

Film "stagecoach" analysis

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Stagecoach: The Revolutionary Western John Ford built a standard that many future directors would follow with his classic 1939 film "Stagecoach".

Although there were a plethora of western films made before 1939, the film "Stagecoach" revolutionized the western genre by elevating the genre from a "B" film into a more serious genre. The film challenged not only western stereotypes but also class divisions in society. Utilizing specific aspects of mise-en-scene and cinematography, John Ford displays his views of society.

The film consists of many cliché western characters. There is a banker, an outlaw, a prostitute, a doctor, a gambler, and a pregnant woman. These characters are categorized by social class.

The banker, the pregnant woman, and the gambler are considered upper class. The outlaw, the prostitute, and the doctor are considered lower class. Ford emphasizes the social prejudice that is present between the two classes by using composition of mise-en-scene. In the dinner table scene, Lucy Mallory cannot bear eating next to, Dallas, the prostitute.

Therefore, Hatfield escorts Lucy Mallory to the opposite end of the table. The use of space in the scene depicts the division between the upper class and the lower class.

Because of the social status of Ringo Kid and Dallas, the characters in the upper class try not to associate themselves with them. John Ford also illustrates that prejudice can also occur within the same social class. In one of the earlier scenes, Lucy Mallory is in the hotel with her friends. The camera is in a medium range shot and the shot is from the inside of the tearoom.

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In this scene, Lucy Mallory asks her friends who the strange man outside of the window is. Her friends reply that the man is nothing but a notorious gambler.

In this shot, the curtains of the window frame Hatfield. The way that Hatfield is judged immediately is similar to picking up a picture frame and judging a picture. Ford is trying to illustrate the fact that even at first glance, Lucy Mallory is given a negative perspective of Hatfield. Throughout the film, the characters in the lower class are not respected by the others.

Doc Boone is not taken seriously and considered a fool because he is always drunk.

Dallas is always forgotten and all the attention is given to Mallory. In a scene where the stagecoach is headed towards Apache Wells in the cold, Hatfield's facial expressions show that he is worried and concerned whenever he looks at Lucy Mallory. Hatfield, being a gentleman, offers Lucy Mallory water and serves water to her in a fancy silver cup but does not bother to ask Dallas. However, Ringo Kid makes sure Dallas also gets a drink of water.

This demonstrates that even though Hatfield is considered a gentleman, he does not show any concern for Dallas because she has a lower social status.

Once the stagecoach arrives in Lordsburg, Lucy Mallory is carried out on a stretcher. At first, the camera shot is wide-angled and the street is crowded with soldiers and civilians. Then there is a close-up shot of Mallory on the stretcher as she speaks to Dallas. The shot reveals Mallory's facial expression of remorse. Mallory looks apologetic and offers any help to Dallas.

This is one of the final scenes in the film and illustrates how Mallory's view of Dallas completely changed by the resolution of the film. Throughout the film, Mallory felt uncomfortable being around Dallas. Once Dallas helped take care of Mallory's baby, Mallory realized that her judgment of Dallas was completely wrong. John Ford challenges society's views of people based on class. Most people would expect the characters in the upper class to be more compassionate and respectable compared to the lower class.

However, as the film progresses, the stereotypes are broken down and the characters true intentions are revealed. Everyone's view of Ringo Kid and Doc Boone also changed by the end of the film. Although Doc Boone was always intoxicated, he was able to deliver the baby of Mallory. Ringo Kid was considered just an outlaw but he helped defend the stagecoach and fight the Indians. Ford shed new light on the western cliches and helped transform the western genre.