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Abstracts

KING VIDOR OR THE ABILITY TO SURPRISE

Tag Gallagher

King Vidor is reminiscent of Chaplin. Both filmmakers managed to bring the art of the big screen closer to the man in the street, who saw himself reflected in their pictures. Chaplin was Vidor's model and, like Chaplin, was successful in capturing in his images the essence of nature and humankind, in bringing out the poetry of the commonplace, of the simple things in life. His work, just as that of Rossellini and De Sica, is full of melodrama and sex, storyline and climax, plus all kinds of cinematographic inventions. Vidor's characters are often lost and alone, the family or community representing a battlefield rather than ideal. However, in the end they find the strength needed to become a family. On the other hand, Vidor's work with his actors, and even more so with his actresses, is extremely important. His results came from the very behaviour of his actresses more than from acting methods. We might know that the people in Vidor's films are acting, but we never perceive them as actors.

KING VIDOR, THE APOTHEOSIS OF INDIVIDUALISM

Jesús Angulo

King, without question, is a pioneer in American filmmaking and one of greatest contributors to its development and permeation. Born in Texas, where he saw *Le Voyage dans la lune* (1902) by Méliès, King was drawn to this new emerging art, to which he would end up dedicating his entire life. In 1919, after making a few short documentaries, he directed his first feature film, *The Turn in the Road*. However, it was *The Big Parade* (1925) and *The Crowd* (1928) that made him one of the most celebrated names in American filmmaking of the time. Over the course of his career King Vidor directed some of the cornerstones in the history of international cinema, including *Our Daily Bread* (1934), *Duel in the Sun* (1946), *The Fountainhead* (1949) and *War and Peace* (1956), with *Salomon and Sheba* (1959) bringing his career to a close.

MORE THAN THE BRANCHES OF A TREE

Carlos Losilla

King Vidor's work presents a number of ramifications in film history. It condenses and anticipates different styles and tendencies, ranging from Soviet silent cinema to *Nouvelle Vague*, taking in the documentary movement of the Thirties and neorealism. Despite this stylistic disorder, both his formal aim and his favourite subject seem to be the search for balance and harmony in art and life, represented through disjointed structures and restless characters. The physical intensity of his images is carefully counterbalanced by the spiritual strength he so successfully extracts at the right moment, not unlike Emerson, Whitman and even Poe, following one of his country's most fruitful cultural traditions. The resulting transcendentalism, the constant perseverance in discovering what is hidden behind the images and the search for a palpable reality, connects Vidor's work to the most mystical currents in American filmmaking from Frank Borzage to Leo McCarey. And, curiously enough, the most expressive and direct. He is therefore the perfect figure on which to base an adequate and necessary rethinking of the notion of classicism, at least how it is understood in the context of American cinema.

THE WORK ETHIC IN KING VIDOR'S FILMMAKING

José Enrique Monterde

In light of theories suggesting Vidor was a "social" cineast or even a man deeply committed to left-leaning ideals, the author affirms that Vidor's films as well as his opinions are laced with

ambiguity and confusion. The confrontation between individuality and society or community is appeased by individual triumph, considered vital to Vidor. Collectivism and the masses represent the annulment of the possibility of progress and development. In *The Fountainhead*, the confrontation between art and society is taken to the limit. Vidor defends the posture the artist who creates on his own, with no implication in terms of society's demands, because his talent, both religious and Messianic, is displayed above any other concrete worldly need.

THE TEMPTATION OF THE METROPOLIS: CITY LIFE AND COMMUNITY IN KING VIDOR'S FILMS

Ángel Quintana

One of the main reference points in King Vidor's thinking is the transcendental philosophy of Ralph Waldo Emerson. His way of thinking expresses a debate between the integration of the individual in nature and the recognition of the self as a means of personal imposition. The article studies the relationship between the fundamentals of Emersonian thought and the conflict in King Vidor's films between communal structures, in which individuals seek harmony based on respect for tradition and perseverance of rituals, and the new urban lifestyles which place tradition in crisis, promote community fragmentation and isolate the individual. In King Vidor's work the solution to this conflict lies in the exaltation of the figure of the common man, who accepts his place in the world and is adverse to the ambitious madness of the self-made man.

KING VIDOR IN THE CROSSROADS OF MELODRAMA

Pablo Pérez / Javier Hernández

When studying Vidor's contribution to melodrama, his works should not be approached as a single unit, particularly if we bear in mind that a number of his pictures were made to order. Moreover, his filmmaking is known for "intergenre contamination" making it hard to find a pure melodrama among his films. His range of hues is also covers a wide scope: from sentimental comedy with dramatic overtones, to out-and-out melodrama and social drama, to the most classic of sagas. Although Vidor is not a great creator of pure melodramatic forms, his contributions to the genre are significant. His social melodramas lack the sacred bourgeois milieu of the melodrama, becoming somewhat secularised, more along the lines of the emerging capitalist society. He introduces the debate between wild and domestic, between instinct and society, with clearly romantic underpinnings. And although his stories might be feeble at times, his staging overwhelmingly makes up for this weakness, becoming the true touchstone of his melodramas.

WESTERN AND COMMITMENT

Antonio Santamarina

After situating the five King Vidor Westerns in the context of the genre's evolution and in the history of the United States, the author takes a brief look at each of them, highlighting the filmmaker's personal contribution to each. He then goes on to analyse the underlying conflict on which these films are based, looking at some of the fundamental archetypal characteristics of Vidor's heroes. Lastly, the author draws on the civilisation vs. barbarity debate that runs through a good part of the narrative in these works, to unveil some of the key issues connected to the filmmaker's personal view of the political development of his country and of Westerns themselves.

THE GREAT DISILLUSION

Ricardo Aldarondo

King Vidor took on the subject of war in only two of his films and even so both became examples of the finest and most lucid films of the genre. Both pictures tell stories of disillusion, felt when war was still thought to be an act of courage, glory and devotion. Vidor does not attempt to deliver pacifistic declarations, but rather to demonstrate the impact of war on human lives, and for this very reason the antiwar message in his films is all the more powerful.

THE REVOLUTION OF THE METRONOME AND SILENT MUSIC

Quim Casas

King Vidor might be considered a theoretician and a forerunner in the development of motion picture soundtrack. His contributions were manifold: his use of "silent music" to put together a silent sequence; his experimentation with music to heighten or add counterpoint in the early days of commercial sound; his use of music to define characters; his way of turning a song into a narrative element...

A MOVIE WITHOUT A BAD GUY

Fernando Fernán Gómez

The author takes another look at the film **Champ** and this time it takes him back in time to his adolescence, when he saw the screening of the film with some friends. This is the point of departure from which he examines the characters of the film (the movie without a bad guy), and the world around them. The author also pays tribute to the two stars of the film, Wallace Beery and Jackie Cooper.

WAR AND PEACE, CITY AND COUNTRY

José María Latorre

War and Peace focuses on a constant struggle between two opposites: men of war vs. men of peace, idealism vs. deception, innocence vs. bitterness, love vs. death, city vs. country... and representation vs. reality. The film is true to Tolstoi's universe and very neatly expresses the contrast between the city and the country. The countryside is the place set aside for freedom, happiness and to enjoy the simple things in life. Vidor once again depicts a society torn between happiness as an obligation and obligation as part of the natural order.