical because the corruption of Whiteness by a purported evil demands a reasonable explanation. In Dark Blue, the source of taint is not fully revealed until the final scenes of the movie. It is explained that Perry comes from a long family line of dreadfully racist cops; indeed, these family members gave Perry his first African American kill at the age of eight. In the movie, though an African American officer and his large Black and Brown staff are seeking to bring Perry down, the African American officer is depicted as being unable to touch Perry figuratively and literally. In the end, Perry repentantly ends his own racist corruption. The film concludes by casting Perry as a tragic hero, not a racist murderer, with his estranged wife and son’s support assured. In this sense, Perry and Mackey are similar; though both are wicked and their moral compasses at times malfunction, they are still heavies with hearts of gold. Moreover, what makes Mackey so uniquely and delightfully wicked (i.e., that gangster worship) is that he is such a novelty. He is not expected to be evil, for that is brutal buck territory. Thus, there may be more Mackeys in television and film, but their evil will be limited by their Whiteness, and their presence will be read as a bit of a rip-off in the same way that Dark Blue tried, but failed, to be Training Day.

The brutal buck, then, continues to instill and reinforce troubling definitions about Blackness in general and Black men in particular. And it is this problematic definition that calls into question the awarding of the Oscar to Denzel Washington for this role. Indeed, some have speculated that Washington did not win for Training Day, but that 2001 was the year that the Academy finally decided the actor had been overlooked long enough for past (and more positive) roles. This theory presupposes that those who did not deem Washington worthy of the Best Actor award (even for his work in The Hurricane) suddenly had a change of heart. Therefore, the emphasis is on politics amongst Academy voters. Not entirely discounting this argument, an alternate theory may be that the Academy voted for the role, the portrayal of a Black man, that they thought was Oscar worthy. The Academy may have viewed Alonzo not as novel or a stretch for Washington, but that Alonzo was the authentic characterisation that they knew was in the actor all along - after all, who best, or most au-
thetically, can present the darkest side of evil than an authentic “darkey” himself? Following this theory, Washington won for exuding what, purportedly, may come naturally for a Black man, rather than for being a skilled actor who performed - according to Robert Toll’s observation of such roles for Black men - a White-centred stereotype of Black males.22 The Oscar, then, became the Academy’s collective sigh of relief that all was indeed right with the (racial) world’s hierarchy as they had come to know it. As for Chiklis’ Emmy, it was a nod to the rarity of such a performance and the great stretch it must be to play a Vic Mackey.

The lesson to be taken away from this discussion is that evil should not be singularly measured by its proximity to, or absence of, purity, or the presence of God. Rather, evil may be defined as being perpetuated by a certain kind of body - either bodies that are Black or, in the case of Mackey; that are infected with the taint of Blackness via proximity (yes, even riding in a police car with a Black trainer can have deleterious effects). Moreover, in the case of the purest evil that resides in the Black male body, only a great deal of destruction can rid society of its spoil. For Alonzo Harris, this came in hail of close range automatic weapon fire delivered, not by the Black Crips and Bloods gangs that he so abused, but by Whiteness in the form of the Russians to whom he owed money. Alonzo’s fate was secured within Whiteness when Jake returned to the “light side” of goodness and purity. By contrast, when Vic Mackey is shot by a Latino (a Brown body), the shooting is not a victory over evil; moreover, it brings Mackey closer to his family and crew. Alonzo’s lone violent execution is marked by his animalistic grunts as he works to cling defiantly but futilely to life, as well as the laughter of the Russians watching the spectacle of evil’s demise. There is no empathy for Alonzo’s many families: his wife and four children, his mistress and their son, or his family of police officers. Instead, there is only the harmonious enjoyment of the destruction of Black evil.

To be sure, Alonzo and Mackey are different kinds of cops. They both are wolves that could do a much better job of protecting the sheep rather than having a regular diet of mutton; only one of them is far more fearsome and loathsome than King Kong, however, and that is Alonzo Harris. King Kong was destroyed, but films such as Training Day may prompt the nagging fear in some, when seeing a Black male in the real, that the Russians/Jake/Whiteness have not gotten rid of all the evil. Consequently, the ability to conquer - or more specifically, for good to conquer evil - is a necessary source of tension between Alonzo and Jake. Nietzsche believes that the ability to conquer is an attribute of powerful men. In the end, while evil/Blackness is powerful, those who conquer it - the good/Whiteness - remain the most powerful of them all.
Notes

9. Ibid., 3.
10. Ibid., 7.
11. Ibid., 8.
12. Ibid., 6.
20. Bogle, 236.