

spooky films such as *The Body Disappears* (1941), featuring Sleep 'n' Eat, and *King of the Zombies* (1941), boasting Mantan Moreland. There were glimmers of hope for Blacks with the return of a Black film director, Spencer Williams. Williams' "Black horror" films had monsters, the devil, and a healthy dose of lessons in morality to go with them. But first, there would be another ape film to contend with in Williams' half-man, half-ape film, *Son of Ingagi* (1940).

1940s

HORRIFYING GOONS AND MINSTREL COONS

In staging this orgy of terror
That leaves you in dread of the dark,
The movies are making an error;
They're all overshooting the mark.

—Jaffray (174)¹

Horror had come into its own very quickly, and a multitude of filmmakers happily jumped on the horror bandwagon, either specializing in horror or diversifying their portfolios by adding horror films to their oeuvre. This exploding interest in the genre soon meant that a horror film glut was at hand, and audiences who once lined up to get a taste of horror began to bend under the (often crude and formulaic) oversupply; in response audiences turned scarce.

As 1940s horror films were greeted by rather anemic box office returns, the film industry responded to dwindling ticket sales with a two-tiered film production and distribution system. There were A-list movies, with impressive budgetary support, and "B movies," such as horror, which garnered lower budgets and promotion.² The two types of films, A and B grade, were at times marketed as part of a double-bill so that when audiences queued up for a quality "A-film" like the Academy Award-winning *All the Kings Men* (1949), they might also take in a horror movie such as one of the many, many mummy "B-flicks" in circulation: *The Mummy's Hand* (1940), *The Mummy's Tomb* (1942), *The Mummy's Ghost* (1944), or *The Mummy's Curse* (1945). Frequently, two B movies would make up the double-bill so that patrons might, perhaps, enjoy an evening of monster movies. Even with such clever double-feature marketing, horror continued to struggle. Perhaps the atrocities of World War II, the

most repulsive of which targeted civilians, such as the Holocaust and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, were far, far more horrifying and inescapable.³

Horror was just gaining its momentum, and already it was under considerable threat. The famed Universal Studios' monsters became embarrassingly derivative, with the comedy duo Bud Abbott and Lou Costello "meeting" many of the monsters in slapstick films. RKO, the studio that produced *King Kong* (1933), under the direction of Val Lewton, offered more original horror film fare, such as *Cat People* (1942). *Cat People* was a rare horror innovation for the time as much of the horror fare of the 1940s was man-in-a-monkey-suit drek such as Monogram Pictures' *The Ape* (1940).

While the horror genre was unraveling, Blacks' representational treatment in the films, particularly in "Blacks in horror" films, saw no improvement. After 50 years of participation in the genre, Blacks were still relegated to roles such as that of the primitive, jungle native or servant to Whites. The most dramatic change to Blacks' portrayals in horror during the 1940s simply added insult to injury, as late nineteenth and early twentieth century minstrelsy was resurrected to create comedy-horror films in which Blacks were presented as deathly afraid coons—absurd, comic figures whose intellectual deficits, such as speaking in malapropisms, cultural inferiority, such as chasing chickens, and physical antics, such as bugging their eyes, invited laughter and ridicule. Unlike the native or the servant, who was often cast as a mere extra in horror films, moving about silently in said films, the scared comic-Negro roles (as they have come to be called) were substantial co-starring parts that were central to the plot. When horror paired with comedy the genre turned to Blacks, with comic actors such as Mantan Moreland and Willie "Sleep 'n' Eat" Best called in to perform their very "best" coon antics.

Importantly, "Black horror" returned during this decade, and thanks to filmmaker Spencer Williams Jr., the horror genre saw some of its most compelling stories, unique characterizations, and thoughtful treatments of Black life and culture. Williams' films focused on the battle between good and evil, delved into Black religiosity, and centered their stories on women. Williams' films begged the question, how could Black filmmakers, excluded from Hollywood and operating on a shoe-string budget, bring to the genre something so markedly inspiring? In sum, this was the dilemma regarding Blacks' participation in horror films of the decade: abysmal, but prominent portrayals, or promising portrayals, limited in their reach.

Monster Mash

The "Blacks in horror" films released over the course of the decade evidenced how dire things were for Blacks. *I Walked With a Zombie* (1943) is set on the Caribbean on the island of postcolonial St. Sebastian, on a sugar plantation and in

its surrounding jungle.⁴ For the Blacks in the film, St. Sebastian is an island built on death due to its past love affair with slavery. The film begins derisively with a White woman, Betsy (Frances Dee), casually and uncritically dismissing the atrocities of slavery while in a conversation with a Black man, a descendant of slaves: **COACHMAN (CLINTON ROSEMOND, UNCREDITED):** The enormous boat brought the long ago fathers and mothers of us all chained to the bottom of the boat.

BETSY: They brought you to a beautiful place, didn't they?

COACHMAN: If you say, Miss, if you say.

Though the film works to assert that slavery's history and effects remain at the fore for Blacks and their existence on the island, this particular scene works to illustrate how filmmakers could not help but to dilute such messages with a postcolonial fantasy of primitive exoticism and beauty. St. Sebastian may be crying from Blacks' spilled blood (as Ti-Misery, the masthead salvaged from a slave ship, symbolically does in the film), but the film works hard to convince viewers that the Caribbean is still a very lovely place to vacation. Humphries, explains Betsy's incomprehension scene in this way: Betsy "can only see beauty around her, beauty of the kind constructed by colonial discourse for the benefit of those who live off the fruits of slave-labour. . . . It would be difficult to represent and sum up social and economic blindness more cogently."⁵ The way in which Betsy first sees St. Sebastian is reminiscent of *White Zombie* (1932) when the engaged couple Neil and Madeline are surprised that Haiti is not going to be the wedding paradise that they expected. Betsy's (and Neil and Madeline's) ability to be among so many Blacks without knowing them provides startling insights into the repression of cultures and histories.

I Walked With a Zombie features an assortment of Voodoo-practicing Blacks who spend quite a bit of time "frightening" Whites by beating Voodoo drums and engaging in rituals. This restriction of Blacks to stereotype means that the films most interesting turns focus on "the psychological problems of White people" rather than any kind of consideration of, or engagement with, the Black characters.⁶

In *Zombie*, there is, expectedly, a zombie among the Blacks—Carre-Four⁷ (Darby Jones). Carre-Four skulks around silently and ominously, never really a threat except for when he is ordered to enter the home of the White plantation owner and snatch away a White woman. Of course he does not fulfill this part of his mission, as Black men can only look (which is presumably menacing enough), but they cannot touch. Carre-Four is not the only zombie on the island; there is also Jessica, a White woman who may or may not be a true zombie. There is much to be known about Jessica as the White protagonists battle to regain her soul, and the White men battle for her love. However, Carre-Four's story does not

merit exploration, and no one is interested in restoring his soul.⁸ There is also Alma (Theresa Harris), who keeps up with the tradition of her slave ancestors of mourning when a Black child is born, but making “merry at a burial.” In the film, Alma’s tears (which are not seen) are aligned and even supplanted by Ti-Misery’s, the masthead-turned-garden-water-fixture on the plantation, that appears to be weeping when its water flows. In the film, the story of the island’s slavery history is represented through Ti-Misery. The film denies the living a chance to fully recount this slave history. Instead, Ti-Misery, through symbolism, filters and carries living Blacks’ slave narratives of St. Sebastian. Rounding out this odd group, who are viewed “through the confused eyes of the film’s White protagonists,”⁹ is an omniscient Calypso singer portrayed by Lancelot Pinard a.k.a. Sir Lancelot. Lancelot’s contribution to the film is to weave gossip, stories, and an ominous warning about one’s fate into his Calypso songs.

What is clear in this film is that Blackness is so infectious that it imperils Whites, particularly White women, who are weakened by their brush with it. In this film, two White women fall victim to Black culture. The first becomes obsessed with the myths and power of Voodoo and she in turn zombifies another defenseless White woman. *New York Times* film critic Bosley Crowther dismissed



FIGURE 3.1 Only a Black man’s shadow can enter the White boudoir in *I Walked with a Zombie*
 RKO/Photofest

I Walked With a Zombie, snidely remarking the film “drains all one’s respect for ambulant ghosts.”¹⁰

Two years later, in 1945, RKO (absent Val Lewton) introduced a sequel to *I Walked With a Zombie*, entitled *Zombies on Broadway*. This horror film took a comedy turn, as so many films did during the 1940s, by centering on the antics of Jerry Miles (Wally Brown) and Mike Strager (Alan Carney), who are Abbott and Costello-type buddies. The film is about the efforts of Jerry and Mike to find a real-life zombie for the opening of a New York club called the Zombie Hut. The duo travel to San Sebastian and are welcomed to the island with a song by Sir Lancelot as the Calypso singer who summarizes their coming fate through lively rhyme. The actor Darby Jones is also back in the role of the silent, gliding zombie, though his name has been changed to Kolaaga and he has a new master in Dr. Paul Renault, played by Bela Lugosi. Lugosi’s presence provides a bit of humorous inter-textuality for horror fans as he delivers the line “You’ve seen me create a zombie [before];” thereby paying clever homage to Lugosi’s turn in the first zombie horror film, *White Zombie* (1932). Kolaaga is portrayed seriously, without comic effect. It is explained that Kolaaga was “taken” by Renault, and is now being forced to kidnap victims for zombification, as well as do a little house-keeping work around Renault’s spooky mansion. In this film, Kolaaga actually does grab a White woman, delivering her to Renault, who opts not to turn her into a zombie after observing her beauty. More, in this film, Kolaaga is far more empowered as he turns on his master, refusing his orders to kill others and ultimately killing Renault (with a shovel) instead. The film shows natives as half-clothed primitives and makes reference to Voodoo drums with their “death beat” that drives the Whites crazy; the “hill natives” also dance around a fire, with spears. The comedy in the film is performed largely by Jerry and Mike, with Mike even appearing in blackface (which fools the natives into thinking he is Black).

The “Blacks in horror” film *White Pongo* (1945) stood out for its use of more than a dozen Black actors during a period when roles were decreasing due to the budgetary constraints of B movies. Here, the majority of the Blacks are cast as extras—partially clothed natives with no speaking lines. They guide a team of White scientists across the “dark continent” and through land “unexplored by White men” in search of a great anthropological find, a prized white gorilla, or “pongo,” believed to be the intelligent missing link. A violent black gorilla—who attacks the pongo but loses the fight and pays with its life—is undesirable, and is tossed back into the jungle by the White men when it is accidentally trapped. When the natives do get to make a sound, it is only for brief moments, such as when they fawn over European clothes or when they are screaming as pongo stomps them to death. Only one very lucky adult male native, Mumbo Jumbo (Joel Fluellen), gets to say “Bwana” and offer himself as “#1 porter boy.”¹¹ In the film, Mumbo Jumbo, like Carre-Four, also has an opportunity to touch a White woman, but does not dare. And like Carre-Four and Kolaaga, there is little else

known about Mumbo Jumbo as he joins the ranks of the many Blacks who are treated as (work) objects rather than subjects in these films.

To view *White Pongo* as a B movie is generous. The film is cheaply made, relying on a good bit of old stock footage of animals drinking water to pad a convoluted, badly conceived script. However, *Pongo* looked like A-list, award-worthy fare next to its film doppelgänger *White Gorilla* (1945). The bulk of *White Gorilla* is a jumbled mix of stock footage and scenes from the 1915 silent, short nature film *Perils of the Jungle*. This messy movie is essentially a race-war film between a black gorilla, Nbonga, who makes a rare white gorilla, Konga, an "out-cast" in the jungle because it is different.¹² The two fight over the course of the film, with the black gorilla, "the monster with his huge chest filled with hate," the instigator. Predictably, the film's location was some African "bad country" where natives "hated the White man" and where Whites are scared of the tones of the natives' drums. When the white gorilla is killed by an interloping White man, the ape is eulogized at length, with the black ape Nbonga even implicated in the mourning of a noble, fallen White warrior who was simply fighting on behalf of his race and in "a battle for jungle supremacy."¹³

You know I feel kind of sorry I had to kill that white gorilla. He seemed almost human. . . . His death seemed to cast a spell of loneliness over the jungle . . . a silent tribute to his passing . . . I can almost see him [the black gorilla] as he discovers the white outcast laying there as though sleeping. His efforts to make him do battle. And then the change . . . His bewilderment as he looks at the motionless figure. A sort of human emotion that comes over him. Then the slow realization, the outcast is dead. Then the animal instinct returns, the instinct to cover up and hide the remains of a fallen one from the scavengers of the jungle. A gesture for forgiveness as a chance of death call for the outcast for his race—the white gorilla.

In the end, the audience came to know much more about the white gorilla than about Carre-Four, Kolaaga, and Mumbo Jumbo combined.

Reforming Hollywood, Reinventing the Black Image

Gearing up for a new decade of films, in December 1939, Spencer Williams and a who's who of Black horror film stars, including Clarence Muse (*Black Moon*, *White Zombie*, *The Invisible Ghost*), Laura Bowman (*Drums o' Voodoo*, *Son of Ingagi*), and Earl Morris (*Son of Ingagi*) met to discuss how to rein in the "derogatory types and stigmas" inflicted on Black characters in film across genres.¹⁴ Independent filmmaking, Black or otherwise, had all but disappeared for the time being; hence the bulk of the representations of Blacks was coming out of Hollywood. Demanding change, however, was a tricky proposition as Hollywood was the dominant employer and the industry had already shown it could and

would work around a Black presence, as Williams' "knew they spoke from weakness, from the ranks of the Bs [i.e. B movies], from still prevalent servile roles."¹⁵ Many Black performers were already keeping quiet "about their dissatisfaction or anger over the lack of decent roles. Like the White stars, they knew bad-mouthing the industry got them nothing except a one-way ticket back to wherever they had come from."¹⁶ The other alternative was to forge ahead with their work in Hollywood, acting as change-agents when and where they could.

Several Blacks opted to speak up about their treatment by Hollywood. On December 28, 1940, actor Clarence Muse published his hope for a new year filled with improved imagery for Blacks:

SOMEHOW, SOME WHERE, WE MUST HAVE A MAJOR NEGRO PICTURE. THIS IS a serious resolution . . . A great Negro story, big enough, good enough to be released by a major company like any other picture . . . Uplifting, daring, entertaining and true to Negro life in all its elements . . . I have resolved to do my best to encourage this . . . And if it happens . . . What a happy New Year!¹⁷

Still, Blacks' treatment in and outside of horror was troublesome, and after much deliberation, the NAACP attempted to corral Hollywood—its writers, producers, directors, publicists, casting directors, and the like—by getting them to agree to a plan which would improve Blacks' standing in the industry. After significant resistance from Hollywood, which had so far refused even to listen, in 1942 the Civil Rights organization finally got its audience with film producers and studio executives, and urged them to liberalize the roles offered to Blacks.¹⁸ However, Blacks were also blamed for their own plight; a Columbia Pictures studio representative said, "as long as there are colored persons . . . willing to play Uncle Tom roles or through buffoonery . . . to barter the dignity of their race" the portrayals will continue.¹⁹

Absent what Cripps called a defined "Black aesthetic," it was difficult to identify what exactly constituted improved imagery.²⁰ The film industry had its "Code" which prompted them to consider whether the images they were creating were appropriately moral or exploitive. The Code was clear on what it found off limits; things such as lustful kissing, profanity, sexual perversion, and miscegenation. Imagining such a "Code" for racial imagery was difficult, though the best minds kept trying to develop some strategies for handling Hollywood. Lawrence Dunbar Reddick was one of the more well known and respected of those who worked to forge a plan of action. Reddick earned a doctorate from the University of Chicago in 1939 and that same year assumed the position of curator of the (today) Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture as part of the New York Public Library. During his tenure there (1939–1948), he wrote and presented his ideas on the treatment of Blacks in all

media, such as textbooks, radio, print, and film. In 1944, he published his ideas for handling Hollywood in a lengthy scholarly essay in the *Journal of Negro Education*. Reddick suggested that censorship boards, such as the Hays Office which administered the Code, should be worked with to “include treatment of the Negro in films” as part of the codes.²¹ More, to protect the interest of performers, Reddick proposed that “Negro actors in particular must be supported when they refuse to accept ‘Uncle Tom’ and ‘Aunt Jemima’ roles.” He even asked the government’s Office of War Information to ban racist language such as “nigger,” “darky,” “pickaninny,” “Smoke,” “sambo,” and “coon” from film on grounds that such language could be exploited by America’s enemies.²² Reddick continued to circulate his ideas on reform. The NAACP continued to call meetings, with uneven success. Those in Hollywood who were more liberal-minded made changes that they thought were appropriate. However, film was slow to progress. Black actor Spencer Williams, Jr. took it upon himself to effect change by moving forward with his own plan to offer up representations for Blacks, by

Making Over the Ape Film

Williams’ first contribution to the cause came in 1940 with a “Black horror” film he wrote and starred in. However, the film’s title—*Son of Ingagi* (1940)—was cringe-worthy. Horror audiences had heard of these mythical “ingagis” before. In 1930, director William Campbell presented the infamous, highly controversial “Blacks in horror” film *Ingagi*, about apes or “ingagis” and the Congolese women who bear their children. *Ingagi* was originally offered as a real and true documentary recording the strange, beastly practices of Black women in the jungle. *Ingagi* ended with a native woman cuddling a half-ape, half-human baby.

Was Williams imagining *Son of Ingagi* as a sequel? Why would Williams imply a link with the earlier film through such a similar film title? The two films are not connected; however, *Son of Ingagi*, made by the White director Richard Kahn, has a couple of minor overlaps with the original film. *Son of Ingagi* is about a scientist who travels to Africa and brings back an ape, a “half-man, half-beast,” as the film’s promotional poster describes the creature. In addition, the film also subtly advances the notion of interbreeding; after all, where exactly did the ape-human offspring come from? Thankfully, the similarities end there, with *Son of Ingagi* taking a novel turn toward a focus on the Black middle class.

The film’s first significant imagistic contribution is that the scientist who recovers the ingagi is both Black and a woman—Dr. Helen Jackson (Laura Bowman), an aging, wealthy, brilliant researcher boasting talents in chemistry, anthropology, and animal behaviorism. Through Dr. Jackson, the White male on safari is recoded, though the exploitative nature of such missions is not so easily dismissed even in a Black and female body. Dr. Jackson is a neighbor and family friend to a young, up-and-coming newlywed couple, Robert and Eleanor Lindsay

(Alfred Grant, Daisy Bufford), who celebrate their nuptials with similarly aspiring friends. Here again, Williams breaks ground, depicting a Black bride and groom and their wedding.²³ The film includes a musical number by the Lindsays’ buddies, portrayed by the real-life quintet the Four Toppers. The film also includes the portrayal of the competent “prominent” attorney Mr. Bradshaw (Earl Morris) and Mr. Nelson, a detective played by Williams.

On Robert and Eleanor’s wedding night, the factory that Robert works at burns to the ground, leaving him jobless and fretting over how they will survive. Dr. Jackson takes the young couple under her wing, bequeathing to them her home and all of her possessions. After the scientist dies in an encounter with the rampaging ape, the animal breaks free of his confines to roam the house, unseen, thereby frightening the Lindsays, who have moved into Dr. Jackson’s home. They then phone the police to investigate. Unbeknownst to the couple, Dr. Jackson has \$20,000 in gold hidden in her home, along with the now murderous ape. Though the ape in *Son* walks upright and wears pants and a tunic, the film does not explore the ape-human connection, dealing with the monster simply as a beast on the prowl. Thanks to an “all-star colored cast” and the film’s setting in an all-Black community, the Lindsays’ saviors are not White men riding in to defeat the savage beast, as seen in so many colonial-themed ape films. Instead, the Black community rallies around to support the Lindsays.



FIGURE 3.2 Dr. Jackson prepares to meet her end at the hands of her ingagi

Sack Amusement Enterprises/Photofest

Detective Nelson (Williams) arrives to solve the mystery of the murders in the home, which now includes the murder of the attorney, Bradshaw, who while visiting the home is secretly strangled by the ape. However, the ape proves elusive as well as a trickster—when Nelson completes making a sandwich for himself, the ape steals it while Nelson's back is turned, leaving the detective befuddled. Thus, Williams brings a bit of comedy to his performance, revealing some of the comedic skill that he would use in the (controversial bufoonish) role of television's Andrew "Andy" Hogg Brown in the situation comedy *The Amos 'n' Andy Show* (1951–1953). However, in the film Williams is no coon. He is shown both serious and comical. Notably, with Nelson asleep, it is Eleanor who stays on alert listening for prowlers, and it is finally Eleanor who discovers the ape—though she faints and has to be rescued by Robert since Nelson is knocked out by the animal. In the end Nelson redeems himself by recovering the hidden wealth and turning it over to the Lindsays so that they may happily pursue their lives, and the American dream, together.

Son could be thought of as a double "B" film—low budget, for Black audiences, two rather deadly box office traits. However, the film did succeed in making an initial step toward recuperating the race film and Blacks' portrayals in it. The effort spoke to Williams' personal mission of changing Blacks' treatment in entertainment film.



FIGURE 3.3 Spencer Williams, Jr. (with hat)
CBS/Photofest

Taking on Hollywood, the Devil Can't Defeat Me

Well, let me see, there was once a Black cinema. Spencer Williams performed there and made relevant films. And there was an audience for that. . . . It was a culture—film culture, Black culture—where serious, relevant films were made.

—Charles Burnett, filmmaker²⁴

A native Louisianan, Spencer Williams, Jr. entered into show business full-on as an adult, in his mid-thirties, after a stint in the military and work around theater circuits as first an aide and then a bit comedy actor who also contributed some comedy material for theatrical performances. He got his start in those race films whose content targeted Black audiences but which were made by non-Blacks. Williams appeared in a diversity of genres, including musical shorts such as *Brown Gravy* (1929), westerns such as *Harlem on the Prairie* (1937), and crime dramas such as *Bad Boy* (1939). He was also a writer with writing/screenplay credits for films such as the 1929 comedy short *The Lady Fare*, as well as *Harlem Rides the Range* and *Son of Ingagi*, films in which he also stars.

In 1983, 14 years after Williams' death in 1969, some of Williams' films were found and recovered from a warehouse in Tyler, Texas (about two hours outside of Dallas), by film and video archivist G. William Jones of Southern Methodist University in Dallas. Williams had a special relationship with the city of Dallas, filming there and working in partnership with Dallas-based Sack Amusement Enterprise for financial, distribution, and production support. Sack permitted Williams to make movies outside of the Hollywood system, which would have excluded him anyway, while maintaining creative control of his product.

The 1940s was Williams' decade. He directed 12 films, all of them between 1941 and 1949. Notably, he wrote, produced (under his company Amegro), and directed *The Blood of Jesus*, a "Black horror" film, in 1941. The film, which marks Williams' directorial debut, has been hailed as "the most popular race movie ever produced."²⁵ *Blood* was never marketed as a horror film; rather, it shirked generic classification, being described at times as fantasy and other times as religious drama. However, if Sobchack is correct, that the horror film deals with "moral chaos, the disruption of natural order," particularly God's order, and "threat to the harmony of hearth and home," then *The Blood of Jesus* is the quintessential horror film.²⁶ The film is heavily inspired by Christian religiosity and centers on the theme of free will—choosing a path of righteousness or one of sin. Threat to hearth and home is introduced when the church-going, God-fearing "Sister" Martha (Catherine Caviness), who lives in a close-knit rural town, cannot persuade her husband Razz (Spencer Williams) to attend church or to witness her baptism. Razz is deemed a sinner because he chooses to go hunting instead and, in a brief comic scene, he hunts on his neighbor's farm, claiming two hogs as his prize. Chaos ensues when Martha, upon return from her baptism and while

praying in their bedroom, is accidentally shot when Razz's rifle falls to the ground. The rifle discharges, with the shot traveling through the bedroom wall and striking Martha and her picture of (a White) Jesus. She is mortally wounded, leaving Razz devastated. But this is horror, and disruption of the natural order is, well, in order. Razz finds himself praying in sincere earnest over Martha, who is dead but who has not yet been assigned her place in Heaven or Hell. Interestingly, it is Martha, not Razz, whose faith is challenged. Here again, Williams distinguishes himself by placing a Black woman, just as he did in *Son with Dr. Jackson* and Eleanor, at the center of his narrative. Martha brings even greater depth to the representation of women. She is the antithesis of Razz, a louse of a husband, who would easily fall prey to the Devil. Hence, Martha is the one that must be rendered vulnerable to be sure that she is righteous rather than *self-righteous*.²⁶

While in death, Martha is greeted by an angel who takes her to the Crossroads, the junction between Hell and/or Zion. Martha assuredly chooses Zion, but the Devil (James B. Jones, complete with horns and a cape) intercedes, sending in a "false prophet," the charmingly seductive Judas Green (Frank H. McClellan) as "temptation" to entice the right-living Martha to witness a side of life she has never seen. He directs her attention away from Zion to a cityscape ablaze in bright lights and full of people and lively music. Judas becomes the "bête noire of the Black bourgeoisie" as his flash, smooth talk and connection with the urban make him excessively evil.²⁷ Judas' terrain is markedly different from the dust-filled, far from sparkling rural life Martha is accustomed to; thus he is able to lure her with fancy clothes, while leading her down the path to Hell, which is filled with swing bands and couples dancing to a "little jive." In defining piety and sin in this way, the film makes no pretense; it is a straightforward view of religiosity, "all surfaces" in its treatment of good and evil.²⁸

Judas first takes Martha to the 400 Club, a classy venue for more well-heeled Blacks. However, Martha is there only briefly before the real plan is revealed. Judas secretly sells Martha for \$30 to a fellow named Brown (Eddie DeBase) who is at the club waiting to pick up this latest young catch. Hence, Williams' narrative, already a cautionary tale, adds an additional warning for young women metaphorically "just off the bus" from the safety of the homely rural to the treacherous urban. Brown takes Martha to a seedy, dangerous juke joint in which women receive money to dance with men (and perhaps a bit more).²⁹

While horror has attended to Black women before, often by way of the wicked Voodoo priestess, Black women infrequently get to be central and *feminine*. Black women are not eligible for the symbolic pedestal upon which White women are placed by men, to be romanced, gazed upon lovingly, and to see their bodies, emotions, and even their beauty protected. These moments of sheer adoration tend to be for Whites only, such as Ann Darrow in *King Kong* (1933). However, Martha is a Black character who comes close to being placed on that pedestal. Razz longs for her, praying over her relentlessly. The last time a Black woman had a man attend to her with such verve she was strangled to death by him

(i.e. Kili in *The Love Wanga* [1936]). More, Martha is also depicted as a Black Southern "lady"; hence she is a real prize for the Devil. When Judas is sent in to tempt her, he does so by placing her on a pedestal, thereby exploiting Razz's failure to fully recognize the value of not just this woman, but what she represents as a lady. Here, Judas acts as trickster, confusing Martha by conflating sex (sexiness, sexual attraction) with the feminine. This is a subtle and important difference, distinguishable in great part by comparing Judas' performance of masculinity, which is modeled on desire and sexual urges, with Razz's performance late in the film, which focuses on love and intimacy. In fact, Martha's dilemma is presented as a war over what kind of femininity she will embrace, the "lady" or the sexpot in fancy clothes and shoes (before she is "turned out"). Manatu argues that Black women have been, and continue to be, denied access to and participation in the feminine. As a result, Black women are not afforded the opportunity to fight for, or opt to escape from, a feminine performance, including the proverbial pedestal.²⁹ Notably, the femininity that Martha chooses—to be a respectable, God-fearing lady—is what gets her love and romance (Razz) and firmly secures her on the pedestal.

While trapped with Brown in the juke joint, Martha falls to her knees in prayer, begging God for forgiveness, and in return a Black female guardian angel helps Martha escape her fate. Feeling restored and empowered, Martha (now in an angelic, flowing dress) flees back toward the crossroads. As Martha runs, the Devil's minions from the juke joint appear, chase her down, and attempt to stone her to death. The next sequence is one of the most dramatic and highly stylized in the film. Cripps calls the imagery in the film "unlike that in any other Afro-American movie."³⁰ In the next scenes, just as Martha arrives at the sign marking the crossroads, the sign is transformed into a towering cross bearing the image of Jesus. Martha, lying prone beneath the cross, is literally washed in the blood of Jesus as blood runs from Jesus' body, which is nailed to the cross, and over hers. As stunning as the scene is in appearance and symbolism, it is also meaningful as it speaks to Martha negotiating a complex state of abjection. That is, she finds herself in a state and space between object and subject. Martha represents several levels of abjection, as she occupies a liminal position between the living and the dead, and also between compromised saint, but not quite a sinner. Martha reveals how physically and emotionally traumatic it is to confront her condition of being separate from her body (object) and being absent of her humanness/humanity (subject).

Martha's final choice, to side with God, thereby expelling that which she does not want as part of her subjective self, is a lesson in rejecting the "improper" and "unclean," replacing them with the "clean and proper self."³¹ Restored by the blood of Jesus, Martha suddenly awakens at home. She and the now God-fearing Razz are reunited under the watchful eye of the angel.

Williams took great care with his first film, striving for exacting detail to accommodate the most discerning audience members who might scrutinize his

religious message. He presents the (real-life) Reverend R.L. Robertson and his Heavenly Choir while offering an authentic glimpse into the Black church, from sermons to songs to prayers. Indeed, the first three minutes of the film make clear that this is a production that is taking religion and its iconography quite seriously. The congregants talk of following the “10 original commandments accepted as civilized law” and that religion should be “practiced with honest sincerity.” Bibles, crosses, and portraits of Jesus abound. Hymns such as “Good News” and “Go Down Moses” are sung by the choir. Rev. Robertson performs an authentic riverside baptism while the choir sings and parishioners pray and engage in praise and worship.

The Blood of Jesus also popularizes several themes that would take center stage in more modern “Black horror” films beginning in the 1990s. Williams’ themes of choosing between being good and evil, being tempted by the fast way of (Northern) urban life versus that of the humble, honest (Southern), rural life, and a woman as moral arbiter and savior figures prominently in films such as *Def by Temptation* (1990) and *Spirit Lost* (1997).

Hallelujah! Eloyce Gist

While Williams’ messages and film style would be oft-duplicated in horror, Williams’ own films did not emerge in a cultural vacuum. Oscar Micheaux’s *The Scar of Shame* (1927) used the urban, secular music, and all that comes with the lifestyle such music supports, as a warning to stay close to one’s own (Southern) roots. Following Micheaux’s lead, the wife and husband filmmaking duo Eloyce and James Gist made two circa 1930 films, *Hellbound Train* and *Verdict Not Guilty*, which took up themes of good/South and evil/North. *Hellbound Train*, here a “Black horror” film, is particularly seminal. Williams’ *Blood* closely resembles *Hellbound*’s story, which centers on a journey, and messages of choosing the path to righteousness. The Gists’ silent, short film’s iconography may have also informed Williams’ film as the two share Devil, crossroads, and damnation imagery. While there is no evidence that Williams saw the Gists’ films, it is clear that Williams is applying to his films a style seen in the efforts of Micheaux and the Gists.

Gloria J. Gibson provides the most insightful pieces of research into the Gists’ life, particularly Eloyce’s.³² According to Gibson, Eloyce Gist was born in Texas in 1892, with Washington, D.C. becoming her home not long after the turn of the century. She attended Howard University. Eloyce’s thinking about religion is said to reflect her own beliefs in Baha’i and that of James, her Christian self-ordained evangelist husband. Eloyce worked in partnership with her husband, and his contributions to their filmmaking are undisputed, if not precisely known. However, the silent film *Hellbound Train* is viewed as being significantly Eloyce’s as the script is largely hers, as are several scenes which she arranged the shooting of. The Gists made films, not for entertainment, but as a teaching tool to aid in their ministry.

The duo traveled from Black church to Black church, by auto, with their films and equipment.³³ When Gibson interviewed Eloyce’s 82-year-old daughter, Homoiselle Patrick Harrison, in the early 1990s, Harrison recalled how the couple screened their films: Eloyce would play the piano and lead the congregation in hymns. Then, the film would be shown, followed by a sermonette by James Gist. Tickets were either sold in advance, or a collection was taken at the close of the service, with the Gists and the church splitting the money.³⁴ The Gists’ films were well received, even drawing the attention of the NAACP in 1933, when the organization contacted the couple to offer their endorsement of their efforts.

Thanks to the efforts of film scholars Gibson and S. Torriano Berry, who have been reassembling and digitizing the film’s fragments, the film’s story is fairly discernible. *Hellbound Train* begins with the title card “The Hell-Bound train is always on duty, and the Devil is engineer,” followed by a message from the Devil, “Free admission to all—just give your life and soul. No round trip tickets—one way only.” The film then shows a group of sinners queuing up for their train tickets: “no round-trip tickets, one way only [signed] Satan.” The train has dedicated cars for all kinds of sinners, a storyline presented through title cards made by Eloyce.³⁵ For example, those who dance at parties and in clubs have their train car because “the dance of today is indecent,” with Eloyce aligning dancing and music with the more sinful side of life. Those who sell alcohol have a car as well: “there’s room in hell for BOOTLEGGERS and their followers.” Alcohol is depicted as leading to all manner of trouble for women. One woman is shown being encouraged to drink by a man, who then guides her into a private room. “Mislead by the whisper of a man,” she is next shown, alone, watching over her newborn. Interestingly, there is also a scene that attends to reproduction in which a woman dies in spite of a doctor’s best efforts. The card reads, “She has taken medicine to avoid becoming a mother. SHE’D better get right with GOD, for it’s murder in COLD BLOOD.”³⁶ There are other sins identified, such as gambling and murder, as well as being a crook and liar. The Devil has a car for “backsliders, hypocrites and Used to be Church Members.”³⁷ The implication is that this is a very long train with lots of cars to accommodate all evil-doers; none will avoid judgment and Hell.

Unlike Williams’ film *Blood*, the audience is not shown that a return to righteousness is possible after one has sinned. Rather, the sinful remain that way and embark on their train journey, with the train moving rapidly toward the “Entrance to Hell.” According to Gibson

the train bursts Hell wide open (it enters a tunnel), crashing and exploding into flames. The Devil circles the train to further torment the victims. . . .

In the final scene a man, perhaps James Gist, states, “Thus I’ve demonstrated to you this picture which I painted as a vision from hearing a sermon in a revival meeting.” Behind him is a large poster or flowchart of the

hell-bound train's journey. This scene may have functioned as a segue to Gist's sermonette after the film.³⁸

After the death of her husband, Eloyce continued to tour, "traveling with the films, a projector, and an assistant for a while, but soon realized she couldn't shoulder the diverse responsibilities alone. The work of programmer, manager, and exhibitor was too taxing."³⁹ More, sound had made the silent film obsolete, making way for efforts such as Williams'. Eloyce died in 1974. The magnitude of her accomplishments can be measured today by the condition of her films. According to the Library of Congress, showing the films so often took their toll: "The movies were so widely shown that they literally fell apart along the splices and were received by the Library in hundreds of short fragments."⁴⁰

The Gists and Williams' religious-message/"Black horror" films act as a purposeful intervention into the film discourses swirling around Blacks in the 1930s and 1940s. Horror films gave dichotomous attention to Blacks' religious practices in that they were depicted either as evil Voodooists or as (ideally) faithful Christians. Interestingly enough, neither the Gists nor Williams explored Black religions more broadly, beyond Christianity. Williams in particular had a model for dealing with Black religion through the 1934 Sack Amusement film *Drums o' Voodoo*, which examined Voodoo and Christianity equally.

In the film, believers in Voodoo and in Christianity co-exist in the same rural Louisiana community. The films' opening title card initially casts Voodooists as evil with their incessant drumming "on the eve of a sacrifice." However, no such event pans out. Rather, the evil introduces itself in the form of a cool slickster, obviously named "Tom Catt" (Morris McKenny). Here, Catt is much like Williams' Judas who is in pursuit of Martha, as Catt wants a young woman named Myrtle (Edna Barr) to work as eye candy in his juke joint. The problem is that Myrtle wants nothing to do with either Catt or his juke joint. Others are opposed to Catt getting his claws into Myrtle, including her minister uncle (the oddly named) Elder Amos Berry or Elder Berry (Augustus Smith), Ebenezer, the grandson of the local Voodoo witch Auntie Hagar, and Auntie Hagar (Laura Bowman) herself. Hagar works her magic to protect the minister's niece. Importantly, she has the minister's support, as he announces, "I believe [she] is the only one 'round here that can drive Tom Catt out of this community." In fact, Hagar has the support of the entire community—Christian and Voodoo alike—who want Catt's disruptive ways to end. It is Catt who has drawn people away from the church, but it is the work of Hagar that brings them back into the fold when she begins to wage war against Catt. Catt is struck blind, inside the church, by Hagar's magic. In the end, stricken by Hagar, Catt falls into quicksand and dies. All is well again thanks to the teaming up by Christians and Voodooists, with the Voodooists presenting a different, but hardly deficient Black religion.⁴¹

Perhaps Williams knew his audience and had settled on a strictly Christian formula that he knew would work. *The Blood of Jesus* proved popular and profitable enough that Sack Amusement threw their support behind a second Williams film with a rural, Southern religious turn.⁴² Williams' next religio-horror film, *Go Down, Death* (1944), focuses on Big Jim Bottoms (Williams), who is a far from comic character. Rather, Jim is the owner of a nightclub that is also the playground for men and women of low morals. The story closely parallels *Drums o' Voodoo* in that Jim regards as his enemy Jasper, a young preacher (Samuel H. James) in charge of Mt. Zion Baptist Church, who is "ruining Sunday business" at the club. Jim enlists three "fly chicks," or prostitutes, to set Jasper up. As the minister presents the women with bibles and reads them scriptures, they surround him, press a drink in his hand, and quickly kiss him just in time for Jim to snap a picture.

Before Jim can "expose" Jasper and ruin his reputation, Jim's (adoptive) mother Caroline uncovers the scheme and confronts her son. Caroline, a Christian and devoted church-goer, demands the photos. Caroline also begs Jim to acknowledge Christ so that their family can all "be together in the hereafter." Instead, Jim mocks her and dismisses her pleas. To strains of the song *Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen*, Caroline talks aloud to her dead husband Joe asking Joe to talk to God about Jim. Caroline is stunned to see Joe's ghostly image appear leading her to a safe in which Jim has stored the scandalous picture and all of its copies. Joe's ghost opens the safe for Caroline, and she removes the pictures.

Williams' use of Joe's ghost is much like his use of Martha in *The Blood of Jesus* as they both return from the dead to speak to and about Black people's experiences. So rarely is the living story of Black people spoken in popular culture that it is often represented as being told by the dead. The efficacy of such communication rises and falls, literally, on where the dead speak. "In modernity," writes Holland, "Death' can no longer occur in the midst of the living, and to achieve the separation between the happy (living) and the miserable (the dying/almost dead), the hospital was created."⁴³ In these Black films, the talk of the dead or dying is, notably, delivered at home. Martha's lessons of religiosity are delivered from her bed, at home, as she is attended to, watched, and prayed over by Razz at her bedside.⁴⁴ Similarly, in Williams' film, Joe comes to Caroline and is able to be heard only at "home" and during prayer.

Jim catches Caroline before she is able to get away with the photos and fights with her, accidentally killing her. The film's title, *Go Down, Death*, comes from the 1926 James Weldon Johnson poem/funeral sermon of the same name, and it is this sermon that is delivered at Caroline's funeral while Jim listens on guiltily, having blamed Caroline's death on a robber. In the sermon, words of assurance are offered, which include a promise that Caroline is not quite in death but has passed on to an afterlife.

During his mother's funeral, Jim begins to get his punishment. When Jasper preaches, "Grief-stricken son—weep no more," Jim hangs his head in shame and begins to hear a voice—his conscience talking to him. After the funeral, Jim's mental condition worsens. The devilish, disembodied voice screams at him, "You killed, you killed, killed your best friend!" and "The Lord has no mercy for killers." Jim runs in fright, but the torment worsens. Jim runs, but falls to the ground as the voice promises, "I'm going to show you where you're going home to ... Hell!" However, Jim cannot see Hell alive and upright. Instead, he is stricken down, though not yet dead, to receive the visions of his fate.

As is Williams' trademark, illustrated in a hauntingly stylized sequence, Hell is revealed to Jim through shocking visuals of writhing undead tortured souls in a lake of ice, and a horned Lucifer violently consuming souls. The sequence is borrowed from the frightening silent film *L'Inferno* (1911), an adaptation of Dante's *Inferno*, the first part of the fourteenth century epic poem *Divine Comedy*, directed by Francesco Bertolini and Adolfo Padovan. Williams' budget constraints moved him to become creative, turning to one of the more frightening allegorical presentations of good and evil for archival footage. The film depicts a downward, spiraling journey to the inferno of Hell in which sinners endure never-ending tortures. The Devil is present, abusing and even eating the wicked. Soon after being exposed to the visions, Jim is found truly dead, having gone to the quintessential "Terrible Place" (not simply a haunted house or spooky tunnel) that is a requisite and even celebrated element of horror.⁴⁵

However, these types of films were not sustainable. In 1968 and 1970 film scholar Thomas Cripps interviewed Alfred and Lester Sack, of Sack Amusement Enterprises, distributors of *The Blood of Jesus* and *Go Down, Death*. According to Cripps, before the war *The Blood of Jesus* (by way of example) "had amounted almost to folk art among [Williams'] Southern rural clientele; its lack of artifice had seemed a charming flaw rather than a crippling wound."⁴⁶ However, the Sacks revealed that the film's setting in "those days ... almost gone" was met with loud laughter in the North in the war years and beyond.⁴⁷ More, so-called "all-Colored cast films" were competing with films in which Blacks were cast as co-stars, not simply extras, alongside Whites. In the horror genre, unfortunately, co-starring roles for Blacks meant performing as the comic-Negro sidekick. Williams would have to share his decade of achievement with the likes of Mantan Moreland and Willie Best, whose popularity was built on cooning.

"Ain't Nobody Here But Us Chickens"

Are Hollywood producers mindful of their harmful acts,
Or are they just plain ignorant and do not know the facts?
They show us all as comics, wasters, gangsters, and slowpokes,
Don't they know colored people are just like other folks?

Film had a half-century of image-making under its belt; however, if one were to consider the depictions of Blacks during this time, the offerings resembled something out of the nineteenth-century minstrel stage. During the 1800s' slavery and post-antebellum periods, theater performances had much to say about race relationships by offering an opportunistic depiction of the White master-Black slave relationship. Whites were portrayed as patient, paternalistic caregivers to their squirelly, inept but otherwise content human property. This racial relationship between superior Whites and happy "darkies" was a powerful fantasy supplanting the reality of the brutalities of chattel slavery.⁴⁹ These fantasies were initially played out on stage by Whites in blackface who performed in black voice — a malapropism-laden, simpleton manner of speaking. While it was hard to imagine that Blacks would participate in their own subjugation on the theater stage, in the late 1800s they were cast in the darkey role, with some appearing in blackface. To draw White audiences from White minstrel performances, Black actors claimed to be the real deal, "true plantation slaves, not an 'imitation' like Whites in blackface."⁵⁰ Film simply lifted these kinds of performances from the theater stage (often also borrowing its actors), and placed them on celluloid.

For example, theater actor Harold Lloyd found fame in film, appearing in approximately 200 comedy films. One of his better-known films was the 25-minute silent comedy-horror film *Haunted Spooks* (1920). *Haunted* and films like it were dubbed "thrill comedy" films, which coupled tense, thrilling scenes or knee-knocking frights with broad humor.⁵¹ In this "Blacks in horror" film a young man, "the Boy" (Lloyd), helps his new wife, "the Girl" (Mildred Davis), earn her inheritance, a sprawling mansion. The Girl cannot claim the home unless she lives in the home for one year. The Boy chases off the Girl's greedy Uncle (Wallace Howe), who "haunts" the house in an attempt to drive the Girl away. The film features a large cadre of Black actors (approximately 10) in the capacity of house servants who are told by the Uncle that "grinning ghosts of the dead scream from their graves and roam these rooms." The film depicts the servants as quite glib, spreading the tale (through the use of title cards) in malapropism-laden black voice, "An' de whole graveyard turns upside down! Gassly, spookey ghosts come heah to room dese rooms." As the Uncle "haunts" the house, a child servant (Ernest "Sunshine Sammy" Morrison) dives into a bin of flour, emerging white and petrified. The butler (Blue Washington) is depicted as being so terror-struck that he can only tap dance in place while sweating black ink which coats his face. The depiction of Blacks was so abysmal in the film, one could easily assume that the "spooks" in the film's title was a hateful slur deployed to describe the Black characters.

Hollywood was notably prolific in presenting such comedy-horror offerings, with these films dominating the genre during this decade. The humor that Blacks affected, a "hybrid minstrelsy," was still White-oriented, with Blacks employed to validate and veil the racism.⁵² This was an era marked by an obsessive representation of Blacks as "cultural inferiors," in which Blacks became the White man's

burden as Blacks were shown as lacking, but here in America to stay.⁵³ Blacks were increasingly depicted as being American (either from the South or from New York, most often Harlem), rather than almost singularly natives in Africa or the Caribbean. The representational shift was a bit of propaganda as the Office of War Information's (OWI) Bureau of Motion Pictures claimed it was in the nation's best interest to present a unified (though not necessarily integrated) America.⁵⁴ Still, Hollywood's horror films continued to insult. For example, in the "Blacks in horror" film *The Ghost Breakers* (1940), Bob Hope as Larry talks of traveling to "Black Island" to (in a double-entendre joke) "get acquainted with the spooks." The prevalence of such films was, in part, the outcome of incomplete censorship plans which easily identified and demanded a deletion of the most egregious, vicious stereotypes, but overlooked those couched in humor. As a result, racist comedy-horror became a tour de force, and it all worked to further enforce Whites' ascendancy.⁵⁵

A Sin and a Shame

"I got an urge that I want to leave, but my legs won't cooperate with me." —Birmingham Brown, Charlie Chan's *The Scarlet Clue* (1945)

Willie Best marketed himself as Sleep 'n' Eat. Nellie (Wan) Conley became Madame Sul-Te-Wan. Ernest Morrison was known as Sunshine Sammy. Mantan Moreland did not need such gimmicks, as his name sold itself. When Moreland's name appeared on a promotional bill, audiences could rest assured that they were going to hear his best one-liners and see him bug his eyes and quiver with fright. The characters that these performers played, and what they did to their reputations and to that of Blacks, have been described in the most scathing terms. However, some of the most ferocious contempt has been reserved for Moreland. Film scholar James Nesteby described the roles that Moreland took as "the sunshine friend, the coon who turned coward at the first sign of distress, or the coon who could not motivate his feet when the rest of him was shivering."⁵⁶ The British film journalist and historian Peter Noble (181-182) wrote brutally of Moreland, "no Negro actor has ever rolled his eyes with such abandon as Moreland, no coloured actor has ever tried so hard to revert to the Stepin Fetchit subhuman characterisation. He is the accepted U.S.A. idea of the Negro clown supreme, and performs before the cameras like a well-trained monkey."⁵⁷

Born in Louisiana in 1902, Moreland began his career as a traveling performer, making his way to the vaudeville stage in his twenties. Appearing in over 100 films, Moreland's claim to fame was his comedy. He was credited with being a comedy craftsman, displaying an "arsenal of gestures and grimaces that actors had traditionally used to steal scenes and develop characters."⁵⁸ His spirited performances were perfect for comedy-horror.

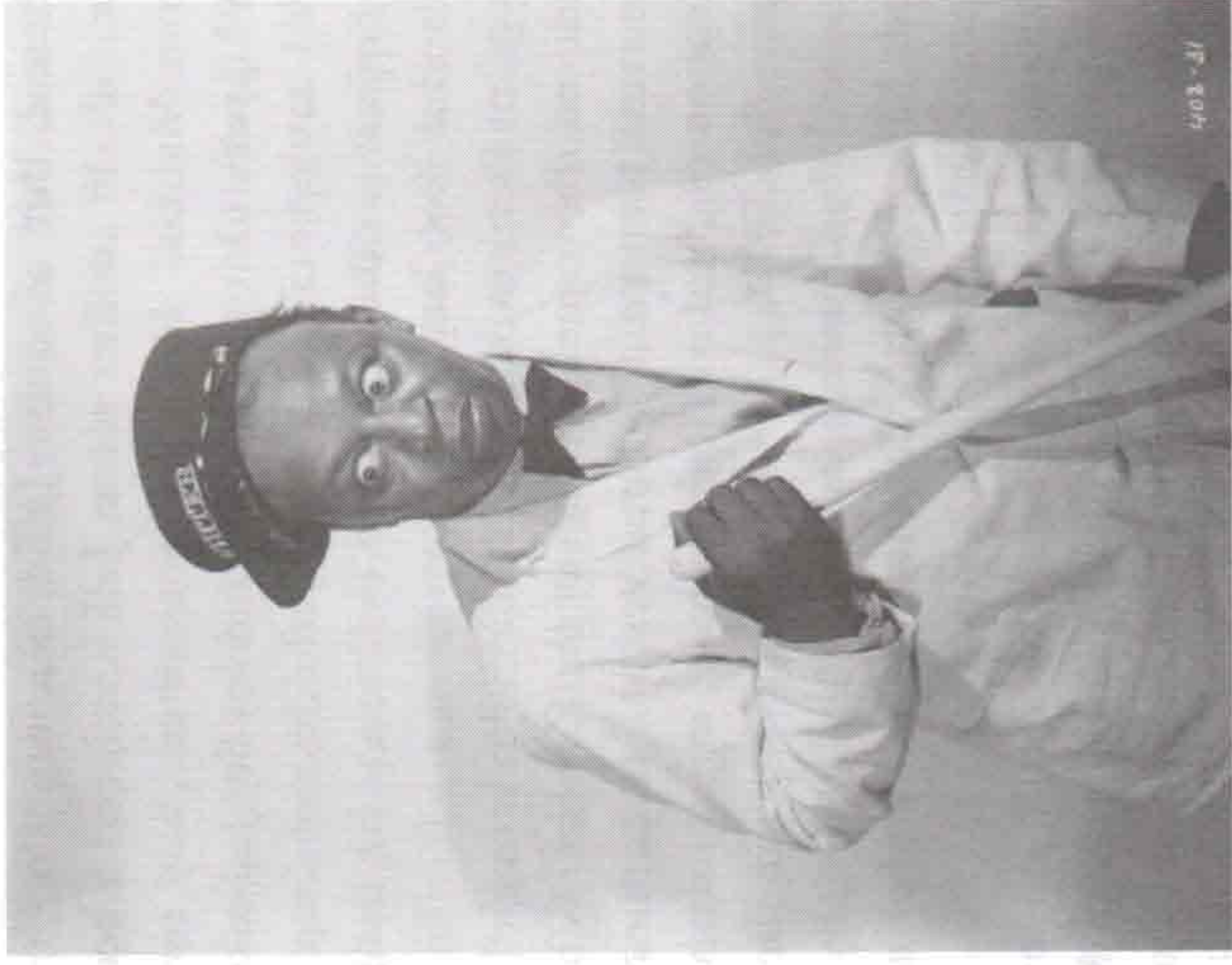


FIGURE 3.4 Mantan Moreland

Toddy Pictures Co./Photofest

In the "Blacks in horror" film *King of the Zombies* (1941), set during World War II, Moreland plays Jefferson "Jeff" Jackson, a Harlemite and valet to his White master, Bill "Mr. Bill" Summers (John Archer). The pair, along with their pilot, James "Mac" McCarthy (Dick Purcell), crash land on an island in the Bahamas. There, the trio locate the mansion of Dr. Miklos Sangre (Henry Victor), an Austrian scientist. Sangre is also a "secret agent" for an unnamed "European government." He is using the power of Voodoo as an interrogation tool to drag war secrets out of an American admiral so that America's enemies (who communicate by radio in German) may have militaristic advantage. The scientist's scheme relies on the powers of Tahama (Madame Sul-Te-Wan), an aged Voodoo High Priestess who doubles as his cook. Despite his diminutive size, Moreland is a scene stealer as he widens his eyes while delivering one quick quip after another at the expense of his own Blackness. For example, just before crash landing he shudders, "Oh oh!! I knowed I wasn't cut out to be no blackbird." And, when his character Jeff realizes he has survived the crash he proclaims, "I thought I was a little off-color to be a ghost." Jeff's purpose in the film is to be frenzied with fright, while the Whites around him are calm and reasoning, reinforcing dichotomies of Black emotionality and White rationality.⁵⁹

Nearly every line delivered by Jeff is (albeit rightly so) about the dangers on the island and the trio's urgent need to leave. As such, Jeff is cowardly, the White

men serious and heroic. But, of course, Jeff does not run, opting to stay close by the side of his Mr. Bill. In another scene, Jeff is assigned a bed in the servants' quarters, away from Mr. Bill. He is to be escorted away by the eerie butler Momba (Leigh Whipper). Out of both fear and loyalty Jeff asks, "Oh, Mr. Bill, does I has to, can't I stay up here with you?" Jeff does not simply turn his humor on himself, but implicates other Blacks in deficiency by describing the Black zombies on the island as "too lazy to lay down."

In 1943, Monogram Pictures, the same studio who brought audiences *King of the Zombies*, introduced the sequel, *Revenge of the Zombies*. While the two films have generally the same premise, the narratives do not connect and the second film makes no mention of the first. *Revenge* is set in Louisiana, with Moreland back as Jeff. Madame Sul-Te-Wan returns, but this time in the role of Mammy Beulah, a cackling, elderly housekeeper. They are joined by a host of silent zombies that include James Baskett (Academy Award winner for *Song of the South* [1946]), as the overworked zombie slave Lazarus.

The premise of *Revenge* is similar to *King*, but it is more overt in its anti-German/Nazi propaganda. Dr. Max Heinrich von Altermann (John Carradine), who greets his German compatriots with a click of the heel of his boots, is experimenting with a drug made from "swamp lilies" which will help him create an army of zombies: "I'm prepared to supply my country with a new army, numbering as many thousands as required . . . an army that will not need to be fed, that cannot be stopped by bullet. That is, in fact, invincible."

When his (White) zombie wife goes missing, von Altermann assembles the Blacks in his kitchen for interrogation. Most interesting about this scene is the disregard the Black characters are portrayed as having for the German. When von Altermann accuses his maid Rosella (Sybil Lewis) of knowing where the zombie went because she is "always under foot listening and watching," Rosella responds in a defiant tone: "I ain't seed nothing, I ain't heard nothing." Next, a scornful Mammy Beulah chimes in, challenging her master, "You sho' you don't know where she is master, you sho' you can't guess?" When von Altermann replies, "Would I be asking you if I knew?" Mammy Beulah snaps back, "Well, you might master, if you wanted to *pretend* you didn't know." On the whole, this is an amazing exchange given representations and real-life race relations of the time. The Black characters are not "sassy," rather they are oppositional. It is a powerful scene of American propaganda depicting Blacks unified in their derision for this German. In films of this era, Blacks are not depicted as rising up in opposition to Whites in this way, and certainly not with impunity. Black zombies or Voodooist natives, then, were not the only monsters of the war era. Filmmakers distributed monstrosity a bit farther afield, and zombies became representative of a kind of anti-democratic social and mind control that more fascist regimes might find use for.⁶⁰

Mantan Moreland and Flournoy Miller, as Washington and Jefferson, respectively, teamed up in the Black horror-comedy film *Lucky Ghost* (1942). *Lucky* boasted a Black cast and targeted Black audiences. It was directed by

William Beaudine, a White man who, with over 350 films under his belt, was known for making B movies in two weeks or less. The film was distributed by Ted Toddy's Dixie National Pictures, Inc. (later Toddy Pictures Co.). Toddy, a White man who supported several films featuring Blacks such as *Harlem on the Prairie* (1937), *Mantan Runs for Mayor* (1947), and *House-Rent Party* (1946).

Lucky Ghost tells the tale of two down-on-their-luck men, Washington (Moreland) and Jefferson (Miller). We learn that the men have been in trouble with the law from a judge telling them to "get out of town, and keep walking," which the not-too-bright men do, literally, walking for days on end. Washington cannot write and he does not know the days of the week, but is a master at throwing dice. Jefferson plays the straight man to Washington, who throws out one-liners and engages in slapstick antics. Their comedy does nothing to distance Blacks from long-lingering stereotypes. For example, the men have a built-in radar for chicken. As Washington enters a coop to steal chickens he is caught by the owner, who yells "Who's in there!?" giving rise to the popular colloquialism offered by Washington: "Ain't nobody here but us chickens!" As Washington flees the coop, the owner shoots him in the butt. In 1915, the Lubin Manufacturing Company produced a cartoon film, *A Barnyard Mix-Up*, which focuses on a "chicken-thieving Rastus" who escapes the farmer's buckshot but is finally laid low by an axe, although he is resurrected in an unusual manner by an explosion of dynamite.⁶¹ *Lucky* served as a reminder of how pernicious the "Blacks love chicken" stereotype is.

The pairs' luck changes when Washington wins in a craps game a stack of cash, a car, chauffeur, and clothes from two monied passers-by headed for an illegal afterhours club (inside of a mansion). Washington and Jefferson go to the club and while there Washington wins the entire club by playing dice. The club turns out to be haunted by a family who is displeased their "no good nephew" has turned their home, now owned by Washington and Jefferson, into a place where sinful "jitterbuggin', jivin', and hullabalooin'" is going on. Their hauntings provide Washington ample opportunity to alternately be frozen with fright or engage in a "feets don't fail me now" routine.

Moreland's trembling act as the "coon who turned coward" was not confined to comedy-horror.⁶² In the mystery *The Strange Case of Doctor RX* (1942), in the role of Horatio Washington, his hair turned white with fright. When he was cast in the *Charlie Chan* comedy-mystery film series as chauffeur Birmingham Brown from 1944 to 1949 he often delivered quips such as: "I got an urge that I want to leave, but my legs won't cooperate with me!"⁶³

Cedric Robinson, in *Forgeries of Memory & Meaning: Blacks & the Regimes of Race in American Theater & Film before World War II*, works to rehabilitate Moreland's legacy,⁶⁴ describing him as "no fool" and as someone who employed a kind of subterfuge in which he teased and mocked Whites for not being as superior as they let on. Robinson specifically cites *King of the Zombies* (1941) as a film in

which Moreland carved out some Black comeuppance. For example, Robinson sees in Jeff intellectual capabilities which are purportedly evidenced through Jeff's use of words like loquacious, kosher, and prevaricator. Indeed, Jeff uses such words, though in Jeff, whose speech is also littered with malapropisms, such talk is to be viewed as comical.

And as for Moreland's depiction as Birmingham Brown, Robinson even finds hope there, observing that Brown turned the Chan household into something more "diverse, lively, daring, and comic."⁶⁵ Moreland's inclusion is certainly lively and comical, though more prop-like than bringing racial diversity.

It is difficult to see how, as a whole, these comedy-horror films do more than continue to cast Blacks as inferior. As Moreland's characters stay by the side of his White masters, stuck like glue, the films communicate that all is well between Blacks and Whites. Such depictions accomplish a "view of racial harmony by presenting to its intended audience an image of Blacks as humorous (they can't be unhappy; they make us laugh), mistaken (you see, they do need us to guide them), and eager to please (we obviously merit their concern)."⁶⁶ These films are also unique because the violence in them is so trivialized. In more traditional horror films, violence is ubiquitous, but hardly trivialized. When a mummy strangles or an ape pummels, these actions are understood as violence. When Moreland's character is shot in the butt as he scrambles away or when Eddie Anderson's character, Eddie the chauffeur in *Topper Returns* (1941), is repeatedly head-butted by a seal and nearly drowned, the consequences of violence upon Black bodies (in this Jim Crow era, no less) are muted.

Willie Best was the 1940s other comedy-horror icon. He, too, entered acting at an early age, "with the tall, thin Negro going through all the hackneyed rigamarole of the vaudeville black-face comedian."⁶⁷ Bogle writes, in partial jest, that Best was Stepin Fetchit's (Lincoln Perry) "step-chillun," with Best appropriating Perry's comic, shuffling, dull-witted moves and characterizations, and taking the roles which might have gone to Perry.⁶⁸ Best was not nearly as good a performer as Perry and could not get at the lazy, slow-moving coon performance with the same ingenuity. He simply was not as accomplished an actor. In *The Ghost Breakers* (1940), Best appeared alongside Bob Hope, hanging his bottom lip while enduring lines such as "You look like a blackout in a black-out. If this keeps up, I'm going to have to paint you white." Best was always the same, not quite funny, just simply a dimwit who played a sidekick but did not react to insult or, like Moreland, fire back with the occasional zinger. Best notoriously hung his lower lip, bulged his eyes, and shuffled through "Blacks in horror" films such as *The Monster Walks* (1932), in which he considered his kinship to an ape, and *The Smiling Ghost* (1941), in which he adds crossing his eyes and out-running a team of stampeding horses to his scared-Negro performance. Best would be called in again and again to do little more than quake with fear and jump at shadows in other comedy-horror films such as *The Body Disappears* (1941), *Whispering Ghosts* (1942), and *The Face of Marble* (1946).



FIGURE 3.5 Willie Best
RKO Radio Pictures/Photofest

Scared-Negro ... Puppets?!

"If I'm yella' you's colorblind," —Scruno, *Spooks Run Wild* (1941)

The great proliferation of comedy-horror films seemed to almost smother the achievements of Spencer Williams. Even *The East Side Kids* film series (1940–1944) with the young Scruno (Ernest "Sunshine Sammy" Morrison) got in on the scared-Negro act. In *Spooks Run Wild* (1941) as Scruno trips through a dark, haunted mansion, he is scolded by his pals, "The next time you come out of the dark, put a coat of whitewash on, will ya?," to which Scruno replies, "I'm so scared I'm turnin' white now." In *Ghosts on the Loose* (1943), another William Beaudine quickie, Scruno, quaked and sputtered, "Who dat say who dat when I say who dat," as Emil (Bela Lugosi) a Nazi spy stalked him.⁶⁹ It comes as no surprise that Hollywood would move from infantilizing men to implicating children—real and cartoon alike—in the scared-Negro act.

George Pal created stop-motion films featuring wooden puppets, or "puppetoons." Pal's most infamous films are his series of Jasper short films (1942–1947) starring the puppet Jasper as a "little pickaninny" (as Jasper was called in promotions) drawn like a blackface caricature—bug eyes, wide, bright smiling lips highlighted against coal black skin—who lives with his "Mammy" in

a decrepit shack. Jasper and those around him speak in black voice. Across the series, Jasper's love for watermelon is a constant, and the source of many of his troubles, sending him into horror film territory, with Jasper experiencing "frightening violence" highlighted by gloomy scenes, darkly lit, that mark the mood as ominous and foreboding.⁷⁰ In *Jasper and the Watermelons* (1942) Jasper steals watermelons out of a forbidden watermelon patch. The film then turns to a "haunting sequence with [the] frightened child chased by threatening figures."⁷¹ As the film changes from day to night, enormous watermelons appear singing, "Gonna be trouble in Watermelon land tonight," as the melons turn into snarling monsters in pursuit of Jasper. The monster melons turn cannibalistic as they do their best to consume Jasper, all the while Jasper narrowly escapes each one, running and leaping and fighting his way out of their mouths. A swirling watermelon juice waterfall finally gives Jasper the edge he needs, as the rapids carry him back home to Mammy ... who offers him a slice of watermelon. In *Jasper and the Haunted House* (1942) it is not watermelon, though it usually is, that gets Jasper in trouble, but gooseberry pie. On Mammy's order, Jasper is to carry the pie to Deacon Jones, but ends up in a haunted house. Jasper's shadow turns and runs, leaving Jasper behind. Here, in special effects, Jasper's eyes are made to bug and flutter from fright, at the speed of sound. There is a musical interlude in which a ghost plays a little jazz piano and haints dance around.⁷² Eventually, Jasper escapes the home, and while running away gets stuck in a billboard that reads, "Next time try Spooks gooseberry pie."

Jasper came out of the imagination of Pal, who was born in 1908 in Hungary and died in 1980 in the US. During his career, his animation work earned him an Oscar, as well as six other nominations. Pal claimed to have no racial animus in mind when he created Jasper and that he was "simply bringing to life a truly American Black folk character, and harbored no racial prejudices himself."⁷³ Never mind that the series was built on a soup of Black stereotypes and dysfunction with abject poverty, a single-parent home, absent father, mammy, and an "idle, trouble-making" Black male, who steals watermelons no less, at its center.⁷⁴ It mattered little what the maker's intent was, the reception by Blacks was poor. *Ebony* magazine ran an article, "Little Jasper Series Draws Protest from Negro Groups," lamenting the depiction of a Black boy who loves watermelon as much as he is spooked by haunted houses.⁷⁵

Richard Neuert draws parallels between the Jasper films and, interestingly, those of Spencer Williams, writing, "however, it is worth noting as well that some of Pal's Jasper themes, such as urging rural folks to stay put, respect the old traditions, and avoid stealing, also turned up in 1940s live-action race movies like Spencer Williams' famous *The Blood of Jesus*, made by and for African Americans."⁷⁶ However, Williams' religious/horror themed films were unmatched, becoming a sort of genre unto themselves, "pristinely Black in [their] advocacy, locale, point of view, social ethic, and ... resolutely non-Hollywood folk technique."⁷⁷ There was nothing about Jasper that reflected Blackness, and it certainly did not

take up the additional aims of advocacy or of privileging Black bourgeois values. Williams presented value systems, class positionings, rituals and behaviors, love relationships, and ideologies of uplift that had not been seen during this cycle of horror films. Pal's films not only failed to speak to these views, but were symbolically devastating. In fact, nearly two decades after Pal introduced Jasper, Black groups were still trying to keep such stereotypes away from viewers. A Portland, Oregon, television station had to be cajoled by the Urban League in 1959 to cancel the series due to its obvious stereotypes. The Black press—the *Los Angeles Sentinel*, the *Chicago Defender*, and the *Afro-American* (Baltimore), among others—reported that the Urban League wrote to Portland station KOIN about the portrayal of Jasper, which "serve[s] to perpetuate false notions about the peculiarities of Negroes as a race." The appeal to KOIN went on to say: "it is tragic that Jasper and his associates are continually presented in ways which solidify false notions and cater to an assumption of racial superiority on the part of White viewers."⁷⁸

Conclusion

Spencer Williams' films were not technically complex. After all, one film (*The Blood of Jesus*) did present the Devil as a man in a Halloween-type costume. Some critics might even say that his oversimplified lessons in piety did not correspond with the deadly times within which they were delivered. Still, Williams literally stepped out on faith to create popular and successful "Black horror" films steeped in (Southern) Black culture for Black audiences. His films proved that there are interesting Black stories to be told. Unfortunately, Hollywood turned a blind eye to such evidence as it continued to mine for formulaic, stereotypical narratives.

Still, a host of right-minded individuals and organizations would continue to appeal to Hollywood, asking it to revolutionize its treatment of Blacks. Joel Fluellen (*White Pongo* [1945]) and Betsy Blair (actress and wife of Gene Kelly), in 1946, appeared before the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) and proposed that the Guild advocate for its Black membership: "NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Screen Actors Guild use all of its power to oppose discrimination against Negroes in the motion picture."⁷⁹ In 1947, Boris Karloff (*The Mummy* [1932]), as a member of SAG's anti-discrimination committee, noted the challenges SAG faced and the incremental change the organization was pursuing: "And if we insist that producers write roles for Negroes according to certain patterns, they may well leave out Negro roles altogether. However, what we plan to do is fight for the inclusion of Negroes in all crowd scenes. We plan to insist that in all scenes at least ten per cent of the characters be Negroes moving about ordinary business the same as other people."⁸⁰

The proliferation of comedy-horror drowned out and undermined calls for change. In these fictions, Blacks are alternately and/or simultaneously "naturally,"

authentically docile and savage, nurturing and monstrous. Such treatments begged the question of whether Blacks would ever get to play the day-to-day monster in horror, or creatures reflecting on mythology, or be featured in a psychological horror. Could horror create a Black monster without indicting the entire race as monstrous, and perhaps image a Black character as brave or as a savior? The Gists and Williams began to answer these questions in the affirmative with few resources. While imaging Blacks' whole and full participation in the horror genre was proven easy, the film industry continued to fail to act over the coming years for a number of social (and some financial) reasons.

Horror film exited the 1940s just as it had entered, under threat. Calling some of the films produced in the coming decade "B movies" was terribly generous as horror filmmakers of the 1950s were lucky if they could hire actual humans to slip into rubber suits to play their monsters. Increasingly, horror sank into laughability as monsters became inflatable brains (e.g. *The Brain from Planet Arous* [1957]), rubber and paper mache tree stumps (e.g. *From Hell It Came* [1957]), or mangy puppets on a string (e.g. *The Giant Claw* [1957]). This made it even easier for television, which began broadcasting nationally in 1948, to become a formidable competitor to film. Though television was much more strictly regulated by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), if a viewer wanted to see frightening fare, television had it, by either airing horror films or creating thriller programming (not quite horror, but some sci-fi) such as *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* (1955–1965). If the comic-Negro was desired, television had that covered as well, with Black "TV minstrels"⁸¹ appearing in programs such as *Beulah* (1950–1953) and *Amos 'n' Andy* (1951–1953).

As for horror films, invisibility and ridicule are the best terms to describe what lay ahead for Blacks over the next *two* decades (1950s–1960s). In the 1950s, science fiction and horror would wed to create monsters malformed by atomic energy bombs. Unlike Spencer Williams, who imagined a Black woman scientist, Hollywood could not do the same. Since Hollywood could not imagine Black scientists in laboratories where bombs and chemicals were created and where experimentation went awry, there could be no Blacks in movies attending to such themes. Blacks were rendered largely invisible in 1950s horror; that is, unless some scientist needed to take an African safari. Otherwise, Blacks would rear their heads again for a bit of that hybrid minstrelsy in the 1960s (e.g. *The Horror of Party Beach* [1964]). It would not be until 1968, nearly 25 years after Williams' films, with *Night of the Living Dead's* Black lead character Ben, that the genre would finally catch up with Williams' vision.

4 BLACK INVISIBILITY, WHITE SCIENCE, AND A NIGHT WITH BEN

1950s–1960s

I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids—and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me.

—Ellison, 1952¹

It looked like something from outer space, and it seemed like a weird nightmare, not part of me.

—Mamie Till Bradley, mother of 14-year-old Emmett Till, who was murdered by White racists²

Something was wrong. In the sleepy, affable small town of Santa Mira, the idyllic 1950s peace was being disturbed by a dangerous "them" which worked to intrude upon the community's "us." The town began reacting swiftly, albeit controversially, to the threat. When interstate buses delivered outsiders to Santa Mira, the interlopers found themselves ominously met by the town's sheriff, immediately placed into the back of his patrol car, and taken away, never to be seen again. Control and conformity were Santa Mira's new preoccupation; hence, its inhabitants would no longer tolerate visitors (outside agitators) who possessed the potential to ask questions and to influence others with their differing agendas. With each passing day, its citizenry tightened the reins, eliminating all manner of variance. A swing/jazz band who had arrived just months earlier to play in one of the town's popular restaurants, thereby marking Santa Mira's flirtation with progress—"We're on the way up"—was, in this new climate, let go. The band was replaced by a pre-programmed jukebox. On the whole, this was a lamentable

Black races.)" Sexual perversion, semi-nudity, dancing representing sexual action, and "racial and religious prejudices" were also "immoral," but none of these latter issues seemed to apply to representation of Blacks. See: Hays, Will H. *Annual Report of the President*. New York: Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, 1936. Print.

- 68 Dayan (174).
- 69 Guerrero, Edward *Framing Blackness: The African American Image in Film*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1993. 23. Print. Guerrero also observes that the Big House provided Depression-era audiences with an insider view of aristocracy.
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- 72 Lawless (10).

3 Horrifying Goons and Minstrel Coons: 1940s

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- 2 Jones, Alan. *The Rough Guide to Horror Movies*. New York: Rough Guides/Penguin, 2005. 24. Print.
- 3 According to Jones (24). The horror film took a particularly devastating hit in Britain, with only four films making it to the screen between 1940 and 1945.
- 4 The film is loosely based on Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), and as a horror film with a non-horror literary heritage (i.e. compared to Shelley's Frankenstein) it has attracted its fair share of critical attention.
- 5 Humphries, Reynold. *The American Horror Film*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002. 48–49. Print. Later, in 2009, Humphries would hail *I Walked With a Zombie* as one of the most significant contributions to the horror genre. *Zombie* is credited for being "dense, complex, and multilayered" thanks to a "brilliant script" which also offers an "exceptionally subtle analysis of repression in every sense." See: Humphries, Reynold. "I Walked With a Zombie." *101 Horror Movies You Must See Before You Die*. Ed. Steven Jay Schneider. London; Quintessence, 2009. 85–86. Print.
- 6 Hutchings, Peter. *The Horror Film*. Harlow, England: Pearson, 2004. 111. Print.
- 7 In Vodou, the spirit Carrefour controls the "crossroads," or path to death.
- 8 Often, there was little exploration into Blacks' stories. They are simply natives or servants and are often not given names in films, or, worse, the actors who portray them receive no credit. As late as 1968, with *Night of the Living Dead's* Ben, little is known about the lives of horror films' Black stars. That would change with *Blaclula* (1972), in which the Black character Mamuwalde's life history is carefully laid out. Later, over the course of two films, *Candyman* (1992) and *Candyman: Farewell to the Flesh* (1995), the Candyman/Daniel Robitaille story emerges.
- 9 Hutchings (111).
- 10 Crowther, Bosley. "Old Black Magic." *New York Times*, June 13, 1943; sec. X3. Print.
- 11 In the last few minutes of the film, when Mumbo Jumbo has to explain to the White men that he saw the pongo carry off a White woman, his character is suddenly fluent in English and without an accent (no 'me boy, you Bwana' type talk). In reference to the ape, Mumbo Jumbo seriously observes, "I certainly hope his disposition improves." It is a nice peek into what Fluellen could have brought to such a character. However, in this extremely low-budget film, Mumbo Jumbo's sudden, inexplicable fluency comes across as if the film's director, Sam Newfield, simply forgot that Mumbo Jumbo started the film speaking in very limited, broken English.

- 12 The film featured the famed man-in-an-ape-suit actor Ray Corrigan from the horror films *White Pongo* and *Nabonga* as the white gorilla.
- 13 "A Battle for Jungle Supremacy" was a tagline in the film's trailer. See: "The White Gorilla." *YouTube*. YouTube, LLC. 2010. Web. July 26, 2010. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n_c47ZGZ518.
- 14 Cripps, Thomas. *Slow Fade to Black: The Negro in American Film, 1900–1942*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993. 374. Print.
- 15 Cripps (*Slow Fade* 374).
- 16 Bogle, Donald. *Bright Boulevards, Bold Dream: The Story of Black Hollywood*. New York: Ballantine One World, 2005. 126. Print.
- 17 Muse, Clarence. "What's Going on in Hollywood." *Chicago Defender*, December 28, 1940: 21. Print.
- 18 Cripps (*Slow Fade* 376–378).
- 19 Leab, Daniel J. *From Sambo to Superspade: The Black Experience in Motion Pictures*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1973. 130. Print.
- 20 Cripps (*Slow Fade* 376).
- 21 On the point of treatment, Reddick identified 19 stereotypes he wanted buried: the savage African, the happy slave, the devoted servant, the corrupt politician, the petty thief, the social delinquent, the vicious criminal, the sexual superman, the superior athlete, the unhappy non-White, the natural-born cook, the natural-born musician, the perfect entertainer, the superstitious church-goer, the chicken and watermelon eater, the razor and knife "toter," the uninhibited expressionist, and the mental inferior.
- 22 Reddick, Lawrence D. "Educational Programs for the Improvement of Race Relations: Motion Pictures, Radio, the Press, and Libraries." *Journal of Negro Education* 13.3 (1944): 369, 382. Print.
- 23 Fifty years after *Son of Ingagi*, films focusing on the Black wedding remain novel, and are often hailed as positive, such as the romantic-comedies *The Wood* (1999) and *The Best Man* (1999).
- 24 hooks, bell. *Reel to Real: Race, Sex, and Class at the Movies*. New York: Routledge, 1996. 167. Print.
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- 26 Sobchack, Vivian. *Screening Space: The American Science Fiction Film*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001. 30. Print.
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- 28 Cripps (*Genre* 90).
- 29 Manatu, Norma. *African American Women and Sexuality in the Cinema*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2003. 53. Print.
- 30 Cripps, Thomas. "The Films of Spencer Williams." *Black American Literature Forum* 12 (1978): 131. Print.
- 31 Creed, Barbara. *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*. London: Routledge, 1993. 37. Print.
- 32 See: Gibson, Gloria J. "Cinematic Foremothers: Zora Neale Hurston and Eloyce King Patrick Gist." *Oscar Micheaux & His Circle: African-American Filmmaking and Race Cinema of the Silent Era*. Eds. Pearl Bowser, Jane Gaines, and Charles Musser. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001. 195–209. Print. See also: Gibson-Hudson, Gloria. "Recall and Recollect: Excavating the Life History of Eloyce King Patrick Gist." *Black Film Review* 8 (1994): 20–21. Print.
- 33 Gibson-Hudson (20–21).
- 34 Gibson (200).
- 35 Gibson-Hudson (20–21).

- 36 Gibson (203).
 37 Gibson (203).
 38 Gibson (203–204).
 39 Gibson-Hudson (20–21).
 40 The Library of Congress: American Memory, Library of Congress. 2010. Web. July 26, 2010. Out of sequence fragments for *Hellbound Train* are held by the Library of Congress; a fire destroyed the remaining associated materials/documents related to the Gists' lives and careers. Gloria J. Gibson (Hudson) made an effort to decipher the order of the fragments, as she discusses in detail; see: Gibson (195–209).
 41 The summary of this film comes in great part from: Senn, Bryan. *Golden Horrors: An Illustrated Critical Filmography 1931–1939*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1996. Print.
 42 Cripps (Films of Spencer Williams 132).
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 44 The Black filmmaker Charles Burnett would build an entire movie around modern rituals of watching over the dying, at their home bedside, in his haunting film of good and evil *To Sleep With Anger* (1990). In *Anger*, the almost dead, Gideon (Paul Butler) struggles to return to the living, while an evil thrives, distracting and wreaking havoc among those who should be gathered at his bedside in prayer.
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 47 Cripps (*Making* 134, 330).
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 50 Coleman (45).
 51 McCaffrey, Donald W. "The Golden Age of Sound Comedy." *Screen* 11 (1970): 27–40. 33. Print.
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 59 Guerrero, Ed. *Framing Blackness: The African American Image in Film*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Temple Press, 1993. 123. Print.
 60 *Revolt of the Zombies* (1936), for example, recast the zombie mythology away from Black Voodoo to the purview of a fanatical "Oriental" priest from Angkor Wat, Cambodia, whose power could be used to raise a zombie army, tipping the scales of military power, and thereby bringing "the destruction of the White race."
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 62 Nестеby (222).
 63 *The Scarlet Clue* (1945).
 64 Robinson, Cedric J. *Forgeries of Memory & Meaning: Blacks & the Regimes of Race in American Theater & Film before World War II*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007. 376–378. Print.
 65 Robinson (376–378).
 66 Kliman, Bernice W. "The Biscuit Eater: Racial Stereotypes: 1939–1972." *Phylon* 39 (1978): 92. Print.
 67 Noble (181).
 68 Bogle (*Toms, Coons* 72); Bogle (*Bright* 118).
 69 *Spooks on the Loose* presents one of the oddest endings to a film. The character Glimpy (Huntz Hall), after fighting with the Nazis, comes down with the German measles, which are represented, seemingly comically, as dozens of tiny Swatikas all over his face.
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 77 Cripps (Films of Spencer Williams 133).
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 - 5 For its cinematic innovation, *Invasion* has been inducted into the United States National Film Registry by the National Film Preservation Board. Library of Congress. January 25, 2010. Web. June 17, 2010. It took 47th place, out of 100, on the American Film Institute's (AFI) list of the most-scarey films.

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