

Citation metadata

Author: Glen Masato Mimura
Date: Fall 1996
From: Velvet Light Trap
Publisher: University of Texas at Austin (University of Texas Press)
Document Type: Article
Length: 9,565 words

Main content

Article Preview :

Media Rhetoric, Filmic Philosophy, Textual Analysis

"One out of twenty-one Black American males will be murdered in their lifetime. Most will die at the hands of another Black man." These two statements, the second following the first on a black background, introduce *Boyz n the Hood* (Columbia Pictures, 1991), a story of three young black men growing up in South-Central Los Angeles, written and directed by then-twenty-three-year-old John Singleton. One imagines they might have been drawn from some news story or other, assessing the "plight" of African Americans. That is, they mimic the austere, numerical rhetoric in which people of color today so frequently achieve visibility in mainstream media: as momentarily shocking or startling statistics, as yet more ingredients in the banal, daily horror which has come to typify, for many people--differently, of course, according to who (racially-ethnically) and where you are--the essence of print, radio, and TV journalism. (This representation finds its logical refrain in the privileged subject of its address: "So what world problems, what horrors greet us today?"--cliche cynicism of the bourgeois husband as he opens his newspaper at the breakfast table, in film, on TV ...)

Singleton's film doesn't offer an explanation for its opening statements, the crisis of self-violence they name, but does elaborate on its brutal details and conditions. More significantly, *Boyz* offers an alternative vision, not so much about how to address violence in the community, but rather how to get out of it. More than merely strategic or pragmatic, this vision is also a principled guide to living one's life. But a guide for whom is the question which motivates and constitutes the central problem of my investigation. Articulated through *Furious Styles*, the film's only "real" father (we will discuss later what counts, precisely, as "real" here), this philosophy is played out and confirmed through the growing-up story of the title's three "boyz," the brothers Doughboy and Ricky, and *Furious's* son, Tre. The film's problem is specifically a problem confronting young African American men; and *Furious's* philosophy promises to redeem these social subjects through the construction and affirmation of patriarchal masculine identity. From opening scene to ambivalent resolution, *Boyz* offers a narrative largely--but not completely--faithful to the philosopher-father's lessons to his son, Tre.

By analytically following the central characters and their interrelated fates, this essay seeks to know how Singleton's film assimilates textual conventions from mass media and the classical "coming of age" film, or *bildungsroman*, specifically their representations of sexuality and death--and the degree to which *Boyz* reproduces or transforms them, to tell a different story with a different subject. What is at stake more generally is an understanding of how *Boyz* participates in what Gayatri Spivak calls the "worlding of the world," which "actually is also a texting, textualising, a making into art, a making into an object to be understood." (1) The urban-social experience of black masculinity, however, proves ultimately more complicated than the film's representational structure allows; in closing, therefore, the present analysis elaborates on a crucial narrative...

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Source Citation

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Mimura, Glen Masato. "On fathers and sons, sex and death: John Singleton's *Boyz n the Hood*." *Velvet Light Trap*, 1996, p. 14+.
Accessed 6 Nov. 2020.

Gale Document Number: GALE|A90190311

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Writer and Director John Singleton's portrayal of social problems in inner-city Los Angeles, California takes the form of a tale of three friends growing up together in the "hood". Half-brothers Doughboy (Ice Cube) and Ricky Baker (Morris Chestnut) are foils for each other's personality, presenting very different approaches to the tough lives they face. *Boyz n the Hood* Directed by: John Singleton Country: USA Year: 1991 Running time: 107 minutes Starring: Laurence Fishburne and Cuba Gooding Jr. "I watched the news this morning. Either they don't know, don't show, or don't care about what's going on in the hood. The mother of Tre Styles (Cuba Gooding Jr.) decides to send her son to live with his father, Furious Styles (Laurence Fishburne), after he gets into a fight at school. John Singleton, director of *Boyz n the Hood*, has died, , , and report. Singleton's demise comes after following a "" that left him in a coma earlier this month. John Singleton was 51 years previous. "It is with heavy hearts we announce that our beloved son, father and friend, John Daniel Singleton will be taken off of life support today [April 29]," Singleton's household spokesperson stated in an announcement, in line with . "This was an agonizing decision, one that our family made, over a number of days, with the careful counsel of John's doctors." A local of South Los Angeles, John Singleton attended the Filmic Writing program on the USC School of Cinematic Arts. Shortly after his commencement, he offered the script for his directorial debut ...