**Teddy’s Bogle notes \*sorry if this is difficult to read, these were typed up for personal use!!**

Chapter 1

toms

early shorts

Uncle Tom’s Cabin (1903)

Confederate Spy (1910)

For Massa’s Sake (1911) <https://youtu.be/ZUVnxMIHeYU>

Rastus

\*think about “reconciliation” and “Lost Cause”

why would mainstream, non-southern production companies make these films in 1910s?

1914 – Sam Lucas in UTC version, first black lead actor

Bill Robinson (“Bojangles”) in Shirley Temple films (1935) (clips)

-The Little Colonel

-The Littlest Rebel (also featuring Willie Best a.k.a. Sleep n Eat)

-notice how careful he seems to be, trying very hard to not imply any kind of sexual discourse

coons

1903 UTC, with Topsy, comic relief (for audience, and also for white characters like Eva)

1904 – Ten Pickaninnies (forerunner to Buckwheat and Our Gang)

-all nameless children

1905 – Wooing and Wedding of a Coon \*\* (hilarious description)

1907 – The Masher

1910 – How Rastus Got His Turkey

Rastus and Chicken

Pickaninnies and Watermelon

Chicken Thief

(also look up old cartoon with black character seeing a chicken and deciding to steal it)

Uncle Remus – similar to uncle tom, but maybe a little more comedic

-satisfied with his situation

-Green Pastures (1936) and Song of the South (1946)

A Reckless Rover (1918) – on blu-ray but heavily damaged

-made by Ebony Films

-with Sam Robinson as “Rastus Jones”

Tragic Mulatto

The Debt (1912)

In Hannity’s Cause (1913)

In Slavery Days (1913)

The Octoroon (1913)

Usually female character trying to pass for white, usually sympathetic

-is she sympathetic because she is trapped in between worlds, shunned by both sides?

-or is it because anyone would prefer to live as white?

-or is she more sympathetic than darker skinned blacks because she has superior genetics?

(i.e., racist filmmakers)

\*note Pinky in 1949, over 3 decades later; still an interesting issue to explore

-Halle Berry, Beyonce – considered the pinnacle of black female beauty, sex appeal

-as late as a couple years ago, Steph Curry’s daughter stole the spotlight in press conferences

-some blacks commented that lighter skinned blacks, especially girls, get preferred treatment

Mammy

Female, non-sexual, cantankerous (not afraid to speak her mind, because she is not threatening)

Coon Town Suffragettes (1914)

-blackface version of Aristophanes’ *Lysistrata*

Aunt Jemima is an off-shoot, but more polite, maybe religious, offering wisdom (like a female Uncle Tom)

e.g., the maids in Mae West films of the 1930s

Gone With the Wind (1939)

Raisin in the Sun (1961)

Hurry Sundown (1967)

Bucks

Brute has animal instincts, sexually repressed

-usually dark skinned

-The Birth of a Nation (=TBOAN)

-So Red the Rose (1935)

TBOAN – perspective that order can only hold if whites control blacks

-white Camerons are benevolent to their loyal black slaves

-slaves are happy, childlike

-Uncle Tom, Mammy, coon

-war and reconstruction allow northern blacks to terrorize the South

-blacks are inherently bestial, sadistic

-former loyal slaves are corrupted

-tragic mulatto and buck

-Bogle asserts naïve audiences took these character types as reality (p. 13)

\*scene in legislature with newly elected blacks

-eating chicken, drinking liquor

\*Gus tries to rape young white Cameron daughter

-contrast of dark skin and lily white skin

chapter 2

1929

-Hallelujah (dir. King Vidor)

-both this film and *Hearts in Dixie* took advantage of new demand for sound, music, etc.

-blacks were considered the most musical

-*Hearts in Dixie* contains more grotesquely made-up actors

-basically, black actors in blackface

-unnaturally happy, loyal to white characters

-Bogle on p. 22, notes New York Times review saying the film is “truthful to its reflection of black men”

-stars Clarence Mus, Mildred Washing, and Stepin Fetchit as “Gummy”

-*Hallelujah* features more realistic modern story than Hearts in Dixie

-Vidor and white Hollywood’s version of black family, black culture

(Otto Preminger would use the image of black girl dying in the arms of black hero in *Carmen Jones*)

-opening credits, begins with blacks singing

-no MGN lion sound

-very clearly meant to signal to the audience that this is a different movie

-documentary feel in opening cotton fields

-the film announces itself as real/realistic/true to life for all blacks in America

-throughout, the farming lifestyle is seen as idealized

-very little complaining, sweating

-they are content with their life

-larger, societal problems don’t exist in this world

-per Bogle (p. 22), black actors worked to please their white employers (director, producers)

-gratuitous singing, dice playing, dancing

-p. 25 – all the characters were either sentimental idealists or highly emotional animals

-theme of religious ecstasy contrasts with sexual fervor (Bogle p. 23-24)

e.g., Zek can’t control his urges

-first with his adopted sister Missy Rose

-then with Chick

p. 24 – despite its flaws, Bogle notes it is “the finest record of black grief and passion to reach a movie screen.”

p. 24 – New York Times and Variety reviews noted “darkies” were truly gullible, religiously hysterical, fearful of water (in the baptism scene)

-Vidor used “restraint” to keep “that bunch down” during revival scene

(implying the cast was too rowdy on the set)

p. 26 – Chick (Nina Mae McKinney) has some traces of the tragic mulatto character type

-resented by other black women (called “high yaller” and “cinnamon”)

-McKinny was the first recognizable black actress

-later appeared in *Pinky* (1949)

-but never had a great Hollywood career

-moved to Europe

-influenced many black female characters

-including Dandridge in Carmen Jones

-Bogle notes even today that light-skinned entertainers are treated differently than darker skinned women

-Halle Berry, Beyonce

\*\*research topic – black leading ladies

-what were their career prospects

-what roles did they get; what did they almost get?

\*\*potential research topic - early black films as representative of all African Americans

-how do *Hallelujah* or other majority black cast films compare with other films with similar storylines but with white characters?  
    -why should we condemn black films for attempting to represent all black people when we do not necessarily have the same reaction with "white" films?

Chapter 3

1930s – Servant roles

p. 30

Often comic relief in otherwise serious stories set in Depression or antebellum times

-joy, zest, loyalty

Lincoln Perry = Stepin Fetchit

-*Judge Priest* and *Steamboat Round the Bend* (dir. John Ford)

-lazy, ignorant

-hugely successful

-eventually shunned by black civil rights activists

-Bogle seems to argue that Stepin Fetchit deserves some credit for opening studio doors to blacks

p. 39

Black maids in Mae West films represent the “second step in the servant evolution—the domestic servant as trusted good friend.”

Shirley Temple films – “first signs of the humanization of the black domestic”

Bill Robinson

-dignified, intelligent, humanized, but still loyal “tom”

*-Littlest Rebel*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=776oLm9GXxQ

-dance scene

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lJtGAgslyyk

-whole film

-first 10 minutes contains scenes with Robinson and Willie Best, including one in which Shirley asks Robinson what it means to free the slaves, and Robinson plays dumb

Clarence Muse, p. 45

-played “tom” characters, in *Hearts in Dixie* and *Broadway Bill* (Capra film), *Show Boat, Spirit of Youth,* and *Way Down South* (he co-wrote with Langston Hughes)

-but also a “buck” in *So Red the Rose*

-much later, appeared in *Car Wash*

-Bogle notes his roles were not flashy

-but they appeared during a time when it was nearly impossible to be both black and human, yet he succeeded often

*Imitation of Life* (1934) – p. 48

-starring Louise Beavers

-motherly love, motherly woes

-friendship between white and black women, tension with their daughters

-tragic mulatto

-held the promise that differences between black and white, between rich and poor, could be worked out if everybody tried to work together

-yet also painfully demonstrated that this was not possible

Louise Beavers – p. 54

-first regular mammy type

-perfect “foil” for white female stars like Jean Harlow and Mae West and Claudette Colbert (Colbert co-starred in *Imitation of Life*)

-these white leading ladies were in film plots that forced them to be alone, Depression-era tales

-Beavers’ character would be on their side, source of strength

-intentionally gained weight in order to play mammy roles

-faked a southern dialect

-her character in *Rainbow on the River* laments that slavery was abolished, claims her masters treated her nicely

*The Green Pastures* (1936) – p. 58

-all-black cast (first since 1929)

-Warners was optimistic because of success of *Imitation*, new “ghetto theaters”

(Hallelujah and Hearts in Dixie weren’t financially successful)

-debate was, again, if this film was meant to characterize all black people, or if, as a standalone film, it is a good piece of entertainment

Rex Ingram – p. 60

-played “De Lawd” in *Green Pastures*

-got an MD from Northwestern

-in many roles, he didn’t have to “tom” or “coon”

-maybe an “uncle remus” type in *Green Pastures*

-usually seemed free, heroic, if removed from typical American life and roles

-similar to Paul Robeson, except Ingram was more gentle, not as selfish as Robeson characters

Willie Best (Sleep’n’Eat) – p. 62

-classic coon, similar to Stepin Fetchit

-always seemed sleepy, lazy

-*Littlest Rebel*

-*Cabin in the Sky*

Mantan Moreland – p. 63

-often comically disappeared in the story right when his white friend needed him most

-many gestures and facial expressions

-*Cabin in the Sky*

*-The Trap* (Charlie Chan movies, as Birmingham Brown)

-*South of Dixie*

Louis Armstrong – p. 66

-another Fetchit imitator

-often foil for Bing Crosby, comic relief

-also in *Cabin in the Sky*

Later “servant” characters were not concerned with being so civil, so loyal

-Rochester (Eddie Anderson)

-Hattie McDaniel

-Butterfly McQueen

Rochester (Eddie Anderson)

-signature gravelly voice

-often worked with Jack Benny, as loyal valet

-yet he gains some level of independence

-*Man About Town* (1939), Rochester saves Benny who is trying to pick up socialite women

-*Cabin in the Sky*

-small role in *Gone With the Wind*, but under heavy make-up as clownish slave

Hattie McDaniel

-mammy characters, but boisterous, strong, audacious

-under the confines of the archetypical character, she was able to express individuality

-*Blonde Venus* (1932) – Josef Von Sternberg, southern town

-*Judge Priest*, happy to wash the judge’s laundry

-*Alice Adams*, plays a cook/maid yet clearly is smarter than the whites, puts them in their place without seeming out of place

-*Show Boat*, *Can This Be Dixie*

-with each role, she gained more and more strength, status

\*see TCM *Gone With the Wind* segment

-clear power in her relationship with Scarlet

-also, she’s critical to the plot in that she knows Scarlet’s secret desires for Ashley

-the audience knows partly because mammy knows

-in *Song of the South*, she lost some of that fire and played a more contented servant

Butterfly McQueen

-Bogle doesn’t seem to mind her performance

-Malcolm X claimed all black were embarrassed by her

-later had a role in *Cabin in the Sky*

Paul Robeson – p. 82

-great athlete and scholar (Rutgers football, Columbia law school)

-great success followed by betrayal due to his outspoken political beliefs, demands for better roles, affiliation with Communism

-*Emperor Jones* – explicitly cuts “the man” down to size

-a symbol for black confidence and self-fulfillment (p. 86)

-despite the fact that in the end, he is hunted down and killed

-the film is criticized sometimes because Jones is a callous killer and self-righteous

-*Show Boat*, with Hattie McDaniel

The “servant” roles virtually ended after the 1930s

-blacks were very careful to avoid taking those roles

-even casting sessions today, blacks discuss the possibility of accidentally slipping back to past stereotypes

Chapter 4

Black filmmakers

p. 89 – independent black filmmakers “tried to present realistic portraits of black Americans, but more often than not were trapped by the same stereotype conceptions as their white competitors.”

Oscar Micheaux

p. 99 – micheaux criticized for casting actors based on type

-especially for casting light-skinned actors as leading men and women

p. 102 – some say his films “reflected the interests and outlooks of the black bourgeoisie.”

p. 103 -never addressed ghetto life, racial misery, or decay

-mostly centered on upper-class

-“seems determined to depict blacks as just as affluent, just as educated, just as ‘cultured’ as white America”

-seems to adhere to Du Bois’ “talented tenth” theory

-Bogle says we must remember he was trying to move as far as possible away from Hollywood jesters

“Your self-image is so powerful it unwittingly becomes your destiny.”

1920, *Within Our Gates* (on blu-ray, 79 minutes)

-clearly states that conditions that blacks live with should not be tolerated

-as response to TBOAN

-similar movement between North and South settings, North-South marriage plot

-ending focused on hope, optimism for enlightened blacks

-should not be left out of national picture, as TBOAN tries to do

-portrays lynching scene, rape scene

-the color line between whites and blacks, and among blacks, clearly causes misery and death

-TBOAN contains black man attempting to rape a white woman

-but reality was that white men more often raped black women

-prior thinking was that lynching was justified to punish black men who raped white women

-Micheaux shows lynching is portrayed as wrong, intercut with rape by white man

-very intentional intercutting here

-other themes, including voting rights and assumed inferiority of blacks by whites

-also criticizes religion among black people

-ministers are dishonest

-Old Ned preaches to his people that schooling and wealth will lead white folks to hell

-blacks need to remain humble, content, and they will receive Heaven

-style – uses flashbacks for storytelling and to reveal character relationships

-formal qualities of the film are radical for 1920

-another response to TBOAN

-mullatoes in TBOAN are immoral, evil, conflicted

-but Within Our Gates’ heroine is mixed-race

-she is a victim, but also courageous

-sometimes hard to know if actors are white or black

-probably intentional by Micheaux

-to blur and destabilize the color line

Other Micheaux films

1920, *The Symbol of the Unconquered* (on blu-ray, 59 minutes)

-explores passing, mixed-race issues

-in this film and in *Within Our Gates*, sometimes hard to know if actors are white or black

-probably intentional by Micheaux

-to blur and destabilize the color line

1925 – Body and Soul (on blu-ray, 93 minutes)

-featuring Paul Robeson as a sociopath preacher who uses his authority to extract money and sex from parishioners

1931 – *Darktown Review* (on blu-ray, 18 minutes)

-harsh criticism of blackface, ministers

-juxtaposes sophisticated black choral performance against stereotyped vaudevillian act

-demonstrates intraracial social tensions

1937 – Underworld

-advocates rurality

-criticizes life in the city, great migration

-many awful things can happen in the city, many temptations

-it promises better life than the rural South, but doesn’t deliver

-this is part of Micheaux’s 2nd phase of career, more genre films (this one has gangster elements)

1938 – Birthright (on blu-ray, 73 minutes)

-based on T. S. Stribling novel -check out Code Switch podcast

-Harvard educated black man returns to the South

-encounters prejudice from both whites and blacks

-includes a scene in which a black maid criticizes him for seeming “above” her

-very similar to *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner*

-note one sequence toward the end in which an all-white audience is replaced inexplicably by a black audience

-was this accidental, or a subtle comment on our obsession with race?

\*Bogle says some blacks criticized Micheaux. Why?

-his best characters were light-skinned, dubbed “light brights”

-he focused on black bourgeoisie, ignored working class blacks

-never showed the ghetto

\*Musser says Micheaux was often critical of WEB Du Bois. Why?

-Du Bois believed blacks should be able to express their own culture and still integrate into American society immediately

-advocated struggle and agitation

-Booker T Washington’s approach was for blacks to have economic independence first

-but he was okay with staying separate in order to educate themselves and then eventually join American society

-this was more in line with Micheaux’s approach

-Micheaux was also not considered part of Harlem Renaissance, not considered an intellectual

-critics said his films catered too much to racial strife and the “lowest elements of the race.”

-titillating subject indeed

As a filmmaker, his work is admittedly derivative,

-meaning it intentionally took elements from previous films, novels, and plays, but reworked them with more obvious themes of racism

-but by examining the films and comparing with literature and political commentary of the time, we can understand debates within the Afr. Amer. Community

(says *Within Our Gates* takes exception to Du Bois’ *The Quest of the Silver Fleece*, but how?)

-*Body and Soul* – partly a response to Eugene O’Neal’s play *Emperor Jones* and *All God’s Chillun Got Wings* and *Roseanne* which deal with black culture

-Micheaux had no use for this

-cast Paul Robeson (who had played in *Emperor Jones*)

-Robeson’s character mocks his character from Emperor Jones

-Micheaux spent time in South Dakota and advocated for blacks to move west, be homesteaders

-blacks cannot continue to see themselves as victims, must be proactive

-in this way, he is more like Booker T. Washington, and opposed to Du Bois

-criticized city life and people living in poverty conditions but pretending they have a plan to succeed

-Bogle p. 103 – he was “determined to depict blacks as just as affluent, just as educated, just as ‘cultured’ as white America.”

*Two Knights of Vaudeville*

1915 – *Two Knights of Vaudeville* (on blu-ray, 11 minutes)

-comedy short, by Historical Feature Film Co in Chicago, distr by Ebony Pictures

-**dir. Luther Pollard**

-intentionally avoided “crap shooters, chicken stealing, razor display, watermelon eating stuff that the colored people generally have been a little disgusted in seeing.”

-yet some black critics still saw exaggerated performances and subject matter

-is it fair to criticize?

-other films (like Mack Sennett’s Keystone comedies) also contain zany characters and absurd actions

-respectable whites may have turned up their noses to Keystone films, but not because they were ashamed of their own race

-but blacks have to stay on guard for potential self-denigrating images

-as Du Bois noted, “It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,--an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.”

-black critics of *Two Knights* might be watching the film through white eyes, worried that whites would judge all blacks

Spencer Williams, black actor/director

-later played Andy on TV version of *Amos ‘n’ Andy*

-1931 – *Hot Biskits* (on blu-ray, 10 minutes)

-comedy, shot in Hollywood golf course, with sound

-later feature films visualize southern Baptist preaching, good deeds, going to heaven, temptation, evil

-1941 – The Blood of Jesus (on blu-ray, 56 minutes)

-rural religious parable

-but also praised for its realistic portrayal of black southern life

-listed in National Film Registry

\*mention “Rev. S.S. Jones Home Movies” from 1924-1928

-contains large river baptism scene, similar to Spencer’s *Blood of jesus*

-inspiration for Julie Dash and *Daughters of the Dust* in 1991

Screen *Hot Biskits*, dir. Spencer Williams (10 minutes)

~~Screen~~ *~~Blood of Jesus~~*~~, dir. Spencer Williams~~

Watch opening of *Bronze Buckaroo*

Chapter 5

\*What is Bogle’s big theme of 1940s?

=1940s had less emphasis on jesters, servants, villains

-previous decade movies were frivolous, screwballish

The Entertainers – from the beginning, “filmmakers had been trying to maintain the myth that Negroes were naturally rhythmic and natural-born entertainers” (p. 106)

\*what do you feel about this myth? Does it still apply today?

*Song of the South* (1946) – a throwback in the 40s that might seem more like a 30s movie

\*short clip

-Hollywood’s last attempt at the “servant syndrome” (p. 121)

-“corruptive piece of old South propaganda” (p. 122)

-innovative with animation,

\*is it racist? Why is it out of print by Disney while other more blatant racist films are still seen?

=maybe because even 1946 audiences saw it as old-fashioned

Starting in the 1940s, blacks were still used as entertainers

p. 123

\*what does Bogle mean by the “new” Negro?

=sympathetic, sometimes the center of the story

-often strong

-Bogle mentions traces of “new” Negro in 1930s films like *I Am a Fugitive* and *They Won’t Forget*

-these characters are very minor, but at least independent and not stereotypes

-John Ford’s *Arrowsmith* has a strong black doctor

-plus Paul Robeson films

-“new” black characters also might to promote patriotism, boost morale

-no more blues, depression

-blacks confirmed that America was worth fighting for

p. 109

The difference from 1930’s servant roles was that these entertainers were not deeply connected with the white lead characters (like Robinson and Shirley Temple)

-the “entertainer” was a safe device

-musical numbers could be completely cut out if southern theatre owners didn’t want to show them

\*what effect did WWII and post-war period, Cold War have on Hollywood?

-America needed to maintain moral high ground, but internal race problems were a major weakness

-FDR and Washington encouraged Hollywood to make better representations of blacks

-would help get blacks hired in industries previously restricted

-40s movies more attempts at “real” life

-problems at home haunted Americans, couldn’t legitimately win the moral high ground war against fascists and communists as long as a race problem existed

-some attempts at racial themes

-combined with new empowerment of blacks after serving in WWII, knowing they could contribute to American society, seeing how blacks were treated with more respect in France and elsewhere internationally

-Double V campaign

-this was the genesis of the civil rights movement in the 50s and 60s

-on p. 129, Bogle notes the demand for recognizable problems and issues in movies

e.g., *The Best Years of Our Lives* (not related to race, but very real issue of post-war)

-*Crossfire* and *Gentleman’s Agreement* addressed anti-Semitism

-fewer all-black spectacle musicals (too self-indulgent, idealized)

-made at a time when Hollywood had no conscience

-in the 40s

Leigh Whipper in *Of Mice and Men* and in *Ox-Bow Incident*

-his character aids the main white characters, is a source of strength

Ernest Anderson in John Huston’s *In This Our Life*

-law student, accused of hit-and-run, but Bette Davis eventually confesses

-NYT Bosley Crowther notes it is a “realistic manner uncommon in Hollywood.”

\*again, the notion of what is “realistic” in Hollywood is enigmatic, ever changing

-note, Crowther calls Anderson’s character “the Negro boy” instead of “young man.”

-Anderson also in 1951 *The Well*, very interesting description (I should watch it)

-about an integrated community that realizes there is still much distrust between the races

\*\*it is interesting that Hollywood sometimes sets the trends, but often follows trends

-in real life, 1941, first black general appointed in the Army

-only after this does Hollywood start showing blacks as heroic in military roles

-“realism” is important, and Hollywood won’t present anything unless it could be viewed as “real” within the film’s story world

Show clip from *I Dood It https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XTpt92c\_8Ms*

(with performances by Hazel Scott and Lena Horne)

p. 107 – as with prior conventions, the formula for entertainers in the movies was to give them musical interludes that barely affected the movie’s plot

-these entertainers were not principal characters in the story

-the regular characters could stop and watch the entertainers along with the audience, then the main plotline could continue without the entertainer

Hazel Scott

-musical prodigy

-refused to appear before segregated audiences

-in movies, refused to play stereotypical roles (slutty singer, maid, etc.)

-so she just played “herself” in musical interludes

e.g., *Rhapsody in Blue* (scene cut by southern censors)

-critics noted her blend of classical and swing

-*Time* noted “evil forces are struggling within her for expression” (p. 111)

-Bogle notes that it is ironic “that later younger black audiences found her too bourgeois…as if she had to prove something, perhaps how good she was, for the sake of her race” (p. 111)

\*WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

-white liberals felt good about themselves for appreciating Scott (p. 112)

-but her roles might be interpreted as “a new variation of the age-old ‘exotic black-woman’”

Lena Horne (also in *I Dood It*)

-known for beautiful skin tone

-NAACP’s Walter White personally helped her get early roles, believing she could help transform images of blacks in Hollywood (p. 114)

-but her roles in mixed-cast films were limited, could easily be cut out for southern audiences

-sometimes seemed aloof and detached from her roles

-described by Bogle as often regarded a “bourgeois phony” (p. 118)

*Cabin in the Sky* (1943) – dir. Minnelli - SHOW CLIP (maybe Petunia playing dice)

-familiar storyline of good black man, tempted by light-skinned jazzy singer to leave his good Christian woman

-devil vs. angel

-Eddie Rochester Anderson, Ethel Waters, Lena Horne

-also with Willie Best, Mantan Moreland, Louis Armstrong

-Bogle says great performances, but still “locked in” with old archetypes and scenarios

-poverty of the characters is glossed over (main character can’t read)

-yet still appreciated by mainstream critics

-“Apparently by 1943 this false image of American Negroes had been so thoroughly ingrained in the psyches of moviegoers that, had the movie been made straight, it would have been considered an unbelievable portrait of Negroes.” (p. 116)

\*What does this mean to you?

\*love this thought, because it references the importance of believability and “realism” in Hollywood, and how films reinforce public notions

*Stormy Weather* (1943)

-escapist fare

-but interesting that producers tried to acknowledge prior stereotypes to avoid

-one line of dialogue was edited to avoid referencing crap shooting

\*both of these 1943 films got audiences in the South, in all black movie houses

Hall Johnson choir

-made appearances in many movies

-*Way Down South* (1939) –written by Clarence Muse and Langston Hughes

\*I should try to see this

p. 126 – \*what does Bogle mean by the “huckfinn” fixation?

=black supporting character who helps main white character, like Jim and Huck Finn

-not just aid him in the plot, but helps him to find his soul

-p. 127, “perhaps represents the white liberal American’s dream of lost innocence and freedom”

-the Negro thrives on spirituality; the white character has lost spirituality in order to fit in with society, but the black character helps him get it back or find balance

-1942 *Casablanca*, Sam and Rick (Humphrey Bogart)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bAlzmRjixr0&t=19>s

-earlier examples include Willie Best and Will Rogers in *Judge Priest*

-the black character isn’t strong or virile enough to threaten whites

\*modern versions of the huckfinn fixation?

-*Legend of Bagger Vance*

*-Driving Miss Daisy*

*-Shawshank Redemption*

~~Robert Rossellini’s~~ *~~Paisan~~* ~~seems interesting (1948)~~

~~-black GI in Naples, meets young shoeshiner~~

~~-parallels between bombed out Naples and poverty-stricken Mississippi where the GI is from~~

Important films of 1949:

*Home of the Brave* (show clip)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aaY0IZlggB8>

(start at about 56 min)

-original story was about a Jewish character, but Stanley Kramer substituted a black character

(Kramer later produced *High Noon*, *Defiant Ones,* and *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner*)

-the trauma that James Edwards’ character encounters is not just the battle, but it’s the racism of his fellow soldiers, reminding him that his whole life has been spent as an outsider, a stranger in his own country

-perhaps a forced happy ending, suggesting that just a little communication will solve racism

-Edwards would play many strong black characters

-perhaps a little too ahead of his time, but charted a path for Sidney Poitier

*Lost Boundaries* -find a clip, such as son learning he has Negro blood

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1u-YnihAzf0>

-light-skinned family is “outed” after passing as white many years

-style was “starkly realistic with almost a documentary flavor” (p. 132)

-but its compromise is that it is the familiar mulattoe story

*Pinky*-find a clip, such as Ethel Waters dressing down Pinky

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xZaxH1Tm_fU> (trailer)

-Daryl Zanuck produced, Elia Kazan directed

-starring Ethel Waters and an older Nina Mae McKinney

-cast a white actress to play Pinky

\*should we criticize this decision?

-or is it necessary so white audience will sympathize seeing her do labor usually reserved for black characters

-Ethel Waters praised for performance, “without seeming ludicrous” (p. 137)

-her lines might have been laughed at delivered by a less capable actress

-her “granny” character transcended the stereotype

-her performance “spelled the death of the one-sided mammy figure” (p. 139)

*Intruder in the Dust* -find a clip

-Juano Hernandez

-strong man in the face of the death

-“not once does the black man bend” (p. 140)

-like James Edwards, he had many roles of strong black men, but never became a big star

-perhaps still a little ahead of his time

Chapter 6

\*Why were there big changes to movies in the 50s

-Paramount decision

-rise of TV

-blacklisting

-bolder “message” movies after 1949

-fewer big spectacle escapist films (and the ones that were made often lost money)

-splintering of audiences

distinct personalities shined in Ethel Waters, Dorothy Dandridge, and Sidney Poitier

-not consigned to rigid or mythic types

p. 145 – “they were aesthetic beings in themselves. To contemplate Waters’ humanity or Dandridge’s beauty or Poitier’s code of decency was worth the price of admission.”

Ethel Waters had been in *Cabin in the Sky* and *Pinky* in the 40s

In the 50s, *The Member of the Wedding*

-the first time a black actress carried the lead in a major studio white production

-she played the guiding spirit for children in the film

-she always portrayed long-suffering women, and her real life persona confirmed she was indeed the characters she played (p. 146)

-lived a truly hard life

-“more than just a representative of the long-suffering, strong black woman” (p. 148)

-“she brought dignity and wisdom to the race”

Prompt - Discuss why Bogle describes Dorothy Dandridge as “unfulfilled” despite her unprecedented success in the 1950s.

Dorothy Dandridge – most successful leading black actress of the 50s

-her fragility was part of her appeal (more than McKinney or Horne)

-her characters “battled with the duality”

-doomed to live a real life as tragic mulatto

-50s films include *Bright Road* with Harry Belafonte

-*Carmen Jones*, also with Belafonte, directed by Otto Preminger

-strong black character, would rather die than take shit from a man

-*Island in the Sun*, also with Belafonte

-interracial love scenario (but studio refused to let her kiss a white man)

-*Porgy and Bess* with Sidney Poitier and Sammy Davis Jr.

-showed great range

-first black actress on cover of *Life* magazine

-Oscar nomination for Best Actress in *Carmen Jones*  (first black actress ever to be nominated)

-later tried to make films in Europe but was disillusioned home and abroad

-died at age 42 from drug overdose

-white audiences may have assumed she was “unfulfilled because of that drop of Negro blood.” (p. 157)

\*Sidney Poitier, why was he so successful?

-he was a model “integrationist” for white and black audiences

\*WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

-always educated, dressed well, polite, well-spoken

-“perfect dream for white liberals” (p. 158)

-also loved by black audiences who were tired of seeing blacks dance and act buffoons

-still fit the old uncle tom type

-so his characters were familiar enough to audiences

-but strong enough and independent to earn his own story

-people like Bill Robinson were more concerned with pleasing dominant whites, whereas Poitier’s self-sacrifice was based on a strong moral code

-like Jackie Robinson in baseball, Poitier was the best candidate to cross over to white movies

-very talented, but also had the right mannerism

-rarely has a movie romance

-his films made audiences believe things would work out

-Van Peebles sees him as just a placation device from Hollywood

-1950 *No Way Out* – plays a doctor who gets blamed for a white man’s death

-1957 *Band of Angels* – with Clark Gable

-1957 *Edge of the City* – with John Cassavetes

-1958 *Defiant Ones* – criticized by some blacks for sacrificing himself for the white man

-1959 *Porgy and Bess* – with Dorothy Dandridge

Woody Strode – ex-NFL player

-1960 *Sergeant Rutledge*, directed by John Ford

-Ford’s “apology” for prior racist representations in films

Harry Balafonte – natural good looks

-more of a “buck” than Poitier (according to Bogle)

*Bright Road, Carmen Jones, Island in the Sun* – all with Dandridge

-in *island in the Sun*, he as an interracial relationship with a white woman (Joan Fontaine), but without any physical contact

Most 50s films ended happily, even if there were moments of racial strife

-films featuring blacks “failed to record black anger and anguish realistically” (p. 173).

“They naively announced that integration would solve our problems.” (p. 174)

-or all-black films like Carmen Jones and Porgy and Bess “returned to idealized, fake black worlds.” (p. 174)

Chapter 7 (the 1960s)

p. 175

the movies’ problem people become militants

“no longer were submissive, patient Negroes pleading for acceptance. Instead, the headstrong militants appeared.”

p. 176 – it was a period of significant films rather than significant stars

-even Poitier’s films “overpowered him as a performer”

1960s – first time ghettos, whores, hustlers, pimps, addicts were shown on screen

Louis Peterson – first black playwright on Broadway

-he adapted his play *Take a Giant Step* into a film

Arthouse films: attempted to present “untyped” black characters

*Shadows* (1961) – Cassavetes, verite style

*The Cool World* (1963) – produced by Fred Wiseman

*One Potato, Two Potato* (1964) – first film about interracial marriage

-Nothin But a Man

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rg4st6blAXQ> (this is a “Guardian” review with clips)

-Dixon had a “new style of black sexuality”

-represented “sensitive, tortured men as well as sensual ones” (p. 184)

Ossie Davis’ *Gone Are the Days*, not an art-house film

-relied on older stereotypes

-he tells Get Low, “If slavery ever comes back, I want to be your agent.”

-Davis may have believed that audiences were sophisticated enough to laugh at the exaggerations of black stereotypes, but perhaps he was too idealistic

\*Prompt

Bogle’s descriptions of Ossie Davis’ film *Gone Are the Days* (1963), Otto Preminger’s film *Hurry Sundown* (1967), and Gordon Parks’ film *The Learning Tree* (1969) imply they may have been progressive, or they may have been problematic. Discuss how either interpretation was possible for each of these films.

*Black Like Me* (1964)

-some criticized it because it was exploitive, a “white man slumming at the black man’s expense” (p. 186)

-but “it was an earnest attempt to confront and expose racism in America”

\*Prompt

Discuss the various interpretations and critical opinions of the movie *Black Like Me* (1964).

*Dutchman* (1967) – starring Al Freeman, Jr, and Shirley Knight

-takes place in a NYC subway car, he is a well-dress, well-spoken black man, she enters the subway car and tries to seduce him.

-the whole film takes place in almost real time

-he resists her taunting at first, then his restraints eventually fall

-then he gets angry, tirade

-then she stabs him to death, and the other white people do nothing.

-Freeman “emerged as the movies’ best black spokesman on militancy and intellectualized hostility” (p. 188)

-*Dutchman* is a parable that “articulated the options left open to a black man in white America: either he can survive by joining the ranks of the black bourgeoisie (those apers of white manners who are doomed to lives without their manhood) or he can lash out at the dominant culture and run the risk of being chopped down” (p. 187)

\*really important issue to explore, not just in cinema but in all of black studies

\*Prompt

In Bogle’s description of *Dutchman* (1967), he mentions “the black bourgeoisie.” Discuss what this term means and how it might have both positive and negative implications.

*Hurry Sundown* (1967) – Bogle spends a lot of time on this film

-directed by Otto Preminger

-post-WWII South – filled with southern white and black clichés

-Reeve – a black veteran of WWII who returns home to fight for his own dignity

(the Double V campaign)

-despite its clichés, “it succeeded on a primal level as a popularization of current events…its inadvertent satire and parody…led the way to the pure satire and madness and the intentional use of stereotypes and clichés found in *Putney Swope* and *Cotton Comes to Harlem*” (p. 192)

(see prompt above)

Sidney Poitier

*-Raisin in the Sun* (1961) – a great Poitier performance

-Diana Sands “ushered in the contemporary, untyped intelligent black woman” (p. 177)

-also with Ruby Dee

-“integrationist” theme, blacks hopeful of moving to suburbs

-*Lillies of the Field* (1963) – Best Actor Oscar

-he helps nuns build a chapel

-but to black audiences, his character was sacrificing himself for white characters

-Poitier usually played characters with flawless credentials, “superblackman” (p. 195)

-denounced by some black critics as too perfect, too unrealistic to make an impact on black lives

-even in *In the Heat of the Night*, his character is relegated to helping the whites

\*show clips from *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner* when Hepburn first sees him, and when the maid chastises him for being uppity

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8BI5jFyAdZ8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IC88Tc43r6A>

\*Prompt

*If you didn’t answer the Sidney Poitier prompt from chapter 6, you may answer this prompt*: Bogle uses the term “superblackman” in his discussion of Sidney Poitier. Discuss this concept and its implications in Poitier’s movies *Lilies of the Field, In the Heat of the Night,* and *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner*.

p. 198

Bogle makes the point that MLK’s nonviolence philosophy was no longer prevalent by 1966

-yet the film industry was “coasting along on the King attitudes.”

-“the industry continued with its brotherly-love everything’s-going-to-be-dandy escapist movies, assuming that the audiences would still believe in them.”

\*is this true? Had black separatism and black power overtaken nonviolence as the preferred path to civil rights?

Jim Brown – served the need for a viable black-power sex figure.” (p. 199)

\*here is a potential research/critical analysis question

-Bogle says “Jim Brown’s brute force, if not properly guided, would be blind and indiscriminate and too much of a threat to white males in the audience; thus he could never be cast as a politically militant black man.” (p. 201)

-you could examine 3 or 4 movies with Jim Brown and argue either for or against Bogle

-look at Bogle’s point that Jim Brown’s characters were “used to work with the dominant white culture rather than against it.”

The New-Style Black Film

*Uptight* (1969) – “first American movie to spotlight black revolutionaries and the separatist movement” (p. 202)

-ambiguous political statement, perhaps that blacks were only able to attack one of their own, not gaining any ground compared with white America

-actor Raymond St. Jacques’ personality “undercut…the black militant spirit by presenting so unpassionate an uninspiring a leader” (p. 203)

Gordon Parks’ *The Learning Tree* (1969)

-first black man to direct a major American movie \*\*\*

-used many old clichés, but “presented them with such feeling as to render them new…he restored the clichés original meanings” (p. 205)

(see prompt above)

*The Lost Man* (1969) – with Poitier

-Poitier’s character seems to be a black militant, but has a romance with a white society girl

-Bogle notes that “in this separatist age, such white-black alliances were clearly out of place.”

*Putney Swope* (1969)

-farcical look at black America

-everybody—blacks and whites—are deemed ugly

-plot involves a black “brute” taking over an ad agency and running it into the ground

-like a modern version of a subplot in *The Birth of a Nation*

ch. 8 – the 1970s

1970s was “me” decade (1960s were more about social protest)

movies reflected shifting outlooks

-Bogle says 1970s was most energetic, important for black film history

-black characters, black community had new aspirations, grievances

-studios produced black-oriented films meant to please black audiences, not just exploit them

(1970s was “New Hollywood” in general, so entire landscape of Hollywood was different)

But old stereotypes resurfaced, “simply dressed in new garb” (p. 210)

-the “age of the buck”

-aggressive, sexually charged

Prompt: Bogle says old stereotypes resurfaced in the 1970s, but they were “simply dressed in new garb.” What does he mean by this? Give examples.

(Cotton Comes to Harlem, bucks in Blacksploitation films, etc.)

William Wyler, *The Liberation of LB Jones* (1970) (I should see this\*\*\*)

-small southern town, sex and race

*The Great White Hype*, with James Earl Jones as a Jack Johnson character

Hal Ashby’s *The Landlord*

-black woman, pregnant by a white man

(Ashby was editor on *In the Heat of the Night*)

Ossie Davis’ *Cotton Comes to Harlem*

-highly successful film, with a black director

-cops and robbers, set in Harlem with a variety of coons, toms, etc.

-created a fantasy world of black world order

-seemed to tell black audiences it was ok to laugh at older stereotypes instead of feel threatened

-“the old ethnic humor seemed blessed with a double consciousness: rather than cooning or tomming it up to please whites…the black comic characters joked or laughed or acted the fool with one another. Or sometimes they used humor combatively to outwit the white characters. (Of course, Eddie Anderson and Hattie McDaniel had always done this, on the sly)” (p. 212)

Prompt: Films that were part of the “Blacksploitation” movement in the 1970s often divided black audiences. Compare and contrast pros and cons of films like *Sweet Sweetback’s Baadasssss Song, Shaft,* and *Superfly*.

Van Peebles’ *Sweetback*

Van Peebles said in an interview with *Time* (August 16, 1971), “Of all the ways we’ve been exploited by The Man, the most damaging is the way he destroyed our self-image.” (p. 215)

-audiences, especially young blacks, gravitated to it because “a black man met violence with violence and triumphed over the corrupt white establishment” (p. 213)

-“audiences were ready for a sexual black movie hero”

-but there were problems even within the black community

-concerns that years of civil rights struggle had led in the wrong path

\*the rejection of black bourgeoisie, assimilation

-by reacting against black middle class who sometimes “acted white”

-but “the new militant separatist black classes sometimes came to identify blackness with the trappings of the ghetto.”

-“Ghetto residents seemed to have a greater ethnic identity” (p. 215)

-“poverty and ghetto life (sometimes the very degrading constraints imposed on Black America by White America) were frequently idealized and glamorized.”

Sweetback was the first film to glorify ghetto life, pimps, etc.

-it seems to claim a “communal spirit” or “tribal” element that pertains only to black America

-Sweetback’s character is continually aided by members of the community

-but it doesn’t try to explain why a pimp should be glorified

-and it “debased the black woman”

*Shaft*, Gordon Parks

-based on a detective story not originally with a black cast

-Parks, like Van Peebles, found it hard to sustain a long career

*Super Fly*, Gordon Parks Jr.

-many blacks were outraged by the glorification of drugs, sex, violence

-the point was to show a black man living on his own terms

-Bogle compares the “wildly sexual man” in Super Fly with the “mature male view of sex depicted in a movie like *Nothing But a Man*” (217)

Prompt

Describe the difference between how the movie industry considered black audiences in the beginning of the 1970s compared with the end of the 1970s.

By 1972, the industry and media were well aware of the potential of black movies

-a “black movie boom” (218)

-the industry was struggling, so any niche was a goldmine

\*potential Paper Topic

-a history of the word “nigger” in movies

-even in titles as late as the 1970s (*The Legend of Nigger Charley*, etc.)

-debates within the black population

-more recently, criticism of Tarantino’s use of the word

Prompt: Considering the term “Blacksploitation,” discuss who or what is actually being exploited.

Bogle points out that most new movies in the “black movie boom” were produced and directed by white men

-plus, they were poorly funded, so there was an inherent cheap quality about them

-studios were “exploiting an audience need” (p. 219)

-a Blaxploitation film “played on the needs of black audiences for heroic figures without answering those needs in realistic terms.”

-many blacks protested; NAACP leader: “We must insist that our children are not constantly exposed to a steady diet of so-called black movies that glorify black males as pimps, dope pushers, gangsters and super males.”

\*\*this is such an important point!!!

Bogle notes that the heroes of black movies in the 1970s “were no more realistic than the servants of the 1930s or the entertainers of the 1940s” (p. 219)

But, sometimes these films revealed a subtle political or social message

-comments on the quality of life for black Americans

-themes of violence and betrayals are an outgrowth of current events (Vietnam, Watergate, etc.)

Former athletes as movie stars

-“Seldom has the athlete as movie hero been a thinker, questioning his role in society…the politics of the black athlete are far more populist than revolutionary.” (220)

*Lady Sings the Blues* (1972) – with Diana Ross

-with Billy Dee Williams and Richard Pryor

-Williams plays a rare romantic black male character (Bogle contrasts his role with Sweetback or Priest who aren’t romantic, but very sexual)

-Bogle says Micheaux would have liked *Lady Sings the Blues*

-I need to clarify what he means about black audiences wanting lavish entertainment and dazzling charismatic personalities

*Sounder* (1972)

-highly praised

-family of sharecroppers in the South during Depression

-with Paul Winfield, Cicely Tyson

-“gentle” characters, especially compared with *Sweetback* and other Blaxploitation films

-the family gets along well, despite economic problems

-Tyson was the first dark skinned black woman to play a leading, serious role

Poitier as director – sought to do something different than his starring roles from 50s-60s

-conscious of the criticism of his earlier roles

-e.g., *Buck and the Preacher* (1972) with Harry Belafonte and Ruby Dee

-Bogle calls his films “escapist, nonthreatening, bourgeois yarns” (227)

-but “did give black audiences of their day a sense of community”

Prompt: Bogle uses the term “black superwoman” in his discussion of Pam Grier and Tamara Dobson. Explain what he means by this, using examples from their films.

Pam Grier and Tamara Dobson, “black superwoman”

-part buck, part mammy, part mulatto

-Bogle notes black women found it hard to relate to them

-Grier’s films included *Black Mama, White Mama*, *Coffy*, and *Foxy Brown*

Ivan Dixon, *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* (1973)

-not well-received at first, but later appreciated

Mel Brooks’ *Blazing Saddles* (1974)

By mid 1970s, “once black audiences had stopped supporting the cheaply made action movies, the black movie boom was over” (233)

-Hollywood believed the “black audience” was no longer interested in movies

-but Hollywood didn’t really try to raise the level of ambition of black films

-the “crossover” film was the future – it had to attract white audiences, with built-in device to please them

-no raw political content

-Poitier/Cosby movies were a good example

Michael Shultz was the most productive black director

-*Cooley High* and *Car Wash*

Richard Pryor

-comedy routine and his acting roles had natural political content, but with personal pain/pathos underneath

-Bogle says Pryor, more than anyone in history (except Dorothy Dandridge), connected with black audiences

-small role in *Lady Sings the Blues*

-unexpected success in *Silver Streak* (1976) – Pryor’s attitude, energy saved the film

-it does contain the “huck-finn fixation” (238), which helps attract a white audience

*The Wiz* (1978)

-all-black cast, most expensive musical in history ($35 million)

-Diana Ross, Michael Jackson, Richard Pryor

-not well-reviewed

End of the 1970s

-industry belief that the black film and black audience were dead