

## John Ford's *Stagecoach*

*Stagecoach* is one of the classics of Hollywood cinema. Made in 1939, it revitalized the Western genre, served as a milestone of John Ford's career, and made John Wayne a star. This volume offers a rich overview of the film in essays by six leading film critics. Approaching *Stagecoach* from a variety of critical perspectives, they place the film within the contexts of authorship, genre, American history, and culture. Also examined are the film's commentary on race, class, gender, and democracy, as well as the film's artistry.

**Barry Keith Grant** is a professor of film and director of the Graduate Program in Popular Culture at Brock University. His books include *The Film Studies Dictionary*, *Voyages of Discovery: The Cinema of Frederick Wiseman*, and *Film Genre Reader*.

## THE CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS FILM HANDBOOKS SERIES

**General Editor:** Andrew Horton, *University of Oklahoma*

Each CAMBRIDGE FILM HANDBOOK is intended to focus on a single film from a variety of theoretical, critical, and contextual perspectives. This “prism” approach is designed to give students and general readers valuable background and insight into the cinematic, artistic, cultural, and sociopolitical importance of individual films by including essays by leading film scholars and critics. Furthermore, these handbooks by their very nature are meant to help the reader better grasp the nature of the critical and theoretical discourse on cinema as an art form, as a visual medium, and as a cultural product. Filmographies and select bibliographies are added to help the reader go further in his or her own exploration of the film under consideration.

### VOLUMES IN THE SERIES

- Buster Keaton's "Sherlock Jr."* ed. by Andrew Horton, University of Oklahoma
- Spike Lee's "Do the Right Thing,"* ed. by Mark Reid, University of Florida
- Ozu's "Tokyo Story,"* ed. by David Desser, University of Illinois, Urbana–Champaign
- "The Godfather Trilogy,"* ed. by Nick Browne, University of California, Los Angeles
- Hitchcock's "Rear Window,"* ed. by John Belton
- Godard's "Pierrot le Fou,"* ed. by David Wills, State University of New York, Albany
- Buñuel's "The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie,"* ed. by Marsha Kinder, University of Southern California
- Bergman's "Persona,"* ed. by Lloyd Michaels, Allegheny College
- "Bonnie and Clyde,"* ed. by Lester Friedman

# John Ford's *Stagecoach*

---

Edited by

**BARRY KEITH GRANT**

Brock University

Cambridge University Press & Assessment  
 978-0-521-79331-5 — John Ford's Stagecoach  
 Edited by Barry Keith Grant  
 Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)



**CAMBRIDGE**  
 UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom  
 One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA  
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia  
 314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi - 110025, India  
 103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment, a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9780521793315](http://www.cambridge.org/9780521793315)

© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2003

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

First published 2003

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication data*

John Ford's Stagecoach / edited by Barry Keith Grant.

p. cm. - (Cambridge film handbooks)

Filmography:

Includes bibliographical references (p.) and index.

ISBN 0-521-79331-9 - ISBN 0-521-79743-8 (pbk.)

1. Stagecoach (Motion picture) I. Grant, Barry Keith, 1947- II. Cambridge film handbooks series.

PN1997.S65733 J65 2002

791.4372-dc21

2002020179

ISBN 978-0-521-79331-5 Hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-79743-6 Paperback

Cambridge University Press & Assessment has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

## Contents

<i>Acknowledgments and Credits</i>	page ix
<i>List of Contributors</i>	xi
<b>Introduction: Spokes in the Wheels</b> Barry Keith Grant	1
<b>1 <i>Stagecoach</i> and Hollywood's A-Western Renaissance</b> Thomas Schatz	21
<b>2 "Powered by a Ford"?: Dudley Nichols, Authorship, and Cultural Ethos in <i>Stagecoach</i></b> Charles J. Maland	48
<b>3 That Past, This Present: Historicizing John Ford, 1939</b> Leland Poague	82
<b>4 "A Little Bit Savage": <i>Stagecoach</i> and Racial Representation</b> J. P. Telotte	113
<b>5 "Be a Proud, Glorified Dreg": Class, Gender, and Frontier Democracy in <i>Stagecoach</i></b> Gaylyn Studlar	132
<b>6 <i>Stagecoach</i> and the Quest for Selfhood</b> William Rothman	158

viii CONTENTS

<b>Reviews of <i>Stagecoach</i></b>	179
Welford Beaton, <i>The Hollywood Spectator</i> (February 18, 1939)	179
Frank S. Nugent, <i>The New York Times</i> (March 3, 1939)	181
John Mosher, <i>The New Yorker</i> (March 4, 1939)	182
<i>Filmography</i>	185
<i>Select Bibliography</i>	233
<i>Index</i>	239

## Acknowledgments and Credits

Many thanks to Andy Horton and Beatrice Rehl of Cambridge University Press for their support, encouragement, advice, and patience. Both are a pleasure to work with. I also am grateful to my colleagues in the Department of Communication, Popular Culture, and Film at Brock University, Ontario, for listening to me talk about John Ford. And of course I owe a special debt of gratitude to my family, who helped me balance work with more fuddle.

Quotations from the draft screenplay of *Stagecoach* appearing in Charles J. Maland's essay are part of the John Ford Papers in the Indiana University Library and are used courtesy of the Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.

J. P. Telotte's "'A Little Bit Savage': *Stagecoach* and Racial Representation" is based on material previously published as "A Fate Worse Than Death: Racism, Transgression and Westerns" in *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 26: 3 (Fall 1998): 120–7. Used with permission of *Journal of Popular Film* and Heldref Publications.

Frank S. Nugent's review of *Stagecoach* is reprinted by permission of the *New York Times*.

Stills courtesy of Film Stills Archive, Museum of Modern Art; Jerry Ohlinger's Movie Material Store; and the authors' own collections.

## Contributors

**BARRY KEITH GRANT** is a professor of communication, popular culture, and film at Brock University in Ontario, Canada. He is the author of *Voyages of Discovery: The Cinema of Frederick Wiseman* and *The Film Studies Dictionary* (with Steve Blandford and Jim Hillier) and editor of numerous volumes, including *Film Genre Reader*, *The Dread of Difference: Gender and the Horror Film*, and *Documenting the Documentary: Close Readings of Documentary Film and Video* (with Jeannette Sloniowski). He is currently editor of the “Genres in American Cinema” series for Cambridge University Press and the “Contemporary Film and Television” and “TV Milestones” series for Wayne State University Press.

**CHARLES J. MALAND** is Lindsay Young Professor of Cinema Studies in the Department of English, University of Tennessee, Knoxville. He is the author of *American Visions: The Films of Chaplin, Ford, Capra and Welles 1936–1941*, *Frank Capra*, and *Chaplin and American Culture*, winner of the Theatre Library Association Award in 1990 for best book in the area of recorded performance.

**LELAND POAGUE** is a professor of English at Iowa State University. He has written books on Frank Capra, Ernst Lubitsch, Billy Wilder, Leo McCarey, and Howard Hawks; is co-author of *Film Criticism: A Counter Theory* (with William Cadbury), and with Kathy A. Parsons of *Susan Sontag: An Annotated Bibliography 1948–1992*; and has edited or co-edited volumes on Susan Sontag and Alfred Hitchcock. His articles have appeared in such publications as *Cinema Journal*, *CineAction*, *Post Script*, *Film Criticism*, and *Hitchcock Annual*.



xii     **CONTRIBUTORS**

**WILLIAM ROTHMAN** is a professor of motion pictures and director of the graduate program in Film Studies at the University of Miami. He is the author of *Hitchcock – The Murderous Gaze*, *The “I” of the Camera*, *Documentary Film Classics*, and *Cavell’s The World Viewed: A Philosophical Perspective on Film* (with Marian Keane). His essays and reviews have appeared in numerous journals, and he is editor of Cambridge University Press’s “Studies in Film” series.

**THOMAS SCHATZ** is a professor and chair of the Radio-Television-Film Department at the University of Texas at Austin. He is the author of four books on Hollywood cinema, including *Hollywood Genres*, *The Genius of the System*, and, most recently, *Boom and Bust: American Cinema in the 1940s*. His writing on film has appeared in various publications, including *Film Comment*, *The Nation*, *Premiere*, and the *New York Times*. He teaches and consults frequently throughout the United States and overseas on American film and television, and he also has worked on many television documentaries focusing on the movie industry.

**GAYLYN STUDLAR** is director of the Film and Video Studies Program at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. She is the author of *In the Realm of Pleasure: Von Sternberg, Dietrich, and the Masochistic Aesthetic* and *The Mad Masquerade: Masculinity and Stardom in the Jazz Age* and co-editor of books on John Huston, James Cameron’s *Titanic* (1997), and John Ford’s Westerns. Her writing has appeared in numerous film journals and in such anthologies as *Screening the Male: Exploring Masculinities in Hollywood Cinema*.

**J. P. TELOTTE** is a professor of literature, communication, and culture at the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta. He is the author of *Voices in the Dark: The Narrative Patterns of Film Noir*, *Replications: A Robotic History of the Science Fiction Film*, *Dreams of Darkness: Fantasy and the Films of Val Lewton*, and *Science Fiction Film* for Cambridge University Press’s “Genres in American Cinema” series. The author of dozens of articles on popular film, he also edited *Beyond All Reason: The Cult Film Experience*.