

Document Citation

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| Title | My darling Clementine |
| Author(s) | |
| Source | <i>Publisher name not available</i> |
| Date | |
| Type | book excerpt |
| Language | English |
| Pagination | |
| No. of Pages | 2 |
| Subjects | |
| Film Subjects | My darling Clementine, Ford, John, 1946 |

for an autograph, and the film cuts to a comically exasperated Ward Bond, hurling his arms and his eyes to the heavens, the martial music blaring all the while. This gag sequencing of shots tends to conceal an apotheosis of the General. The timing of the sequence is really too quick for a lingering laugh, and the young sailor's indiscretion is designed quite obviously to lend a human dimension to a solemnly superhuman occasion. Even before the war was over, however, Douglas MacArthur had acquired a controversial reputation for his glory-seeking personality. His personal courage was questioned with the epithet of 'Dugout Doug', and he later became identified with the most reactionary elements of the Republican Party. Ford's artistic decision to treat MacArthur as if he were Lincoln was therefore politically premature. It was the superficially egalitarian Eisenhower who became the nation's unifying symbol as he went on to dismantle the New Deal in order to return America to the National Association of Manufacturers. By contrast, the majestic MacArthur, for all his strategic acumen, dwindled finally to a failed De Gaulle. Still, Ford could not help admiring the General's patrician style of pride and resistance in the face of a humiliating defeat. But the war was over, and it had become somewhat tasteless to continue glorifying a General who was grandiose to begin with.

Another revealing aspect of *They Were Expendable* is Ford's paternalist treatment of young men. The autograph incident is only the most spectacular example of his association of youth with rash immaturity rather than with idealistic rebellion. In the world of John Ford the young must learn from their elders, and the process is painfully and ridiculously slow. But by the same token, it is the sacred responsibility of the elders to look after the young and to teach them to survive. It is not likely that Ford could ever have accommodated such modishly alienated actors of the Fifties as Montgomery Clift, Marlon Brando and James Dean. It would be all he could do to keep Jeffrey Hunter under control as the wildest of all his semi-juveniles.

Ford's next project after *They Were Expendable* was *My Darling Clementine*, only his second Western in twenty years; and it is significant that Ford's decline in critical esteem tended to coincide with his return to the Old West on a regular basis. In this respect, *My Darling Clementine* is the work more of a poet laureate than of a

poet, a Western for viewers with little interest in the genre. It is a Western also in which the realistic touches outweigh the romantic flourishes, and in which the plot is merely a pretext to document the period. Consequently, the final confrontation of the Earps and Doc Holliday on one side, and the Clantons on the other, seems almost anticlimactic. Ford's leisurely narrative style is at odds with the malignant Manicheism of the revenge plot. Indeed, Walter Brennan's Old Man Clanton was the most evil character in the Ford *oeuvre* until Charles Kemper's Uncle Shiloh Clegg in *Wagonmaster* four years later. Both Old Man Clanton and Uncle Shiloh Clegg live just long enough to see all their grown-up sons gunned down by the avengers of law and order and morality. The respective avengers (Henry Fonda's Wyatt Earp and Ben Johnson's Travis Blue) try to refrain from using firearms, but they are finally roused to action by a senseless murder. In *My Darling Clementine*, it is the revenge murder of an Earp in return for the death of a Clanton which sets up the climactic Gunfight at the O.K. Corral, a historical occurrence previously celebrated on a B-picture budget and against a cheesecloth background in Allan Dwan's 1939 *Frontier Marshal*. By contrast, Ford's staging of the gunfight is three-dimensional, with wind and dust for realistic atmosphere. And it is the Ford movie which caused Wyatt Earp and Doc Holliday to recur so frequently in Westerns of the Fifties and Sixties.

What are most memorable, however, are not the confrontations and the gunfights. In fact, Ford virtually throws away a showdown between Earp and Holliday by shooting it (literally and figuratively) in long shot. Ford's Westerns never depended excessively on the machismo match-ups of quick draws, but rather on the normally neglected intervals between the gun-shots when men received haircuts, courted their sweethearts, and even partook of fragments of frontier culture. Alan Mowbray's Granville Thorndyke, a soused Shakespearian actor, pops up so prominently in *Clementine* that we are reminded once more of a certain degree of self-consciousness in Ford's depiction of his action characters. Ford's people very often seem aware that they are striking a pose for posterity, or having their existence on earth preserved for all time on a daguerreotype. But even as they preen themselves in all their pompous pastness, they scratch around for the nagging necessities of survival. Their clothes itch and their stomachs growl, and time hangs heavy on their hands.



'Fragments of a frontier culture': Alan Mowbray and (below) Henry Fonda and Cathy Downs in *My Darling Clementine*

Hence, Ford's penchant for directing away from the obligatory action climaxes towards the optional Waiting-for-God-knows-what interludes.

It follows that what Ford makes us remember most vividly about Henry Fonda's Wyatt Earp in *Clementine* is not Earp's skill with a gun, but his lack of skill on a dance floor. And not merely Earp's, but Fonda's as well. Ford had been taken with Fonda's jolting awkwardness in the square dance in *The Grapes of Wrath*, and he resolved then and there to exploit the humanizing potential of Fonda's lurch-steps on every possible future occasion. But then of all the red-blooded Hollywood action directors, Ford was always the most enamoured of the dance as the most sacred of all social rituals. The sustained camera movement which follows Henry Fonda's Wyatt Earp round a corner to court his darling Clementine (Cathy Downs) and take her to a dance on the floor of an unfinished church tends to consecrate what is clearly the film's ceremonial high point.

What is odd about this visual convergence of the constricting forces of Civilization, Christianity and Monogamous Virtue is how little regret Ford shows for the doomed anarchic spirit of the Wild West, epitomized in the Clantons and in Linda Darnell's tediously victimized and despised dance hall girl. Ultimately, *My Darling Clementine* suffers grievously from an imbalance between the nice girl of Cathy Downs and the not-so-nice girl of Linda Darnell. For one thing, the iconographic content of the two actresses is out of all proportion to the dramatic content of their roles. The studio seems to have imposed Linda Darnell on Ford to the point of clogging his continuity with mystifying close-ups of Fox's rising star. Fortunately for Miss Darnell's career, she was only a couple of years away from more appreciative directors like Preston Sturges (*Unfaithfully Yours*) and Joseph L. Mankiewicz (*A Letter to Three Wives*). Otherwise, Ford's unsympathetic treatment of her in *My Darling Clementine* is comparable to his grudging toleration of Barbara Stanwyck in *The Plough and the Stars*. Similarly, Ford seemed far less creative in embellishing the romantic role of Victor Mature's Doc Holliday than he was in inventing memorable bits of business for Henry Fonda's Wyatt Earp. All in all, *My Darling Clementine* seems divided against itself as Ford's personal concerns struggle against Fox's more conventional concepts. Ford, poet laureate and all, had not yet completely broken the studio mould, and in the year when American audiences and critics were mesmerized by *The Best Years of our Lives*, *Henry V* and *Open City*, John Ford seemed at best to be very pleasantly marking time with a quaintly old-fashioned genre.