

Chapter 5

RACE, FEAR AND MEMORY: HOLLYWOOD CONFRONTS THE CENTENNIAL: CIVIL WAR FILMS 1956-63

*'I have seen the promised land.'*¹

The mid-1950s was the turning point in race relations, America's attitude to the Cold War and in Hollywood's battle with the Production Code Administration (PCA). Hollywood responded with a series of significant Civil War films exploring race and national identity. However, as the opposition in the South to conceding civil rights to African Americans increased, the number of Civil War films declined. Hollywood gave up the opportunity of exploiting the centennial celebrations and withdrew from portraying internal disunity on the screen when there was disunity on the streets. The celebrations became contested territory as African Americans and liberals fought the United States Civil War Centennial Commission (the Commission) for appropriate representation and for the historical memory of the Civil War. By the time of Kennedy's assassination, in November 1963, the Civil Rights Movement had forced the question of civil rights to the top of the domestic agenda and Civil War films were again in production and tackling the issues of race and national identity.

Southern reaction to *Brown*

The Southern response to *Brown* was twofold: direct action and resurrecting the old fears and myths of the mixing of races. White 'Citizens Councils,' which mushroomed throughout the South to fight integration, were complemented by a rapid revival of the Ku Klux Klan and other reactionary groups, using their familiar tactics of intimidation, violence and murder. Almost all of the Southern Congressmen signed the 'Southern Manifesto' to use 'all lawful means' to overturn *Brown*.² Many states passed laws to close their public schools and to channel money into private education. Despite court orders, African Americans were prevented from registering to enter public schools. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was attacked in a co-ordinated legal offensive by the southern states and reduced to insignificance and impotence.³ All opponents of this new southern resistance were labelled traitors and communists. As Governor Herman Talmadge wrote in 1955, 'If communists supported

integration, could there be any clearer sign of its immorality?’⁴ Yet, if any area of America had the lowest number of communists, it was the South. Almost every southern state had established its own investigating committee after the 1950 McCarran Act.⁵

Underpinning southern reaction was the whole issue of race and southern identity. If *Brown* stood for the equal treatment of all citizens then the justification of white supremacy was gone. Civil Rights for African Americans threatened to end the Lost Cause myth – the South’s heritage, memory and loyalty to its traditions.⁶ The fears and myths of miscegenation were resurrected to create emotional support against integration. White men had to defend the ‘inviolability’ of the southern white woman as the *Black Monday* tract proclaimed.⁷ It was *The Birth of a Nation* (*Birth*) again, as an editorial in the *Jackson Daily News* pointed out: ‘White and Negro children in the same school will lead to miscegenation. Miscegenation leads to mixed marriages and mixed marriages lead to mongrelization of the human race.’⁸ In 1955, twenty-nine states had statutes forbidding blacks and whites to marry.⁹ Eisenhower was reported to have said, that opponents of integration ‘are not bad people. All they are concerned about is to see their sweet little girls are not required to sit in schools alongside some big black bucks.’ However if Southerners were forced to see African Americans as people then their whole way of life and Southern identity would have to change.¹⁰ If Hollywood wanted to continue producing Civil War films it would have to take note of the political climate in the South.

Hollywood, race and national identity

Hollywood, too, had been having its own battle over freedom. In 1952 the Supreme Court granted films the protection of the First Amendment - freedom of speech - and in 1953 *The Moon is Blue* was released without the PCA seal, but became a box office success. After the more liberal Geoffrey Shurlock replaced Joseph Breen the Production Code was completely revised. Miscegenation was no longer a taboo subject – the only ones that remained were those concerning nudity, sexual perversion and venereal disease.¹¹ With these liberalisations coming at the same time as the *Brown* judgement Hollywood was free to explore the issues - even in Civil War films.

Hollywood had long been interested in miscegenation and inter-racial romance, generally between whites and Native Americans or Spanish Americans, but, after *Birth*, had avoided

those between whites and African Americans. This was reinforced in the 1930 Production Code, which specifically forbade 'sex relationships between the white and black races.'¹² Not showing white and black sexual relations in Civil War films was not only a total denial of historical fact, but supported the southern myths about the need for racial purity.¹³ To the southerner, miscegenation was the ultimate horror, and in the mid-1950s, when Hollywood was free to address the subject, it did so with care. The first major Civil War films to deal with inter-racial relationships looked at white and Native American relationships. Although in the early 1950s Hollywood had been identifying the Native Americans as the alien (communist) force and, by implication, surrogates for the African Americans, they did not pose the same visual and emotional threat.¹⁴

In *The Searchers* (1956)¹⁵ Ethan Edwards is an unreconstructed Confederate with a hatred for the Native Americans. His search for his two nieces, abducted by Scar, a Comanche chief, is driven not only by hatred and revenge but by the fear that they will be sexually defiled. To him that was the worst that could happen to a white woman and she would be better dead. It is the resolution of this fear, helped by the part-Cherokee Indian, Martin, which informs the narrative. But Ethan is not alone - his race hatred is shared by other whites. Laurie, who is in love with Martin, is equally brutal. Hearing that Debbie, one of the nieces, is living with Scar she says, '(f)etch what home? The leavings of a Comanche buck sold time and time again to the highest bidder with savage brats of her own.....do you know what Ethan will do....he'll put a bullet in her brain - what we'd want him to do.'¹⁶ Yet Laurie has no such feelings against Martin despite his heritage.

Martin is only one-eighth Cherokee but is continually reminded of this - 'I could mistake you for a half-breed' says Ethan. The screenplay was written in the midst of the South's reaction to *Brown*, therefore changing Martin's racial origins - in the book he is white - was consciously raising the issue of inter-racial relationships.¹⁷ Martin becomes the film's moral conscience; he tries to protect Debbie from Ethan. He is also the mediator who gradually influences Ethan until the latter's internal struggle is resolved when, instead of killing Debbie, he takes her home.¹⁸ Martin, the 'half-breed,' has won the argument. He returns to marry Laurie in an inter-racial union. He has been accepted into white society. He is the beneficiary of *Brown*. Martin and Laurie are the future of the country as Laurie's mother predicts that 'some day this country is going to be a fine good place to be - maybe it needs our bones in the ground before that time can come.' In other words America will

only accept racial harmony and equality once the present generation is dead. As for Ethan he is left outside the ranch house (the family - America) unable to enter the shared future of a multi-ethnic, mixed race America. He walks away as the southern 'scapegoat' taking the question of racial guilt with him.¹⁹ Yet, while he cannot share that future, Ethan, the unreconstructed Confederate and racist, has begun to change. In the middle of the South's resistance to desegregation the film challenged equally hard-line southerners of the day to accept a multi-cultural society.

Run of the Arrow (1956)²⁰ is a more polemical film. Its director, Sam Fuller, saw the Civil War as having created a new kind of racism – a racism of hate - as the South shifted the responsibility for its defeat on to its former slaves and their descendants.²¹ However, in the film, Fuller shows that race hatred is not confined to southerners as its main expression comes from a northerner. The central character, the embittered southerner O'Meara, apparently has no race hatred. He meets and falls in love with a Native American, Yellow Moccasin. In the marriage ceremony they 'mix blood' to seal their commitment, 'two bodies in one blood.' This act is the antithesis of the southern belief in racial purity as their children will be mixed-race – the symbol of the future. It is who you are not what race you are that is more important. O'Meara's hatred of the Yankees leads him to prefer inter-racial marriage to white unity, which shows up the illogical nature of racism. However, by using Native Americans instead of African Americans as the racial 'other,' the director, Sam Fuller has indirectly confronted the present day issue, giving it a *Broken Arrow* scenario.²² The PCA was also cautious in the treatment of the relationship requesting that the 'lustfulness between O'Meara and Yellow Moccasin' be 'reduced.'²³ No reason was given but the PCA must have taken note of the comments and pronouncements of prominent southerner leaders on the subject of miscegenation. It also did not want filmmakers to take the removal of the ban on miscegenation as a signal to allow sexual licence on the screen.

O'Meara personifies the struggle of the South in coming to terms with a new concept of national identity. He rejects the Union and the changes that it brings: he rejects the South for its failure. He wants to change his identity and become a Sioux. But at the end of the film he is forced to confront his real identity. He finally realises that 'a man cannot live alone, he must have allegiance to a people, to a nation' – and his nation is America. O'Meara does not reach this conclusion by himself. He has been led there by Yellow Moccasin – a woman from another race, another culture. However much he has tried to

change, to forget what made him, he cannot. Instead of participating in the tribal rite of skinning the Indian-hating Union soldier Lieutenant Driscoll for violating the Sioux ritual of the 'run,' he shoots him out of compassion. He cannot become a Sioux. Yellow Moccasin hands him the captured American flag. 'Is your tribe in this flag?' she asks. O'Meara eventually agrees. As he takes his inter-racial family back to the new America the narrator concludes that, 'Lee's surrender was not the death of the South – it was the birth of the United States.' The film ends with the challenge to America: 'The end of the story can only be written by you.' O'Meara returns to a new country where skin colour is not a bar to full and equal citizenship. The South in 1956 also had to make that difficult journey.

National identity was challenged by the sudden re-introduction of African Americans into Civil War films. This was no coincidence following the *Brown* judgement. Although *Friendly Persuasion* (1956) ostensibly dealt with the moral problem that pacifists like the Quakers in the film faced, when confronted with direct threats against their homes and families, it also touched on national identity. Enoch is a runaway slave, who lives on the Birdwell farm. His introduction is a deliberate change from the book where he is only called the 'hired hand.'²⁴ The author, Jessamyn West, helped on the final script and acted as adviser to the filming and therefore must have agreed to the change and its implications. Although the Birdwell family treats Enoch as an equal, the opportunity to open up a significant debate on slavery and civil rights was lost in Hollywood's caution and stereotyping. There is only one short scene where he talks briefly about his family, otherwise he rarely appears. When he is seen, it is mainly to look after the horses and he becomes the 'servant' once again. However when the community is under threat from Morgan's Raiders,²⁵ Enoch asks for, and is given, a gun, but he is not shown at the battle scene. Once again the African American is denied the recognition of fighting for his freedom. Yet the last image is of Enoch, dressed in his Sunday best, riding off to the Quaker Meeting House - integrated and accepted.

Friendly Persuasion was variously praised as a 'drama rich in human values,' a 'fictionalised but believable Americana,' a film that is 'gentle, humorous and poignant,' and 'rarely has there been a more realistic or true-to-life story on the screen.' With these comments, and the film's romantic nostalgia for a golden age of rural simplicity and ideal American family life, it is little wonder that most commentators were taken in by its

superficial charm and the moral dilemma faced by the white Quakers. However the *Los Angeles Times* saw its 'timelessness' in the context of a 'world on the brink of new conflicts.'²⁶ This was the time of the Hungarian uprising and the Suez crisis which brought the two major world powers into confrontation and demonstrated once again how close the Cold War was to disrupting peace - as Mosby's Marauders were to the Birdwell family. Josh, the eldest son, after a struggle with his conscience, sets aside his pacifist beliefs to help to defend the community. When his horse returns alone his father sets out, gun in hand, to find him. Any threat to the American way of life ultimately had to be met. Every citizen, whatever their beliefs, would rally to America's defence. *Friendly Persuasion* is a good example of the intertwining of Cold War and civil rights.

The next year saw miscegenation explored for the first time in a Civil War film within a black/white romantic context. In *Band of Angels* (1957),²⁷ Amantha only learns that she is the daughter of a mixed-race union on the death of her father. She therefore becomes part of the estate and is taken to New Orleans to be sold as a slave. Amantha refuses to accept her new status. 'Nobody's going to keep me from being free' she tells the slave dealer. She is called a 'flower of Kentucky' by the auctioneer, who knows 'for a fact that she has coloured blood but it couldn't be more than a miser's dram' – yet Amantha's mother was African American. Hamish Bond, a wealthy plantation owner, who made his money from illegal slave trading, buys Amantha at the slave auction. She replaces his previous Creole mistress, Michelle, who remains as the housekeeper. Bond seems to have had mainly interracial relationships and in the film is never seen with a white woman. There is also the hint that he is the father of his 'boss Negro' Rau-Ru, whom he rescued as a baby in Africa when Rau-Ru's mother, 'a woman I used to know,' is killed. The PCA was far more concerned with the sex scenes in this film than in *Run of the Arrow*, although the sex is implied rather than shown, and seemed to indicate that this was because of the black/white relationship. It also takes place in the heart of the South during the Civil War and not in the west after the Civil War, as in *Run of the Arrow*. There is an 'unacceptable treatment of illicit sex,' wrote Geoffrey Shurlock 'resulting in a woman, a slave, getting her freedom,' staying on as Bond's mistress and then 'sailing off' with him 'at the end.' It is treated 'romantically,' there are no 'compensating moral values.'²⁸ They were there, but giving slaves freedom was apparently not recognised as a moral value. The *Hollywood Reporter* echoed these sentiments and pointed to the double racial standards when it

reported that the film had ‘already stirred up some excitement and controversy because of the love story – a white man and a part-Negro girl.’²⁹

Band of Angels did challenge the current tensions in race relations through the male African American lead Rau-Ru, the self-assured, articulate and ‘adopted’ son of Hamish Bond. He understands what freedom means – control over one’s own life – otherwise it is ‘a white word’ defined for other races by whites. To Rau-Ru, Bond’s attitude to keeping slaves and treating them with ‘kindness’ is ‘worse than rawhide. When a man uses a whip you learn what there is to fight against. But this kindness – it’s a trap that can hold you in bondage forever.’ Rau-Ru explodes the myth of the benevolent plantation, of the attitude that African Americans can never be the equal of white Americans, that a compliant expression does not imply contentment with slavery – just accommodation until freedom can be achieved. All this comes out with passion and anger while African Americans are still seething over the killing of Emmett Till and are celebrating their success of the Montgomery bus boycott. Strong though this discussion is, its impact is lessened by Hollywood’s caution and compromise, which replaced the complexities and hard realities of the book with romance and an apologia for the South. The illegal slave trade is carried out by Northerners, like Bond, and African chiefs; a former lover of Amantha, a northerner and abolitionist, attempts to blackmail and seduce her; the Union General Butler is accused of ‘confiscating’ the slaves to work on ‘carpetbagging plantations where the Yankees will use the whip and pay no wages’; only one of the plantations that are mentioned, run by a planter of French origin, uses harsh treatment, where every slave is ‘scarred by the whip’; and at the end Rau-Ru is reconciled to Bond and helps him and Amantha to escape. The last scene is of the lonely Rau-Ru waving them goodbye, the loyal servant having helped his master one more time – an echo of Griffith’s *His Trust Fulfilled* (1911).³⁰

A different perspective on miscegenation – one that went to the heart of the South’s racial fears - is presented in *Raintree County* (1957). Where Amantha became stronger in her determination to overcome her new black status, the southern belle Susanna, in *Raintree*, is haunted by the fear that she might have ‘one drop’ of ‘Negro blood.’ This, she declares to her new northern husband, makes ‘a person all Negro.’ It is worse than ‘being an Abolitionist.’ This fear of the mulatto echoes *Birth* where the ‘villains,’ Stoneman’s housekeeper/mistress and Silas Lynch, are both mulattos. The South can deal with the issue of abolition (desegregation) in the mid-1950s, but mixing blood through inter-racial

relationships is racial suicide and the end of white supremacy. Once again the double standards of southern society are exposed. Susanna's father had a black mistress – 'a lady of colour' – although only after her mother 'went insane.' And it did not bother Susanna's cousins to frequent bordellos, which were full of African American and mulatto women. But to a southern white woman, even contemplating the possibility can drive her into madness – as it does to Susanna. The final irony is that it is all in her mind – just as the fears surrounding miscegenation are built on irrational prejudice.

Hollywood adopted its usual caution in exploring the South's racial attitudes in the film. In the book, Ross Lockridge, Jr., made his position clear about his dislike for the South and for slavery. 'The secret of this culture,' he writes, 'white and proud, was that it had all been built over the stinking marsh of human slavery.'³¹ The film, however, continually downplays the issue. The hero, John Wickliff Shawnessy, an abolitionist, marries Susanna, the Southern belle, who has come North with her two African American servants. They honeymoon in the South where John meets Susanna's family and where he can see and confront slavery. At a plantation ball John is asked what he thinks of the South and he replies that he thinks 'so highly of it that I'm worried about all this talk of secession.' He is told that the North should secede, as they are the ones threatening to break the Union. John should stay in the South and help build 'a Greek Republic on the soil of America' with 'pillared houses' in which would dwell 'the most beautiful women.' Like Greece, of course, the Republic would be built on slavery. When John is challenged on the 'wage slavery' of the North he can only reply that he 'doesn't like misery anywhere – North or South.' The discussion then ends and so the opportunity for a full examination of the arguments about slavery is lost. The South is presented as victim. It is the North that is provoking conflict, threatening to destroy a cultured civilisation and interfering in issues that are the preserve of the states. Similarly, O'Meara in *Run of the Arrow* had argued that it was the North that caused the conflict and the South merely reacted to provocation. He then puts forward an extreme states rights position that 'we don't like it (the federal government) making up laws...we never liked it.' Given the South's response to Brown, perhaps this is as far as Hollywood dared to go at the time.

Another example of how the film softens criticism of the South comes when John and Susanna return north. John makes no comment on the continuing status of Susanna's two maids until he is accused of hypocrisy for tolerating slavery in his own home while

campaigning for Lincoln. John's reaction is personal not principled: it is his honour and reputation that is at stake not the principles of freedom and civil rights. 'I just don't want slaves in my house,' he tells Susanna. This is the North closing its eyes to slavery - it is a southern problem. Susanna reluctantly decides to free them and does so publicly at the party held to celebrate Lincoln's election. One of the guests comments sarcastically that now 'we're all sisters under the skin' while another blacks his face and prances about in a white caricature of a slave dance. The situation is set up again for a denunciation of slavery, but instead, John goes upstairs to comfort his wife, who has fled the racist taunts.

Raintree County had been resurrected in 1953 by Dore Schary, a producer who had been associated with the liberal-conscience films of the 1940s.³² He hoped that it could serve the present day cause of the Negro, since the lead male character was an abolitionist.³³ However he was forced out of MGM in 1956 and therefore was not responsible for the final product. Nevertheless, a strong anti-slavery anti-South approach would not have been well received in the South. One reviewer considered the issues that it raised 'more pertinent today than...ten years ago' and wondered whether its pro-North presentation - 'a comparatively rare point of view in pictures' - would 'alienate Southern audiences.' He felt that the treatment was 'temperate and reasonable.'³⁴ In a rare comment on racial matters, the PCA raised concerns over one scene that 'may prove offensive to your audiences in this country, particularly since this gross mockery of the Negroes goes unchallenged' - although it acknowledged that the scene did not violate the Code.³⁵ Hollywood was showing itself sensitive to both the civil rights issues and the needs of the industry.

As part of the Civil War genre *Raintree County* was different. It was strong on reconciliation, but this comes early on with the marriage of John and Susanna. John is seduced by the superficial beauty of Susanna who represents the very different and exotic nature of the South - something that had fascinated northerners for a long time.³⁶ Something that 'to us Yankees,' says John, 'is not too easy to understand.' Like the South, Susanna's dark secret is the darkness of slavery, the darkness that twists logic to allow white men to have relationships with black women but crucifies black men and rejects white women if the reverse were to occur. Susanna's false premise - and the source of her psychological trauma that deepens as the film progresses - that she is the product of miscegenation, is the false premise of white supremacy. She is the uncomprehending voice

of the South asking John, ‘(w)hat’s anyone in the South do to hurt you?’ The South is innocent of any accusations levelled by abolitionists. They have their life style and do not interfere in the North. All they want is the status quo to continue. But the history of the marriage is the history of America, two sections joined together with mutual needs but also with irreconcilable incompatibilities. The war tears them apart. ‘Things can’t get any better between us...it’s nobody’s fault but it’s such a pity,’ says Susanna at the birth of their child just as the Civil War begins. Their child is the hope of the future, North and South combined, but it is born to white North and white South. At the end of the film Susanna recognises that ‘our foundations are too rickety....it just would not work.’ She is the Old South unable to enter the New South. So just as the Old South dies as victim and martyr so Susanna commits suicide – an act that the PCA condemned as ‘glorification’³⁷ – leaving John free to marry his childhood sweetheart. ‘A man should not only marry his beloved,’ says John’s father, ‘he should marry his region.’ This is an ambiguous statement given the abolitionist position of the film. Is it a plea for non-interference and for understanding the other point of view? It appears to question why the war was fought at all. North and South are so different that they should be left alone to work out their own futures. Any attempt to alter the status quo will only end in tragedy. John is more realistic, but also treads the reconciliationist path when he replies to his former Copperhead friend, who now wants to make the South suffer, that the South is ‘no longer rebellious, it’s beaten, it’s bleeding.’ In 1957 it was rebellious, but it was neither beaten nor bleeding.

Raintree County opened in Louisville, Kentucky, in early October 1957, with a build up and premiere that out-rivalled *Gone with the Wind* (GWTW).³⁸ It was the month after the Little Rock crisis when African American children’s attempt to enrol at school created a confrontation between the state of Arkansas and the federal government. Most reviewers were far more concerned with the stars, the story, production, spectacle and cost than with the contemporary events it mirrored. There were one or two mentions of slavery and miscegenation but nothing on civil rights. However the *Motion Picture Daily* did comment that ‘(t)he origins of our national racial consciousness....is given pointed reference in the script which assumes significance in the light of today’s newspaper headlines.’³⁹ The headlines concerned not only the continuing problems of civil rights in Little Rock but the launch of Sputnik. The *Daily* was linking the Cold War firmly with racial upheaval and civil rights. However, despite its initial success as it was rolled out in a series of glittering premieres, the film flagged at the box-office. This was the last film that addressed

black/white relationships, in Civil War films for some years, although Hollywood felt confident enough to produce inter-racial films in other settings with the ‘tragic mulatto’ played by white actresses trying to pass as white – and failing.⁴⁰ Failure meant exclusion from being accepted as part of the nation and the nation was not yet ready to accept the African American. Once again the Civil War demonstrated its unique position in popular culture.

There were two further Civil War films in 1957 that featured African Americans. In *The Guns of Fort Petticoat*, Hetty is a ‘dignified Negro maid’ who is besieged with southern women and children by Native Americans in an abandoned church.⁴¹ Hetty is dutiful and helpful and is treated as an equal by the women. She is an area of calm while other white women are becoming distressed. In *The True Story of Jesse James*, two African American musicians, one of whom is blind, wander through the narrative to provide a linking thread. Although their presence is not germane to the main narrative it provides a symbolic counter-narrative for they survive while the ex-Confederate, Jesse James, does not. After 1957 there were only two other films until 1964 in which African Americans appear – *The Horse Soldiers* (1959) and *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come* (1961). As Hollywood reduced its production of Civil War films it also reduced the number of African American roles just as the major events in the struggle for civil rights and those of the centennial celebrations were taking place.

If Hollywood was taking a cautious approach to inter-racial relationships and civil rights for African Americans in its Civil War films, it continued the change in the representation of the white North and the white South. By 1960 the totally pro-South/anti-North film had ended with a much more balanced view being shown. The pejorative epithet ‘carpetbagger’ was abandoned – the last occasion it was used was in *The True Story of Jesse James*. Southern characters no longer suggested that the war should be forgotten and the new southern hero disappeared. In their place were the southern villain and the new northern hero. However reconciliation still remained the dominant message. These changes in representation were picked up by reviewers, who began to make more liberal and anti-racist comments after 1956 – see Appendix 4, Production Code Administration Files.

One of the last southern hero films is *The Proud Rebel* (1958), a post-war film, in which the Confederate, John Chandler, is determined to avoid any trouble. However, he is

provoked into a fight and has to admit in court that he 'struck the first blow' – albeit under provocation. This is the argument that the North brought against the South that they fired the first shot, and the South that they were provoked into war. Chandler's fine is paid by a northern farmer, Linette Moore, and he goes to work for her. But the sheep farmers who provoked the fight want her land and Chandler and Moore combine to defend it. Yet again the Cold War message that a united America will succeed, and unity is cemented and the future ensured in Hollywood's traditional Civil War ending - North-South reconciliation through marriage. A different twist to the southern hero comes in *Quantrill's Raiders* (1958) which distinguishes the good from the bad southerner. Here the Confederate captain who has come to give Quantrill orders to carry out a raid is so shocked by his attitude that he warns the townspeople and the soldiers and joins them to defend the town of Lawrence. The film ends with North/South reconciliation through marriage and gives positive images of the Union army and the federal government.

The rehabilitation of the northerner can be seen in *Great Day in the Morning* (1956) where the Union captain is contrasted to the northern profiteer. As in *Quantrill's Raiders* the distinction is being made between good and bad northerners – and continues the trend in altering Hollywood's image of the Union soldier in Civil War films. In *Drango*, (1957) a Union major returns to the south as a military governor wanting to make amends for the destruction that the war caused. He has to struggle against malignant hatred and plots by die-hard southerners, but succeeds through his compassion and desire for justice. In *Westbound* (1959) a Union captain is sent to the west to stop Confederate guerrilla raids on gold shipments. He finds that while the townspeople have southern sympathies they dislike their most prominent citizen who has achieved power through illegal means and is also the organiser of the guerrilla raids. After a series of atrocities they combine with the captain to restore law and order.

In the mid-1950s national identity remained white and male and Hollywood, through its portrayal of the individual in the mythical west, promoted this concept. But society was changing. World War II had opened up national identity to previously excluded groups such as the Jews, the Irish and most of the Europeans. However, when the Supreme Court declared that discrimination was unconstitutional, southern conservatives saw this as a threat to their identity as it implied equality with the African Americans. If Jim Crow was to fall, so would their myths and the justification for the southern way of life. With Senator

McCarthy discredited and a more relaxed Production Code, Hollywood was ready to join the debate and challenge existing notions of national identity. The endings of films such as *Run of the Arrow*, *The Searchers* and *Band of Angels* indicated clearly that the future was multi-cultural.

Raintree County was the last film for a decade that attempted to examine the issues of the Civil War, although there were references in other films to Hollywood's change in attitude. A Southerner admits in *Great Day in the Morning* (1956) that 'we got bad ones at home too,' and in *Quantrill's Raiders* (1958) there is the only mention in all these films of the underground railway. Apart from the maid and the groups of African Americans who observe what is going on in *The Horse Soldiers*, they are rarely seen again until 1964.⁴² As Southern reaction to the Civil Rights Movement increased, so Hollywood returned to its more familiar Civil War of southern and northern whites working towards reconciliation and trust in the future. They come together to fight the forces of disruption – the Native Americans and Mexicans - in *The Guns of Fort Petticoat* (1957), the southern guerrilla leader Quantrill in *Quantrill's Raiders* and greedy Northern farmers in *The Proud Rebel* (1958). Hollywood was coming into line with the underlying theme of the Civil War centennial celebrations – unity.

The Centennial: an opportunity avoided, a memory won

To understand the significance of the centennial it is necessary to return to the events and environment of the fiftieth anniversary. The semi-centennial celebrations took place on a wave of patriotic fervour and national unity underpinned by America's growing economic and political strength in the world and its renewed imperial ambitions following the closure of the frontier. To whites, the celebrations were a time of national reconciliation and unity based on the valour of the past and reunion in the present. The causes and consequences of the war were set aside. 'We've got beyond the time,' said President Taft to a gathering of Confederate veterans in 1909, 'when we discuss the war.....what Americans did then we all cherish as a common heritage.'⁴³ Woodrow Wilson, the first Southern president since the Civil War, echoed those sentiments when he came to give the final oration at Gettysburg in July 1913 flanked by the United States and the Confederate flags. Like other speakers he made no mention of slavery or race relations, the causes or the results. It had been a 'brothers' war, he said, the 'battles [were] long past, the quarrel forgotten.' Only the

‘valour [and] manly devotion of the men’ should be remembered. When Wilson returned to Washington he began to segregate government offices and facilities. During that year over seventy African Americans were lynched.⁴⁴

This attitude towards the African Americans could be justified by the ‘scientific’ theories of white, especially Anglo-Saxon, racial superiority. African Americans largely accepted Booker T. Washington’s view that racial reconciliation and advancement could only come by accepting some degree of racial division and through accommodation with the prevailing structures.⁴⁵ When it came to celebrating the semi-centennial there was no clamour for inclusion. National and local celebrations were separate. This was nothing new. African Americans had begun celebrating Emancipation Day (January 1) even before the Civil War had ended and, from the 1880s held regular exhibitions that showed the ‘progress’ of the race.⁴⁶ During the celebrations a number of states, cities and small towns in the north and the south gave financial support for segregated African American events. So confident were southern whites that most of them supported a congressional grant in 1914 for an exposition in Richmond as a way of honouring the ‘loyalty’ of their former slaves during the war. The previous year, the most elaborate African American commemoration, the ‘National Emancipation Exposition,’ had been held in New York with great success.⁴⁷ Hollywood joined in the celebrations by providing films that were in tune with the times. In 1911 the Civil War was also very good for business.

Fifty years later the arrangements for the centennial had a familiar ring. Congress, in 1957, looked forward to celebrating the unity of the nation forged by the ‘greatest internal crisis’ and the ‘supreme experience’ in America’s history. The language used and the sentiments it implied – focusing only upon the war - could have been written fifty years earlier. There was no mention of emancipation but a bold statement that, ‘the sons of both North and South have subsequently fought side by side for human freedom, justice, and the dignity of the individual among people everywhere.’⁴⁸ The irony that many citizens in their own country were denied these very things was entirely overlooked. Positioning America in the Cold War context was far more important.

The semi-centennial was resurrected when the last surviving Civil War veteran, Walter Williams, died in December 1959. President Eisenhower issued a statement on the War Between the States – not the Civil War – observing that the ‘wounds of the deep and bitter

dispute which once divided our nation have long since healed..... the chief actors in that great and tragic drama.....have all passed....No longer are they the Blue and Gray. All rest together as Americans in honored glory.’⁴⁹ This was Gettysburg, 1913, revisited. Race relations, to the establishment, had not moved on. As fifty years previously, freeing four million slaves was incidental and not worth consideration.

The establishment of the Centennial Commission only served to underline this approach. All its members were white and professional. Its racialised nature, and pro-southern leaning, was soon shown when, in February 1958, it agreed to exercise great caution in the selection of African Americans as advisory members.⁵⁰ The first African American was not appointed as an advisor until September 1961.⁵¹ The Cold War, too, was very much in mind with the appointment of Major-General Ulysses S. Grant III - a right wing anti-communist as chairman.⁵² The Commission’s aim was not to foster regionalism or disunity but to reinforce loyalty to the nation threatened from without and within.⁵³ The theme of the celebrations was unity – as it had been in 1911. Then the Progressives felt that the nation was threatened internally by different, and alien, cultural attitudes and by subversive left-wing ideology. They wanted to re-affirm unity as American unity and re-establish national identity along racial lines. In 1961 the Cold War apparently threatened America externally through potential military conflict with the Soviet Union and internally by communist subversion. The unity of the country was essential to meet this challenge. The centennial therefore became a mechanism to reinforce patriotism and unity and to demonstrate to the world how America’s past determined its resolve for the future: America was not a divided nation. But it was – as it had been in 1911. This time, however, African Americans were openly challenging discrimination and the status quo with demands for equality. African Americans had demonstrated their patriotism, unity and commitment to America in World War II: unity for them now meant the unity of inclusion - not the unity to fight an external threat.

Hollywood was faced with a dilemma. While the national theme was to promote unity, the country, and especially the south, was moving in a different direction. The 1954 *Brown* judgement had given a huge boost to the Civil Rights Movement whilst the year-long campaign (1955-6) over integrated transport in Montgomery, Alabama, had shown the power of organised non-violent direct action. Victory had given African Americans a greater belief in their own abilities to overturn Jim Crow, regardless of the taunt of

communism thrown at them. It had also produced a new and charismatic leader in Martin Luther King, Jr. and an organisation – the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) – which could give a degree of co-ordination and moral authority to the cause. However, the white South had responded to the desegregation judgement with increasing hostility and intransigence. Well before the centennial, the symbol of the Confederacy - the ‘Stars and Bars’ – had made a reappearance and was flying on public buildings across the south. State governors and school boards were confronting attempts at school integration with creative legal arrangements, using police and state troopers and encouraging civilian violence. Even Eisenhower was forced to intervene at Little Rock in September 1957 – just before the premier of the much-hyped *Raintree County*. The historian, C. Van Woodward, observing white resistance in 1958, saw, in the approaching centennial, another sectional crisis reminiscent of the previous one.⁵⁴ Whilst there might be a political consensus over anti-communism and the Cold War, there was bitter and violent confrontation over the issue of civil rights.

Civil War films are about conflict between the ‘sections’ and this would pose problems for Hollywood in presenting a story that would not only be acceptable to the audience but would also be profitable. Hollywood would not want the spectacle of the Civil War on the screen to be duplicated outside the theatres. Already many southern theatres were being picketed to abolish segregated seating.⁵⁵ Hollywood was also looking over its financial shoulder as television was attracting the young, increasingly the main stay of cinema audiences, with prime time western series,⁵⁶ while its own post-war mainstay of the Civil War film, the western, was declining in popularity.⁵⁷ Furthermore, the major Civil War films of the mid-1950s, which had taken a more liberal and pro-Northern view, had not done well at the box office and there was no Civil War novel that was as strong as *GWTW* to provide the basis for an epic fit for the centennial.⁵⁸

Yet the centennial was a golden opportunity to cash in on American patriotism, as Hollywood had done fifty years earlier, and to celebrate the event that was increasingly seen as making America a nation.⁵⁹ There were after all similarities with the semi-centennial. America continued to be an imperial power. The nation had come together to resist the subversive nature of communism at home as it had previously come together against the potential radicalism and alien cultures of the new immigrants. The American flag had become an even firmer symbol of patriotism. Jim Crow, whilst under some

pressure, continued to hold. The memory of the Civil War had come to be one of unity, consensus and harmony, honouring the dead of both sides for their heroism and faith in their beliefs, and not division and disunity.

Hollywood had a number of options. A pro-South film would mean a return to the plantation with loyal slaves and the Lost Cause myth – something that Rau-Ru in *Band of Angels* had shown was a fiction. However, such films would also have to stand against the current portrayal of the ‘decadent South’ as Hollywood transferred Tennessee Williams to the screen. In his plays men and women are far removed from the aristocratic planter and the beautiful and supportive Southern belle: the Old South myths were no longer relevant, they had lost their southernness.⁶⁰ A pro-North film could either concentrate on the conflict and avoid the slavery issue, which would have drawn protests from African Americans and liberals, or it could take a more realistic view of slavery and would probably have been boycotted in the South.

A third way was exemplified by the film *The Horse Soldiers* (1959), which presented a more balanced approach. Both sides were seen to be firm in their ideals, to act honourably and heroically; the slaves were treated with southern paternalism and northern compassion; and the film ended with reconciliation and future unity.⁶¹ The Commission welcomed the film as one that fitted its national programme to pay ‘tribute to the memories of our forefathers who took part in the bitter conflict to determine the exact path our national government should follow’ and would ‘provide Americans with a new understanding of the way in which we built from sacrifice and suffering an enduring nation and a lasting peace.’⁶² Reviewers also liked the film. ‘It is in the centennial mood,’ wrote Bosley Crowther, it is ‘reflective of the curious gallantry of that tragic war.’ *Variety* agreed. ‘This is the kind of Civil War that audiences imagine’ capturing the ‘senseless slaughter’ and the ‘tragedy of the fratricidal conflict between the states.’⁶³ This could have been the way forward but the film failed to satisfy the public despite its ‘bending backwards to do justice to both sides.’⁶⁴

Balance in a film may be less appealing than the usual single perspective of events that Hollywood and genre normally provide. The treatment of the African Americans in *The Horse Soldiers* ranges from the Lost Cause myth, that if they are treated fairly whilst still in their slave/servant status, they will support the South’s cause, to the symbol of a multi-

cultural future as a northern military doctor delivers an African American baby. When reprimanded, because he had not attended to the injured Union troops, he replies that 'one's dead, one's going, one's born – an amazing process isn't it.' In other words the future is with the living – whatever race they may be. However, although this is April 1863, there is no mention in the film of emancipation or of African Americans becoming soldiers or any indication that the African Americans have the ability or determination to help themselves to freedom. Except for Lukey, the plantation owner's maid, they are shown as bystanders humbly waiting for the war to end. It all rests on white men's courage and idealism. Lukey, in the faithful slave role, is complicit in all the stratagems that her mistress tries, in order to frustrate the Union mission, and rejects any possibility of gaining her freedom. She does not want to be considered as 'contraband.' In keeping with the tone of white reconciliation, it is Lukey, not Hannah, her mistress, who gets killed and it is Hannah who, at the end of the film, can look forward to the future.

Hannah takes on the role of the South. She is fiercely committed to the southern cause and will do anything to make it succeed. She questions the Union soldiers' principles about 'saving the Union,' calling them 'plundering pirates' who will be 'cut to pieces' when the Confederates catch up with them. However when her attempt to escape fails she is forced to give her 'word of honour' not to try to do it again. The brave and valorous southern approach to war is further celebrated in a 'Pickett's charge' against a well-defended Union position and the attempt by young cadets to halt the Union retreat. At the end, the Confederate general offers his medical staff to help the Union wounded, which mirrored the earlier medical help given to the Confederate wounded. It was indeed a film fit for the centennial, as conceived by the Commission, with bravery, honour, respect and reconciliation between the two white sides.

Hollywood took a fourth way: it severely reduced its interest in, and production of, Civil War films. From 1958 –1963 inclusive, it produced an eclectic list of twelve, barely memorable, films - compared to the average of seven films each year throughout the 1950s. The cycle had not ended because America was at war, but mainly because of the threat that America would be divided at home and divided by the very issue left over from the Civil War – the civil rights of African Americans. This was 1961 not 1911. African Americans were willing to challenge segregation openly and not just through the courts. The lunch counter sit-ins,⁶⁵ the Freedom Rides,⁶⁶ the marches demanding an end to

discrimination, attempts at university and school enrolments and the voter registration campaigns were dramatic assertions of African American activism. They were prepared to brave police brutality and mob violence to win their rights. If Hollywood decided to make Civil War films it would have to compete with the real civil confrontation in the south. However, its decision not to participate meant that the racial issues at the heart of the Civil War conflict would not be discussed through a major cultural medium.

It was not only on the streets that African Americans challenged the established order – the centennial arrangements were contested from the beginning. If the theme of the centennial was to be unity, it appeared that that was still the white unity of fifty years before. The NAACP had sought, in January 1960, for ‘adequate and integrated presentation of the Negro throughout the observance.’ The opening events, however, showed that this had fallen on deaf ears. These included a week-long commemoration of the founding of the Confederacy, a huge centennial ball in Atlanta with a showing of *GWTW*, re-enactments of the bombardment of Fort Sumter and the first Battle of Bull Run, won by the South, and mainly attended by Southerners. Civil Rights activists saw this as no more than perpetuating the Confederate myth, as well as a boost to southern resistance against desegregation.⁶⁷

The insensitivity and unspoken racism of the Commission encouraged protest. Its 1961 annual meeting was to be held in the segregated city of Charleston. The New Jersey delegation contained one African American. She was refused accommodation in the hotel with the rest of her delegation. The Commission refused to act. Finally Kennedy intervened with the offer of the naval base outside Charleston, which was accepted as a satisfactory compromise. The Commission was faced with another boycott when it drew up an all-white list of speakers for the ceremony to commemorate the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. This anniversary had been the subject of a campaign by the NAACP and by the SCLC and supporting white organisations to highlight the unfinished business of the Civil War. The Commission was forced into reorganising the event to make it more racially integrated, but the new arrangements had all the hallmarks of tokenism.⁶⁸

In 1911 Hollywood followed the positive lead of Congress, the White House and popular culture in emphasising unity and reconciliation. In 1961 the same principles were flawed and contested from the beginning. Even a film like *The Horse Soldiers*, which stressed

unity and benefited from the Cold War tension and starred John Wayne, soon flagged at the box office.⁶⁹ When Hollywood looked to Washington for a lead it found ambiguity. Despite his massive endorsement by African American voters, Kennedy's main concern was the Cold War, which was why he expressed deep annoyance at the Freedom Rides campaign. He saw this as an attempt to create a crisis and obtain overseas sympathy and support at a very difficult time in Soviet-American relationships.⁷⁰ Although Kennedy had a majority in Congress he still had to rely on the white southerners, who controlled the key committees.⁷¹ The administration was sensitive to being accused of limiting states' rights if it intervened too often in the civil rights protests and Kennedy did not want to split the Democratic Party by introducing major civil rights legislation. He preferred to rely on executive action, federal court decisions and litigation by the Justice Department.⁷² Unlike President Wilson he did not attend centennial ceremonies.⁷³ He sent his brother to the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation ceremony with a message that accepted that much needed to be done to 'make equal rights a reality for all of our people, to fulfil finally the promises of the Declaration of Independence.'⁷⁴ Nevertheless, it was the events in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1963, that convinced him that legislation was needed. It was, he finally admitted, 'a moral issue,' but it was dictated as much by America's image abroad as it was by internal events.⁷⁵ By that time even ordinary Americans had come to recognise the harm race relations was doing to America as they watched their television news and read reports of violence against civil rights workers and demonstrators in their newspapers. In December 1962 only 4% believed that 'racial problems' were the country's biggest challenge.⁷⁶ In June 1963, 78% agreed that race discrimination harmed the nation abroad.⁷⁷

The linking of Cold War and civil rights continued in the handful of centennial films. In *The Deadly Companions* (1961), the former Confederate, Turk, wants to create his own slave republic with the proceeds of his robberies – a republic where he, and his friends, would be above the law. Once again the threat of secession is raised, and ridiculed. All Turk has is gold. He is one of Alison Graham's unschooled 'redneck' characters and could only 'rule' by a dictatorship of violence and enslavement. Once again there is the implied reference to the authoritarian Soviet Union posing a direct challenge to American democracy. Turk is prevented from carrying out his plan by the democratic forces of law and order.

When the narrator introduces the Civil War section in *How the West Was Won* (1962), he talks about Lincoln pleading that ‘the free West (emphasis added) should be allowed to remain free and warns of the hazards of a house divided against itself.’⁷⁸ This call for freedom and unity paralleled the times. The film opened at the end of 1962 following the Cuban missile crisis in which Kennedy led a united nation ready to defend itself at the same time as the internal conflict over civil rights was creating disunity. The following year *Advance to the Rear* suggested that, negotiated agreements, while not solving conflicts, preserved an armed peace if both sides kept to the terms. In the film, Union and Confederate forces have agreed to fire salvos at specified times, which enabled them to avoid any casualties – a parody of the Cold War ‘balance of terror.’ The Test Ban Treaty of that year showed that military power could be constrained through negotiations and, by analogy, the conflict over civil rights could equally be addressed by positive action and firm commitment by the federal government.

Whilst Hollywood was wary of tackling the issue of slavery it continued its change of emphasis with the northerner as hero and the southerner as villain. In *The Deadly Companions* a Union soldier is pursuing the Confederate who had partially scalped him as he lay wounded on the battlefield. Scalping is an act of savagery that distinguishes the civilised white man from the uncivilised forces – the Native Americans - therefore it places the southerner in the same category. This marked a change as, in 1955, the PCA had written to John Ford forbidding him to allow Ethan, in *The Searchers*, ‘to scalp an Indian’ as it was ‘a savage act.’⁷⁹ Instead Ethan shoots the dead Comanche through his eyes to prevent him entering the spirit land. The other story line in *The Deadly Companions* involves the transport of a child’s body, accidentally shot by the northern hero, across a hostile country to be buried next to his father. In the context of the day the journey can be seen as the North expiating its guilt of not carrying out its promise to the African Americans (the dead child) and in successfully challenging Jim Crow and rebellion by frustrating Turk’s plans of secession and the reintroduction of slavery.

The collapse of the southern code of honour was highlighted in the brief Civil War episode in *How the West Was Won* (1962). In this film a young Texan attempts to shoot at Union generals Grant and Sherman as they discuss the future after the Battle of Shiloh. He is prevented by a Union soldier, who kills him. This was a similar situation to *Run of the*

Arrow. In that film, O'Meara had an opportunity to shoot Grant at Appomattox but lowers his gun as he is told that he would have to shoot the Confederate General Lee as well, as 'the shame will kill him.' Even in the light-hearted *Advance to the Rear* the southern guerrilla leader, Zattig, is described as a 'combination of Quantrill and 'bloody' Bill Anderson.' Zattig acts to his role. After stealing the Union gold he attempts to take it to Mexico rather than hand it over to the Confederacy. In all these films Hollywood took a mild, but pro-North, line

Hollywood reverted to the old conventions of sectional reconciliation, southern paternalism and honour in *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come* (1961),⁸⁰ which opened just before the centennial celebrations and the Freedom Rides. In this film Chad, an orphaned boy, is brought up before the Civil War by (future) Unionist and then Confederate families. When the war comes, Chad chooses to fight for unity. Both of the men closest to him, the Unionist Caleb and the Confederate Major Buford, are killed in the same battle and Chad buries them side by side. There were 'no two better men' he says, and wonders 'why they had to be killed.' After the war he returns to erect a headstone with the words that his ex-Confederate 'father' had said to him before he died: 'every man on both sides was in the right who did his duty.' Hollywood had gone back sixty years to a story written when reconciliation and Jim Crow were at their height, to emphasise the tragedy of the Civil War – of noble, white Americans fighting each other. The ritual hallowing of southern, and American, valour returns when a Confederate flag is taken down and formally returned with the words that 'the Confederate forces have defended your flag with honour.' The film was in tune with the official centennial theme - unity, valour and honour - with no mention of freedom. Nevertheless, it did raise issues of rights and moral choices through the 'prophet' who stands in the market place berating the southerners for declaring that the 'government has robbed them of their rights.'⁸¹ But these rights are white rights, the rights of secession and disunion, not the civil rights of all citizens. Later Chad faces a moral choice when the 'prophet' says to him 'woe to him who calls evil good and good evil. Look into your heart and seek the truth.' It is at this point that Chad realises that he must reject disunion: the unity of the country had to come first. As Kennedy later realised, it ultimately became a moral choice.

The other film that took a reconciliationist approach was *Advance to the Rear*.⁸² The film has elements of the Keystone Cops and the Marx Brothers but while it has fun with the

Civil War scenario, underneath there is a serious intent. Whilst the incompetent Union soldiers muddle through most of the film, in the end they win with American flair and creativity. The Confederates use a sexy spy to seduce information out of the Union officers, but she fails to deliver and falls in love with the northern lieutenant. Meanwhile the pro-southern guerrilla leader proves an untrustworthy and incompetent ally. This parody of war with its anti-war theme questions both the Civil War and the Cold War. This theme is present again in *How the West Was Won* where the Confederate soldier wonders why the west is involved when the war started in the east – the east, in the 1960s is Europe where the Cold War is centred. Seth, the Union soldier, replies that ‘I don’t rightly know....there ain’t much glory looking at a man with his guts hanging out.’ This was the question that the younger New Left historians were beginning to ask in the 1960s: what had been achieved by all the slaughter? ⁸³ A question already asked in *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come*.

Although Hollywood turned away from directly confronting the issues of civil rights and freedom in a Civil War setting, it approached them indirectly, given the Cold War context, in a number of films set in other countries. In the mid-1950s *The Ten Commandments* (1956) and *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957) were concerned with the freeing of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt and with the harsh slave conditions in a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp during World War II. From 1959 Hollywood produced a series of films about liberation and freedom: *Ben Hur* (1959), *Spartacus* (1960), *El Cid* (1961) and *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962). Both the Cold War implications and the civil rights message of these films were obvious - freedom can be achieved by standing up and fighting for one’s rights. There were two other films that looked at the aftermath of slavery (Reconstruction). *Exodus* (1960) traced the journey of Jews from the Nazi concentration camps seeking the ‘Promised Land’ as African Americans thought they had done in 1865, while *Judgement at Nuremburg* (1962) examined the Nazi war crimes. It was only a few years since Kenneth Stampf had published his rebuttal of Ulrich Phillips’s idyllic picture of the plantation in *The Peculiar Institution* (1956) and Stanley Elkins his psychological analysis, *Slavery* (1959), in which he suggested that the slave plantation had the same effect upon the slaves as a Nazi concentration camp had on its prisoners. By analogy, *Judgement at Nuremburg* could imply that the southern slave-owners were on trial.

Hollywood also turned to the other side of the Cold War message – American patriotism. Whilst John Wayne was starring in *The Horse Soldiers* he was also heavily involved in planning his version of *The Alamo* (1960), in which a small group of white Americans fought several thousand Mexican troops in 1836, in their attempt to gain independence from Mexico. Although they are all killed, the message at the end of the film is clear - they are brave Americans defending freedom and justice against a despotic Mexican regime.⁸⁴ (What was not mentioned in the film was that the Americans wanted a restoration of political privileges and slavery, both of which had recently been withdrawn.) Continuing the theme of bringing freedom to those living under repressive regimes was *The Longest Day* (1962) - about the D-Day invasion of Europe. While not directly mentioning the Nazi's racial and anti-civil rights policies and the other restrictions imposed on the conquered Europeans, the audience could infer the ultimate triumph of American values through sacrifice and patriotism.

‘I have seen the promised land’

1963 was the political turning point for the Civil Rights Movement. The success of the campaign in Birmingham led to protests by African Americans across America. By December over three hundred cities had accepted some degree of integration and many had established biracial committees to examine further desegregation. In August, the March on Washington gave the Civil Rights Movement a national platform and the presence of white people and religious leaders from many denominations reinforced the demand for racial integration. Kennedy had already committed himself to civil rights legislation to ‘confront a moral issue.....as old as the scriptures and as clear as the American Constitution... whether all Americans are to be afforded equal rights and equal opportunities.’⁸⁵ The Kennedy administration used every argument from moral outrage to Cold War politics to convince Congress. During his testimony on the Civil Rights Bill, the Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, was questioned about whether he would support civil rights demonstrations. He replied, that ‘(i)f I were denied what our Negro citizens are denied, I would demonstrate.’⁸⁶ Civil Rights was now at the centre of the domestic agenda and Kennedy's assassination was used by Lyndon Johnson not only to push the bill through but also to strengthen it.

1963 was also the year of the last major event of the centennial with the celebration at Gettysburg – where the encounter at the Angle had become ‘the high water mark of the Confederacy.’⁸⁷ Gettysburg, in July 1963, was not the great festival of white reconciliation it had been in 1913, coming after the world had gazed at pictures of children beaten by police in Birmingham and Kennedy’s pledge on civil rights. There were now expressions of regret that so many had died, and yet the promise of civil rights for the African Americans remained uncompleted.⁸⁸ With the memory of the Civil War gradually being appropriated by those who were once excluded and with Kennedy’s death, the growing importance of Vietnam and the centennial ending in Confederate defeat, the celebrations gradually faded away. What was left to the South was their symbol of resistance – the Confederate flag.

By the end of 1963 there was hope that the Civil Rights Movement would achieve its aim but there was still formidable opposition. In Congress the Civil Rights Bill was making little progress. In the South the white backlash continued, with violent incidents increasing support for the more hard line populists like George Wallace of Alabama and a revival of the Ku Klux Klan. The lack of protection given to civil rights workers in their voter registration campaigns in the South by the federal government, despite promises to the contrary, was altering the balance in the Civil Rights Movement from restraint to more assertive protection and political action. The suspicion that the whites could not be trusted grew rapidly. Opinion polls indicated that ‘anti-Negro prejudice is widespread and deeply rooted in the U.S., extending to the vast majority of ordinary, well-meaning Americans.’⁸⁹ Despite détente beginning in Europe, Washington was still concerned with suppressing communism at home and fighting it abroad, and increasingly concerned about the situation in South-East Asia.

Hollywood was now faced with a different scenario. The Lost Cause myth was being dismantled by the continuous challenge of African Americans through non-violent direct action and for appropriate representation in the Commission’s centennial celebrations – the possibility of holding separate events, as African Americans had during the semi-centennial, did not arise. At the same time the political mood of the country was changing. The unfinished business of the Civil War had to be addressed. In contrast to other films, African Americans had been largely excluded from Civil War films as the civil rights protests increased. If the legislation was passed, how would Hollywood respond? What

sort of roles would be available to African Americans? How would slavery be portrayed? In view of the opposition in the south to civil rights, would Civil War films still be profitable there? In the north, the inner city theatres were increasingly patronised by African Americans and other minorities who had moved into the housing vacated by the white flight to the suburbs. Would they accept Civil War movies, which did not take account of the new reality of civil rights and national identity? Or would Hollywood take up the new mood of inclusion?

¹ Martin Luther King Jr.'s, speech, Washington D. C., 28 August, 1963.

² Adam Fairclough, *Better Day Coming: Blacks and Equality, 1890-2000* (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), 221; Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 281.

³ Fairclough, *Better Day Coming*, 223-4.

⁴ Herman Eugene Talmadge, *You and Segregation*, 1955, quoted in Thomas Borstleman, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001) 108.

⁵ Ellen Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 393.

⁶ C. Van Woodward, *The Burden of Southern History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, revised 1968, first published 1960), 11.

⁷ Tom P. Brady, 'Black Monday: Segregation or Amalgamation....America Has Its Choice' quoted in Alison Graham, *Framing the South: Hollywood, Television, and Race During the Civil Rights Struggle* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 18; Gerstle, *American Crucible*, 281. This tract, published in July 1954, became the manifesto of the White Citizens' Councils.

⁸ *Jackson Daily News*, Mississippi, 18 May 1954 quoted by Yasuhiro Katagiri, "Blurring the Color-Line?: Reflections on Interracial and Multiracial America," *49th Parallel – An Interdisciplinary Journal of North American Studies*, 6, (2000/01). Available from: <http://artsweb.bham.ac.uk/49thparallel/backissue6/KATIGIRI.HTM> (accessed 11 July, 2003).

⁹ Brian Henderson, 'The Searchers: An American Dilemma.' *Film Quarterly*, 34 (Winter, 1980/1), 20.

¹⁰ Joel Williamson, *A Rage for Order: Black/White relations in the American South Since Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 268.

¹¹ Harold J Leff and Jerold L. Simmons, *Dame in the Kimono: Hollywood, Censorship and the Production Code* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 194-208, 220, 224-5.

¹² Motion Picture Production Code (1934), II 3.6.

¹³ It is now accepted that Thomas Jefferson sired mulatto children and it has been recently revealed that the champion of segregation, Strom Thurmond, did likewise. *The Guardian Weekend*, 10 January, 2005.

¹⁴ Michael Coyne, *The Crowded Prairie: American National Identity in the Hollywood Western* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 1997), 70; Graham, *Framing the South*, 133-4.

¹⁵ Alan Le May, *The Searchers* (New York: Curtis Publishing Company, 1954).

¹⁶ In the novel Laurie goes further in her hatred, 168-9.

¹⁷ Henderson, 'The Searchers,' 34, 7.

¹⁸ The book suggests that Ethan changes his mind as he rushes through Scar's camp chasing a figure that he thinks is Debbie. It is not. The Native American woman turns round and shoots him, 217.

¹⁹ Henderson, *The Searchers*, 22-3.

²⁰ Written, produced and directed by Sam Fuller.

²¹ Interview with Sam Fuller, reported in the *University of California, Los Angeles, Film Archive*, 1990 (PCA file on *Run of the Arrow*, Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles).

²² In this 1950 film an U.S. army scout brings about peace between the whites and the Apache. He falls in love and marries an Apache woman but she is killed by whites, who are trying to stir up unrest.

²³ Letter from Geoffrey Shurlock to William Feeder at RKO Radio Pictures, 12 April, 1956 (PCA file on *Run of the Arrow*, Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles).

²⁴ Jessamyn West, *The Friendly Persuasion* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1981, first published 1945), 13.

²⁵ John Hunt Morgan commanded the First Kentucky cavalry, which operated as an independent raiding unit under the Confederate High Command. He concentrated on destroying Union communication systems but his men acted more and more like thieves. In July 1863 he crossed into Indiana – not 1862 as the film indicates. Available from: *ehistory.osu.edu* (accessed 5 September, 2005).

²⁶ *Variety*, 26 September, 1956; *Films in Review*, January, 1957; *Chicago American*, 14 October, 1956; *San Francisco Progress*, 7/8 November 1956; *Los Angeles Times*, 31 October, 1956.

²⁷ *Band of Angels* was written by Robert Penn Warren and published in 1955.

²⁸ Letter to Jack Warner, Warner Bros., 15 January, 1957 (PCA file on *Band of Angels*, Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles).

²⁹ *Hollywood Reporter*, 10 July, 1957.

³⁰ In the book Bond is captured and hanged muttering 'All niggers...ass-deep in niggers' as Amantha and Rau-Ru look on. Robert Penn Warren, *Band of Angels* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), 323-4.

³¹ Ross Lockridge Jr., *Raintree County*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1948), 439.

³² Scharly had produced *Crossfire* (1947) and *Intruder in the Dust* (1949).

³³ *Films in Review*, January 1958.

³⁴ James Powers, *The Hollywood Reporter*, 4 October, 1957.

³⁵ Letter from Geoffrey Shurlock to Dore Scharly, 9 July 1956 (PCA file on *Raintree County*, Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles). The exact scene is not identified but presumably relates to the 'blacking up' scene at the election celebration party.

³⁶ This is explored by Nina Silber in Chapter III of her book, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of Carolina Press, 1993).

³⁷ Letter from Geoffrey Shurlock to Dore Scharly, 2 February 1956 (PCA file on *Raintree County*, Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles).

³⁸ *Showmen's Trade Review*, 5 October, 1957; *Motion Picture Chronicle*, 5 October, 1957.

³⁹ *Motion Picture Daily*, 4 October, 1957.

⁴⁰ Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks: An Interpretative History of Blacks in American Films*, New Third Edition (Oxford: Roundhouse, 1994, first published 1973).

⁴¹ *Hollywood Reporter*, 13 March, 1957.

⁴² There is one supporting role in *The Horse Soldiers* (1959) and brief background appearances in *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come* (1961).

⁴³ David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, Harvard University Press, 2001), 357.

⁴⁴ Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 8-11, 390; Fairclough, *Better Day Coming*, 82-3; Nell Irwin Painter, *Standing at Armageddon: The United States 1877-1919* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1987), 279.

⁴⁵ Fairclough, *Better Day Coming*), 63-4; Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 324-8.

⁴⁶ Lincoln was central to these celebrations and the centenary of his birth in 1909 was an early Civil War celebration.

⁴⁷ Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 368-75.

⁴⁸ House Joint Resolution No. 253, 1957, Public Law 85-305; 71 Stat. 628, Eva Maria Brownwall, *Die Amerikaner und ihr Krieg: Analyse der Jahrhundertfeier des Civil War in den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika 1961-1965* (Stuttgart; J.B. Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1978), 141.

⁴⁹ Robert Cook, 'From Shiloh to Selma: The Impact of the Civil War Centennial on the Black Freedom Struggle in the United States, 1961-65', in Brian Ward and Tony Badger (eds.), *The Making of Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement* (London: MacMillan Press Limited, 1996), 134.

⁵⁰ Edward Tabor Linenthal, *Sacred Ground: Americans and their Battlefields* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 98.

⁵¹ Cook, 'From Shiloh to Selma,' 139-40.

⁵² Robert Cook, 'The Historical Significance of the Civil War Centennial,' at a seminar at the University of Oxford, 11 March, 2003.

⁵³ Robert Cook, 'Unfinished Business: African Americans and the Civil War Centennial,' in Susan-Mary Grant and Peter J Parish., (eds.), *Legacy of Disunion: The Enduring Significance of the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 51.

⁵⁴ C. Van Woodward, 'Equality: the Deferred Commitment,' *The American Scholar*, XXVII, (1958), 459-72, reprinted in *The Burden of Southern History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, revised 1968, first published 1960), 86.

⁵⁵ Douglas Gomery, *Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 165.

⁵⁶ Television westerns dominated the evening schedules by the autumn of 1959. James L. Baughman, 'The Weakest Chain and the Strongest Link: The American Broadcasting Company and the Motion Picture Industry, 1955-60,' in Tino Balio, (ed.), *Hollywood in the Age of Television* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Unwin Hyman, Inc., 1990).

⁵⁷ Between 1953 and 1962 the number of westerns declined from 92 (27%) to 11 (9%) of the total of films produced each year. B.F.I.: *Companion to the Western* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1988), p. 47; Michael Coyne, *The Crowded Prairie: American National Identity in the Hollywood Western* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1997), 71.

⁵⁸ *Friendly Persuasion, Band of Angels, Raintree County, Run of the Arrow.*

⁵⁹ Robert Penn Warren, *The Legacy of the Civil War: Meditations on the Centennial* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), 3-4.

⁶⁰ J. T. Kirby, *Media-Made Dixie* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, revised 1986, first published 1978), 96.

⁶¹ The film is based on the 1956 book, *The Horse Soldiers*, by Harold Sinclair, which told the story of the Grierson raid in April 1863. There are no plantations, Southern belles or African Americans in the book. It is a tale of military guerrilla tactics and extreme hardship as the Union troops are pursued for 600 miles.

⁶² Neil Longley York, *Fiction as Fact: The Horse Soldiers and Popular Memory* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2001), 127.

⁶³ *New York Times*, 26 June, 1959; *Variety*, 10 and 12 June, 1959.

⁶⁴ *Variety*, 10 June, 1959.

⁶⁵ In the three years before Greensboro there had been sixteen sit-ins. William T. Martin Riches, *The Civil Rights Movement: Struggle and Resistance* (New York: MacMillan, 1997), 57.

⁶⁶ These were planned by the Congress of Racial Equality to test out the implementation of the 1960 Supreme Court's judgement in *Boynton v. Virginia* that racial segregation was illegal on inter-state buses and trains and in terminals.

⁶⁷ Cook, *From Shiloh to Selma*, 136-7.

⁶⁸ Thomas J. Pressly, *Americans Interpret Their Civil War* (New York: Collier Books, 1962, first published 1954), 8; Cook, *From Shiloh to Selma*, 137-142.

⁶⁹ York, *Fiction as Fact*, 128.

⁷⁰ Manning Marable, *Race, Reform and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction in Black America 1945-90* (New York: MacMillan, 1991), 66.

⁷¹ The Kennedy strategists calculated that fewer than 180 of the 435 members of the House of Representatives would regularly support liberal measures. In the 1961 session only seven out of 23 domestic bills were passed – and none of these were radical measures. Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, *America Divided: The Civil War in the 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 65.

⁷² William H. Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey: America Since World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 307.

⁷³ While Wilson's appearance at Gettysburg has become a significant moment it was a last minute decision. He only stayed long enough to deliver his speech. Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 10-12.

⁷⁴ Cook, *From Shiloh to Selma*, 142.

⁷⁵ Fairclough, *Better Day Coming*, 280; Marable, *Race, Reform and Rebellion*, 73.

⁷⁶ Isserman and Kazin, *America Divided*, 84.

⁷⁷ Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War, Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 187.

⁷⁸ Quotation from Lincoln's Springfield Speech, 17 June, 1858.

⁷⁹ Shurlock to Ford 20 June, 1955. (PCA file on *The Searchers*, Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles). In the book Ethan scalps the Comanche – then throws it away for the wolves to find. Le May, *The Searchers*, 28.

⁸⁰ The film is based on the 1903 best-selling novel of the same name by John Fox Jr. and had been filmed twice before - in 1920 and 1928.

⁸¹ The 'prophet,' in the film, is introduced as Chad's conscience. In the book Chad's moral dilemma about which side to support is discussed in detail.

⁸² The original short story, *Company of Cowards*, was set in Europe in 1944. It was written by William Chamberlain and published in *The Saturday Evening Post*, 10 March, 1956. Jack Schaefer took the idea and wrote a short novel, also called *Company of Cowards*, published in 1957. Schaefer transferred the location to the Civil War. Both of these were serious works addressing the problems that individual soldiers faced in war - self-belief, reasons for fighting and patriotism. Schaefer wrote the screen outline and the script. However while keeping the Civil War location, outwardly the whole tenor of the story was inverted from heroic tragedy to farce.

⁸³ John S. Rosenberg, 'Towards a New Civil War Revisionism,' *American Scholar*, 38 (1969), 250-272.

⁸⁴ Coyne, *The Crowded Prairie*, 105.

⁸⁵ Fairclough, *Better Day Coming*, 274-5, 280.

⁸⁶ Dudziak, *Cold War, Civil Rights*, 183-187.

⁸⁷ Edward Tabor Linenthal, *Sacred Ground: Americans and their Battlefields* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 217.

⁸⁸ Cook, *From Shiloh to Selma*, 143-4.

⁸⁹ Fairclough, *Better Day Coming*, 302.