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Chapter 9 Response Paper

Bogle describes the 1980s as marking the “era of tan.” Most roles for black actors were for supporting roles in white movies. Bogle coins this trend the “era of tan” because while the actors “looked black, everything about them seemed expressed in a white culture context; and in the long run, characters were neither black nor white but a tan blend.” One example of this is Eddie Murphey in *Beverly Hills Cop* (1984), who Bogle describes as “cut off almost completely from any semblance of a black community.” At this time, America was under the Regan-Bush administration, which marked a new conservative attitude towards racism. Bogle points out that Eddie Murphey’s films avoided touching on serious race issues and catered to these conservative sensibilities.

*Beverly Hills Cop* was written and directed by white men. Much of Bogle’s writing, especially as it pertains to the 1980s, makes me question if white directors can ethically direct films that comment on racism or race relations. Bogle touches on *The Color Purple* and criticizes Steven Spielberg’s direction. Spielberg is maybe the best blockbuster director to ever make a blockbuster, but his style of filmmaking turns *The Color Purple* from an intimate narrative into another blockbuster. *Mississippi Burning*, another film about race relations written and directed by white men also faces much criticism. Why does the story focus on white characters and not the black characters? Or *Glory*, written and directed by white men, which decides to focus on Mathew Broderick’s character instead of Denzel Washington’s character.

I don’t believe these films are devoid of value and Bogle doesn’t seem to either. As he points out, *Glory* did bring light to the 54th Regiment, an important part of African-American history that too few people know about. *The Color Purple* did provide American audiences with Whoopi Goldberg’s Oscar-nominated performance. However, these qualities were not brought to the film by its white directors but by its black contributors. This trend continues to this day in Hollywood. Most recently, 2018’s *Green Book* comes to mind. Certainly, the film has aspects to appreciate (Mahershala Ali’s performance), but did it really deserve to win best picture over Spike Lee’s *BlacKKKlansman*? Why is Hollywood rewarding white artists for commenting on the black experience?