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Response to the First Half of Chapter 10 of the Bogle Reading

Hollywood made great strides in the 1990s to give a voice to black filmmakers and more black stars for their films. While many factors contributed to it, it was predominantly the shift of other pop culture mediums and the rise of black filmmakers highlighting social issues. Bogle attributes the 90s era to the rise of movements like rap using graphic language to commentate on critical issues: “African American popular culture veered in a new direction as it gave voice to social/racial concerns and issues” (Bogle 294). Bogle also points out the effect that black filmmakers had on the incoming era, mainly the work of one Spike Lee and his movies of the late 80s: “Already the success of Spike Lee’s films, particularly *Do the Right Thing*, revealed the presence of a large black audience eager for movies with specific African American cultural references, subjects, issues, and stars” (Bogle 304).

A subject that Bogle goes into extravagant detail of is the career of one Whoopi Goldberg in the era of the 1990s. He started off by examining her role as Oda Mae Brown in the 1990 movie *Ghost* starring Patrick Swayze. Bogle seems to criticize the exaggerated performance of Goldberg as the films spirit medium by stating that it is too familiar of the exaggerated performances of the black caricatures of the 1940s: “while we might have hoped that blacks terrified of ghosts would now be consigned to the era when Willie Best popped his eyes as Bob Hope’s servant sidekick…Oda Mae Brown is yet another readily excited creature” (Bogle 298). While it is interesting to see it within this manner, I do believe the intentions of this era aren’t as echoing of the past as Bogle may think. It was Swayze himself that fought for Goldberg to fit that role, so much so that the director Jerry Zucker flew himself and Swayze down to Alabama so that Goldberg could read lines with him in person (Chilton). If the director was so intent on having Goldberg be the actress for that role specifically, I wouldn’t think he would pass this off as another caricature role echoing that of the 40s.

Works Cited

Bogle, Donald. *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films*. 21st Century Edition ed., Bloomsbury Publishing, Inc., 1973.

Chilton, Louis. “Whoopi Goldberg Says Patrick Swayze Fought for Her to Be Cast in Ghost.” *The Independent*, Independent Digital News and Media, 22 Apr. 2021, https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/news/whoopi-goldberg-ghost-patrick-swayze-b1835814.html.