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**THE PSYCHOLOGICAL
WESTERNS OF

ANTHONY MANN**

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fulfilment of the requirements for
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ABSTRACT

The more notable westerns made by Anthony Mann between late 1950-58 have been characterized as “psychological” on the grounds that the westerns are as much concerned with the action which takes place internally within the film’s protagonist (a man usually obsessed with exacting personal revenge) with Mann’s camera acutely capturing his psychological conflicts, as well as devoting itself to core narrative actions which take place in the film. Mann’s scripts are spare; and in the narrative of all of these psychological westerns the hero can be observed proceeding on a journey which is for him both physical and metaphorical. To an extent to which perhaps no other director of westerns has done, Mann uses the variegated landscapes through which his protagonist proceeds in his journey to mirror the effects of the internal changes which are taking place in the protagonist. .

Mann employs an extremely subjective camera throughout much of this narrative with the intention of involving his audience with the protagonist in his progress. Mann’s westerns achieved this identification with the public in the fifties proving enormously successful in box-office statistics. The fact that the seven “psychological” westerns are still readily available (for

purchase) on the Internet suggests that they are still, indeed, very much in the public domain.

Film critics on the Continent (Andre Bazin; Jean Luc Godard; J.P. Missaien; Alberto Morsiani have admired Mann's narrative style which (in contrast to the style of westerns they see as setting out to *teach*), are characterized by them as being refreshingly *pure* (as well as primeval). They have spoken of Mann's being able to capture the tactile sense of his western terrains to the extent that his camera seems to veritably *breathe*.

With English language critics however, Mann's works have never evoked more than half-hearted interest. Indeed, to judge from the total lack of index references to him in recent books of film criticism, interest in Mann's has all but evaporated reputation, which never received more than half-hearted support from most critics, has watered down (if one is to judge by the total lack of index references to him in books of recent film criticism) to the stage of negligibility. Mann's emphasis in his westerns upon a strong storyline and adroit use of a probing camera to align strongly the viewer's interest with the fate of a protagonist whose bearing is usually well adrift from the Hollywood "heroic" mode, may well succeed very well with the public, but much less well with an English language critic who is wary of so much

involvement; whether (such identification of feeling). The rational Anglo-Saxon critic requires, rather, that a western make some kind of statement; whether it be political, sociological or at least in some way ideational in order for it to be a subject warranting a *thoughtful* analysis. The elemental western narratives of Anthony Mann which demand an identification of feeling rather than logic, tend to be either dismissed, or assigned to the “too hard” basket by most English speaking critics. This work attempts to explain this difference in response to Mann’s westerns.

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INTRODUCTION

The late eminent theatre critic, Kenneth Tynan observed that: “the subject of mankind at the end of their tether lies at the heart of all drama.” Mankind at the end of their tether is certainly the subject of a series of westerns directed by Anthony Mann between 1950-1958, the director in his first two westerns seeming to exorcise a moralizing tendency in himself in *The Devil's Doorway* and his expressionistic, film noir tendencies in *The Furies* (both films bring made in 1950) concentrates thereafter his camera, as it were, on the shoulder of the protagonist (all of Mann's subjects have pasts that are too compromised to allow them to be classified as heroes) and invites the audience to follow him on a physical and metaphorical journey he is to undertake. The motivation for the protagonist making these journeys is either ultimately to avoid violence or hurt of his own past or a very deliberate seeking of revenge on his part. The very landscape through which he distances himself from his own violent past, symbolized in one instance by the rope burns on his neck - scars of an unsuccessful lynching - can seem to mirror the conflicting emotions within him as he proceeds to what may be his own or someone else's doom. The harshness of the terrain can be seen to reflect the very steeling of his intentions. The occasional softness of some of the terrain can be seen to mirror his essential humanity as he secretly questions him self as to whether he will, ultimately, be able to bring himself to carry out his revenge against a fellow human.

These movies in which the audience can view the drama's progress in the very face of the protagonist – a face which constantly dominates the film's frame have caused these

films to be characterized as the first “psychological westerns”(Wood, 1998 p32. The first of these westerns *Winchester 73* (1950), in the words of Leonard Maltin, “was largely responsible for renewed popularity of the western in the 1950s.” (Leonard Maltin: *Movie and Video Guide*, 1998, p. 1464).

The actor playing the protagonist of the first five of these films (James Stewart) was to become a millionaire by taking a percentage of the film’s proceeds in place of a salary. However, the fact that Mann’s westerns were made for four studios (Universal, M.G.M, Paramount, and United Artists) renders an assessment of the overall profitability of Mann’s ultimately impossible to determine exactly at this point in time.

However, what *is* readily accessible is a structural study of the western by Will Wright who at the commencement of his study declares that he will discuss only films which have proved themselves to be financially successful in box-office terms. To qualify in his study, a film must have earned \$4,000,000 in box office receipts in U.S.A and Canada. Wright sees each individual western as being a variation, in one form or another, on Western mythology and argues that market forces will ultimately determine those films which most successfully develop the western myth. That this view of Wright’s has some substance in fact is borne out by the evidence that of the 47 westerns between 1950-1972, which he nominates as being financially successful, 45 are reviewed by Ed Buscombe and his collaborators in the *B.F.I. Companion to the Western* (1968) devoted to significant films of the genre.

Wright's figures show that during the fifties, with six westerns over the period of eight years, Mann exceeded the financial criterion of \$4,000,000; a feat which is unique to him in film history. The particular films were: *Winchester 73* (1950), *Bend of the River* (1952), *Naked Spur* (1953), *The Far Country* (1954), *The Man from Laramie* (1956), *Man of the West* (1958).

In the fifties, John Ford, a legendary director of westerns had two films that passed Wright's financial criterion: *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* (1950) and *The Searchers* (1956) while; Howard Hawks, a noted Hollywood director in several genres including western had one of the latter *Rio Bravo* (1959) accomplishing this feat.

But being a popular success can be a far cry from being a success with the cinema's received critics. The Man(n) who so demonstrably captured an audience in his westerns of the fifties, the evocative names of which (*Winchester 73*, *The Far Country*, *Man of the West*, *The Man from Laramie*) are still liable to bring instant images to those who have viewed them, goes all but unrecognized in the more recent books of popular film criticism. For example, Pauline Kael, the recognized doyenne of American film criticism in the most recently available of her collection of reviews; *For Keeps – 30 years at the Movies*, (William Abrahams Books, 1996), while making 14 references to Ford (two thirds of these relating to the westerns of this director) and thirteen references to Howard Hawks, reserves not a single space in her volume's compendious index for Mann. Similarly, in another large and comprehensive selection of her criticism:

5001 Nights at the Movies (Harry Holt & Co, 1991), it is readily apparent that none of her discussions was related to a Mann movie.

An identical situation is to be found in Kael's British counterpart, Dilys Powell's selection of her film reviews made during the years with the English *Observer* magazine: *Fifty Golden Years at the Movies* (Powell: 1989). Though Powell's is a much slenderer volume than either of Kael's collections just referred to, the same pattern of dismissal of Mann without comment and generous references to the films of Ford can be observed within her work's more limited compass. Further investigation reveals contemporary non- recognition of Mann's westerns to be nearly all pervasive. Louis Gianetti in his book: *Masters of the American Cinema* (Gianetti 1981) (multiple copies of which are likely to be held in all universities in which film studies are taught) not only fails to devote a chapter to Mann but neglects to include even an index reference to him. Similarly, James Monaco, critic, and author of several texts which have become required in many University courses on Film Studies, in his *Connoisseur's Guide to the Movies* (Monaco 1985) which contains, essentially, his list of the 1450 films most worth watching, does not find space for a Mann movie, while again, the films of Ford and Hawks are notably featured.

Eleven years after his editorship of the *B.F.I. Companion to the Western*, in editing his: *New Essays on the Western* (ed. Edward Buscombe and Roberta E. Pearson; 1998) Buscombe no longer feels the need to refer to the Mann who helped keep the western

genre alive in the financially precarious fifties. Neither the director's name nor the title of any of his films rates a single mention in this book. In the case of the (evidently) more critically respectable John Ford there exist in Buscombe's book seventy references to Ford since *Stagecoach* (1939), one for every three of the book's 213 pages. It took Ford three times as long to reach Mann's achievement of having five westerns pass the criterion of earning \$4,000,000 at the box office (his successful westerns being *Stagecoach*, (1939), *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* (1949), *The Searchers* (1956), *The Man who shot Liberty Valence*, (1962), *Cheyenne Autumn* (1964). Is Mann to be accounted so much the incomparably lesser artist that his films deserve not even one seventieth of the space accorded to Fords?

However, one popular critic, Stanley Kauffmann who writes drama and film reviews for the American *New Republic* magazine, in a collection of international film criticism: *A World on Film* (Kauffmann, 1966) does mention Mann (with reference to the director's screen adaptation of Erskine Caldwell's novel: *God's Little Acre*) but his discussion hardly counts as a favourable reference as it relates more to Mann's skill (as perceived by Kauffmann) in outfoxing the Georgia censors, than to any skill he might be seen to possess as a director.

Despite the unpropitious evidence which might suggest to the contrary, those who remember the popular Mann westerns will happily find however that critical underpinning for their enthusiasm does exist. In particular, there is in existence a

(solitary) English language biography of Mann by Jeanine Basinger which includes a crucial section entitled "Man(n) of the West". In this chapter the reader is taken on a guided tour of all of Mann's westerns (including some that did not make Wright's list) which includes psychological profiles of all Mann's hero/protagonists as well as expert observations on his use of landscape and camerawork. Throughout her biography, Basinger conveys great enthusiasm for the work of Mann as well as giving evidence of her fine gifts of analysis.

When asked to comment (by the *Cahiers du Cinema* critic J.C. Messaien in 1967) on the comparative critical neglect from which his westerns had suffered in America, Mann responded: "A prophet is not without honor save in his own country".

In this particular case however, Mann might have broadened the observation to include the prophet's own language as well, since almost all English Language critics have been equally as sparing in their praise of him.

In Arthur Miller's legendary play *Death of a Salesman* the play's author has a character describe the play's tragic hero in a phrase that has passed into the contemporary consciousness. It is observed by one of Willy Loman's associates that "he (Willy) is liked, but he's not well liked".

This phrase summarizes English-speaking attitudes to Mann. The appearance of his films in the *B.F.I. Companion to the Western* (1987) which represented Mann as being acknowledged as a popular presence by some film critics, showed that he was *liked*, if

you will. But the failure of his work to receive any acknowledgment in contemporary critical reference seems evident proof that, like Willy Loman, he is not 'well liked'; indeed his westerns do not seem to be held in any present affection or high esteem by American and British critics.

A check with the Internet shows that (by dint of Wright's market forces Mann's films are very much in the *public* domain. His seven "psychological" westerns are displayed as being available (for purchase) in Hi-Fi video format (or in the case of *Winchester 73* DVD, as well) some of the viewers' personal notes in the adverts attesting to the esteem in which his westerns are held. With these films being so readily available it remains at least feasible that some Anglo-Saxon critic might break with his colleagues and champion these films as the masterpieces they are held to be in much of the viewing world.

In international terms, however, an investigation in book form by John Kobal (Kobal; 1988) indicates that among international critics and in terms of film artistry, Mann's westerns should not be underestimated. In his book, Kobal, in attempting to ascertain the names of the world's most critically acclaimed international movies selected eighty critics from around the world as his respondents. He endeavoured, he claims, to strike a balance between youth and age in his respondents but his more primary concern was that the votes should be apportioned according to the number of films produced in the respective countries. Hence the number of critics in English language speaking

countries comprised less than half the number of the total. Each respondent was requested by Kobal to name the ten films they found most outstanding, whether in preferential order (.e. a list in descending order of preference¹ – 10); or as a simple list of ten. His list of English language critics might be as distinguished as one could wish. Among its numbers: Andrew Sarris, Penelope Gilliat, David Robinson, Andrew French, Susan Sontag, Lindsay Anderson, Raymond Durgnat, Derek Malcolm, John Russell Taylor, Leonard Maltin. From the responses of all the critics the results were tabulated by Kobal (with a scoring system which allowed for differential marking between films that were itemized in preferential order by a critic as against being members of a simple list). In the resulting 100 films to emerge from Kobal's study, four were westerns: *Stagecoach*, *My Darling Clementine*, and *The Searchers* by John Ford and *The Far Country* by Anthony Mann.

The results of this survey would have come as no surprise to the film critics of the Continent nor in France particularly where according to the American critic, John Tusk, in *The American West on Film; Critical approaches to the Documentary* (University of Nebraska, 1985) the westerns of Mann are accorded an even higher place than those of either Ford or Howard Hawks. The simplicity of his narrative, the spareness of his scripts, his emphasis upon pictorialness (in the vastly contrasting locations in which his films are shot) have combined to make his westerns veritable cult items on the continent. My thesis is in part an attempt to address the issue of why there should be such a wide, not to say *yawning* disparity between the views of the

Continental critics on Mann and their English language counterparts. I shall here attempt to briefly summarize the differences on which I will dwell with greater length in the main text.

One of the reasons for Mann's westerns being overlooked by the English and American critics seems to lie in the director's refusal to comment on any broader perspective in western history than he feels is warranted by the particular needs of his narrative. In John Ford's *My Darling Clementine* for instance, Wyatt's Earp's dancing with the town's school-teacher-to-be on the floor of a yet uncompleted church is calculated to evoke a sense of the town's burgeoning sense of community; its socialization. In Mann's western *The Far Country*, however, the decision of the gold mining town of Dawson to take a stand against their outlaw presiding "mayor" and their voiced intentions to build as a schoolhouse for their children as well as a church is seen to purely flow from the narrative and is in no way stressed by Mann. The event of their sudden sense of community is sufficiently evident to render any camera movements calculated to convey "a sense of occasion" unnecessary.

Mann's total devotion to the narrative of his westerns at the expense of passing up perhaps countless opportunities to comment upon details in that narrative in terms of issues (whether contemporary or historical) has ultimately damaged his reputation as a "serious" director of westerns. To

Anglo-Saxon critics Mann in his westerns has nothing academically *thought provoking* to say.

Whereas for the English language critics Mann's lack of intellectual reference is his weakest point, with the Continental critics this does not seem to be a point that is at great issue. For them, Mann's westerns, in their total concern for narrative drive are seen to have to have their unique code of self-reference which renders them universally intelligible. In his article: "The Beauty of a Western" ("Cahiers du Cinema" January, 1956) Andre Bazin, the great French theorist on cinema, describes Mann's western narratives as "pure" – i.e. free from extraneous elements. In making this judgment he differentiates them from what he calls the "super westerns" (a term of diminishment on this occasion) *High Noon* and *Shane*.

These westerns are, for Bazin, vitiated by their respective blatant messages: anti-McCarthyism in the first and a retrospective historical judgment in favor of the Wyoming homesteaders (against the open rangers) in the latter.

Continental critics seem to be much better able to identify with the plain narrative which Mann's westerns provide. This identification is only enhanced by Mann's determination towards their total involvement by means of his subjective camera and suggestions of conflict in the film's protagonist by means of the film's very landscapes. Mann's mastery of this (*emotional*)

identification process is seen to work with enormous success for these se critics who, in contradistinction to the English/American critics, find themselves *involved* in the film, rather than feeling it necessary to take the position of watching it from an aesthetically safe distance.

Beyond France, Mann's influence clearly extends into Italy where a biography of Mann, simply entitled *Anthony Mann* (La Nuova Italia; 1986) having been written by the J. P Morsiani. The director Mann is seen to bestride the pages of this book like a veritable colossus – particularly in the section in which his westerns are discussed. The bibliography which forms the closing section of Jeanine Bassinger's English language biography of Mann is characterized by her as "selected". By comparison, the bibliography with which Morsiani concludes his book is compendius, containing as it does references to articles and journals not mentioned elsewhere. Such evidence of research on Morsiani's part would seem to indicate the fact that he is no mere camp follower.

One need only glance at the inside cover of J.P. Messaien's French biography of Mann (*Anthony Mann* ; Paris; Edition Universitaire, 1964) to ascertain that the book forms one of a sequence of eighteen *Classique de Cinema* volumes, each written by a different author. To say that Mann is in good company in being one of the favored eighteen would be to express the mildest of

understatements. Apart from Mann, only four English language directors have been the subjects of biographies in this series: Ford, Chaplin, Hitchcock and Buster Keaton. The names of the remaining directors included seem ample proof of the list's prestigiousness : Vittoria de Sica, Eisenstein, Bresson, Bergman, Rene Clair, Dreyer, Jean Renoir, Antonioni, Sjostrom, Mizogushi, Kurosawa, Bunuel.

In this thesis I shall first examine Mann's general history in Broadway theatre and his early efforts in film – particularly in film noir – leading up to the point in the early 50s when he directed his first western. The particular attention he gave to the scriptwriting process will be investigated as well as his remorseless search for locations where he could effectively (to use his term) “pictorialize” his scenes and thereby render his protagonists' physical and metaphorical journey through them more accessible to the public.

I shall investigate the westerns of Anthony Mann (with particular emphasis on the seven that have been generally characterized as “psychological westerns”). I hope to show that these works are characterized by complexity as well as great symmetry; likely to bear repeated viewings by those who have permitted themselves to be emotionally engaged by them.

Throughout this thesis I make use of some terms which I think deserve a little clarification at the outset. Five questions are probably pre-eminent. Firstly; as

opposed to the average western, what is specifically unique about the westerns made by Mann between 1950-57 that has gained them the tag *psychological*?

(1). Secondly, I note that Mann is commonly held to be an *auteur* by Continental critics as well as some English language critics (Sarris; Wood; Tunks; Kitkes; Andrew). What is denoted by the term *auteur*? (2). Thirdly; I characterize Mann's early work particularly in his films noir and his first two westerns as being highly "expressionistic" in character – what do I mean to convey by this term? (3). Fourthly; what do I specifically mean when I speak of Mann's *subjective* camera? (4). Fifthly; how should the differential frame of reference between an *existential* Continental critic and a rational English language critic be explained? (5). I shall devote a short section to discussing these five questions.

Psychological Western

Raoul Walsh's 1947 western *Pursued* made for Columbia; essentially a revenge western told in flashbacks and described by *Time Out* reviewer Paul Taylor as "a superb western *film noir*" (*Time Out*; ed John Pym; 1990) is frequently referred to in writings on western film as being the first "psychological western". Charles Silver (*The Western Film*; 1976, p 87) makes reference to this earlier film of Walsh's as he discusses the character of Mann's westerns.

It can be argued that the basic thrust of Mann's work grew out of the psychological westerns like Raoul Walsh's "*Pursued*"... (Mann's) hero

is perfectly embodied in James Stewart. Their five films together literally created a new western type, nearly as compelling as John Wayne but possessed of obsessions, doubt and eccentricity.

In his book: *Horizons West: Anthony Mann; Sam Peckinpah ; Bud Boetticher*

– *Studies of Authorship in the Western* Jim Kitkes talks much as if Anthony

Mann made psychological-revenge westerns into a sub genre that was

uniquely his own (indeed as one searches through books devoted to westerns,

apart from Walsh's 1947 film, the term "psychological western" seems to be

specifically reserved only for the Mann westerns made between 1950-1957).

In talking of these revenge-psychological movies Kitkes observes:

"Characteristically the Mann hero is a revenge hero" noting that the revenge

is always dual in character. As well as the physical action which ultimately

takes place between the Mann protagonist and his enemies there is also, in

Kitkes' words:

'The revenge taken (by the protagonist) upon himself; a punishment the meaning of which is a denial of reason and humanity. In general, all Mann's heroes behave as if driven by a vengeance they must inflict on themselves for having once been human; trusting, and therefore vulnerable.'"(Such considerations account for) 'the schizophrenic style of the hero, the violent explosions of passion attended by precarious moments of self reflection.'___Kitkes 1959:43.

Kitkes observes further:

For Mann space was cosmic, the camera ever standing back to place his characters in a continuous and elemental reality, Prometheus chained to their rocks. His contribution (to the western) was... unique, the incantation of his tragic world darkening the genre as no one else has. His neurotic characters and their extraordinary violence were a strange

personal gift to the western, extending its frontiers for both audience and film makers that were to follow. Kitkes remarks on Mann's westerns being generally 'highly modern' (in their) *preoccupation with psychology and violence* (my italics).
_Kitkes; 1959:77.

The critic Robin Wood in his substantial essay on the authorship of Mann (*Cine-Action 46*;1998) describes the revenge-psychological westerns which begin to appear in the early fifties as "adult" in the sense that their action was seen to take place "within the individual's psyche as much as in the overt action of the film. In Wood's opinion Mann's westerns offer "The finest, most fully elaborated example of this development." (*Cine-Action 46*; Summer 1998, p.26).

All seven westerns discussed in this thesis are concerned with a protagonist who is as much in fear of a loss of self control on his own part as he is of his opponent's gun. All these films are characterized by conclusions that are markedly ambivalent; and all deny the hero ultimate catharsis. Although the protagonist always finally gains his revenge, the cost to his essential humanity is shown to be massive – in its exaction he is seen to lose a part of his very self. Whether the passage of time might ameliorate his loss is the question Mann leaves open to the audience at the film's conclusion – at the same time contriving to make it pointedly clear that none of the film's attractive women who are featured in the film's final scene with the

protagonist are in themselves sufficiently adequate to fill the particular void in the hero's psyche which has been laid bare during the film's action.

AUTEUR THEORY

In his book: *The Life and Times of the Western Movie* Jay Hyams heads a short section which he devotes to auteur theory, significantly "Riding Lonesome".

In his words;

The 1950s...saw a new way of looking at films: the French *auteur* ("author") school of criticism, which holds that the director is the sole creative force behind a film. One of the leading exponents of the *auteur* school was Andre Bazin, editor of the *Cahiers du Cinema*, a French magazine devoted to film criticism. Taking their study of films very seriously, these French critics fell in love with a number of American directors of westerns, among them Howard Hawks, Nicholas Ray, Anthony Mann and Bud Boetticher. They analyzed the films and claimed to discern in them the forms of each director's personal style. The *auteur* school has left its marks on film criticism, and it is common today to consider films as the personal statements of their directors. (Joe Hyams; 1983, p.77).

However this *auteur* theory which seems to privilege the director's artistry at some height above the contributions made by the other personnel in the film's making has never been universally accepted by all critics; least of all English language critics. There seem two basic reasons for the dissident critics dislike of this term. It can lead to a situation where certain "received" directors can be perceived (by the auteur school of critics) as possessing a Midas touch which renders their every work, by definition, "significant."

Under the mocking heading “The director Cult” Kenneth Tynan theatre and Film critic observes that a “trivial escapade” like *Man’s Favoutite Sport* (a comedy) is rated a masterpiece by five out of ten reviewers in *Cahiers du Cinema*, for no better reason than that its director, Howard Hawks is one of the magazine’s “pets.” (Tynan; 1967; p.204).

In his article, Tynan addresses what is held as the second flaw perceived by critics of the “director as auteur” theory; namely its tendency to over look the artistic contributions of the rest of the film’s team. After noting that exceptional directors have won a fuller measure of autonomy in the past twenty five years Tynan asserts that “it remains true that the final shape of most pictures is dictated more by the *combined* skills of the writer, the composer, the cameraman; and the director.” (ibid; p 205). The status of the directors is not seen by Tynan to be in any way pre-eminent.¹

Pauline Kael, the noted film critic, in an essay on the auteurist theory entitled “Circles and Sqares”(1985) asserts that auteur critics approach the films of those directors they favour with a “divining rod,” claiming to find what for them are ‘interior meanings’ in works that though subjected to the closest examination but the “unenlightened” are found by them to have none. Kael’s crucial complaint about the auteur critics lies in their inability to make comprehensible to others the particular ‘elan that they have claimed to have

discovered. For Kael, the auteur critics have created a “mystique” which is a “mistake.” (Kael; 1985;pp 541-552).

William Goldman in his article “Auteurs” in his book; *Adventures in the Screen Trade; A Personal View of Hollywood and Screenwriting* (1985), bemoans the auteurist critics’ tendency to overlook the crucial role of the scenarist. Like Tynan, he feels that a film work should be seen as a collaborative effort involving interdependent talents. He strongly affirms the point that over-praise by the auteur critics can have unfortunate effects on artists disengaging them from their true talents; and that whether from uncertainty on their part, or even a slight touch of megalomania, causing them to produce work that is markedly inferior to their earlier more celebrated work. As evidence of this tendency Goldman cites Chaplin’s last film *A Countess from Hong Kong* (1964), and the last five films of Alfred Hitchcock: *Marnie* (1964); *Torn Curtain* (1966); *Topaz* (1969); *Frenzy* (1972) and *Family Plot* (1976). (Goldman; 1985).

Despite the controversy that still surrounds the term, the notion of “auteur” has advanced immeasurably the case for Film Studies to be taken as a serious discipline – one that is concerned with an art form rather than a mere “commodity” This is the view expressed by Pam Cook in the section on “Authorship in Film” in *The Film Book* (ed. Pam Cook; 1995, pp 114-206).

Expressionism.

In *The Oxford Companion to Film*; (ed, Liz-Anne Borden; 1976:265).

expressionism is described as:

A movement in the graphic arts, literature, drama and film which flourished in Germany 1903-33. Its main aim was the external representation of man's inner world, particularly the elements of fear, hatred, love and anxiety.

The entry goes on to observe that the migration of many German film directors (such as Pabst, Lang and Sternberg) who had specialized in the atmospheric qualities of lighting and set design which the expressionist movement encouraged helped to carry such conventions into American films; particularly the gangster films and the horror cycles of the thirties. The article concludes:

Oblique lighting, angular compositions, and menacing objects have continued to be accepted devices in conveying suspense, fear and abnormal mental states.

(Liz-Anne Borden, ed; pp 235-237).

In her "Authorship in Film" section in *The Film Book* Pam Cook cites an early Hitchcock film *Blackmail* (1929) as being a specific example of expressionism. (The extract shows) "an experimental montage editing (cutting shots of the dead man's arm against shots of the heroine's legs as she walks home after the murder, building to the climax of the landlady's scream when she discovers the body) and of the zoom in for dramatic effect. This device

both depicts (the subjects) state of mind and engages the spectator's emotions, a strategy found in much of Hitchcock's work."

(ed, Pam Cook; 1995, p126).

Subjective Camera

When talking of Mann's employment of a "subjective camera" in this thesis I do not mean to imply that Mann was using his camera in ways that were particularly new. Rather, I use the phrase as a shorthand for the French phrase *mise en scene*; a phrase that does not translate easily into English. In *the International Film Encyclopedia* its definition is given as a "French term – literally, the placing of a scene – for the act of staging or directing a play or a film." This bare outline of the term's meaning is then expanded upon:

Derived from the terminology of the theatre, the term has acquired in recent years an additional meaning in its application to the cinema. Andre Bazin , and subsequently other theoreticians and critics have used it to describe a style of directing basically distinct from that known as "montage". (Katz; 1979; p 813).

In Louis Gianetti's book *Masters of the American Cinema* in a chapter devoted to the films of William Wyler (Chapter 8 pp 205-226) the writer provides an illuminating discussion of Bazin's preferences for *mise en scene* over the method of *montage* editing (first developed by the Russian directors Pudovkin and Eisenstein. Bazin saw the montage technique of editing as falsification and as manipulative as the technique allows the viewer no choice in deciding for himself. Because ambiguities are ruthlessly eliminated in the

editing the filmmaker coerces the viewer into seeing his forces juxtapositions as the “truth” rather than the director’s own particular truth.

Bazin felt that classical editing (of the type Mann employed on his films from *Winchester 73* onward) though still far from a realistic presentation, breaks down a unified scene into a certain number of shots that correspond implicitly to the mental process. This technique encourages us to follow the shot sequence without being conscious of it. Gianetti believes that *mise en scene* editing tends to eliminate ambiguities and, to use Bazin’s term “subjectivises” an event because each shot represents what the filmmaker thinks is important and not necessarily what we would think.

Existential Critics.

Existential critics, such as are commonly found on the European Continent are likely to depend on their assessment of a film on their instinctive reaction to its images and ideas; to, as Andre Bazin describes it, its “emotional truth” as it affects the,. English language (rational) critics are less direct in their responses. Rather than instinct, they have a reflex *a priori* net of questions which present themselves to them, and by which they immediately assess the probabilities of the action and images, and weigh them against past representations of similar phenomena. With the existential critics one could say that his consciousness in assessing a movie dealing with a landscape

which is perpetually renewed (deriving as it does from a world of instinctive response). The terrain of the rational critic, filtered by his trusty *a priori* monitor is much more likely to be “tried and true” than “new” with the hope remaining that a new ideational slant will render the terrain more worth *thinking* about.

CHAPTER 1

MANN the MAN

Until the time that he gained employment with the New York Theatre guild in 1933, little is known about Mann's background. Indeed, in her biography of Mann, Jeannine Basinger can only refer to 1907 as being the "probable" date of his birth, with his "probable" birth place being San Diego. His original name was Anton (or Emil) Bundsmann, a surname which he was to ultimately change to Mann (a consequence that was to prove of some confusion to the authors of Hollywood film encyclopedias as during the fifties there were two other notable directors of that same rare surname also working in Hollywood). His parents were known to have both taught philosophy in American colleges (one could speculate that his first interest in the Roman philosopher-Emperor Marcus Aurelius – to be the subject of his second epic of the 1960s might have been stirred by their influence).

Nineteen seventeen is given as the approximate date of the Bundsmann family's move to New York, with 1923 being the year of Anton's leaving school (shortly following the death of his father) to seek work in the theatre. While in New York City (at least from the age of ten) Anton was able to attend Broadway plays. He so enjoyed these experiences that it was his early resolve to become a performer on stage himself, an aspiration which was apparently encouraged by his parents. He made his Broadway debut in a walk-on role and was soon to become an actor in

leading stock companies. Basinger (1979:20) notes that on Broadway the name of “Anton Mann” could be found listed in the cast of *The Dybuck* (1925) and *The Little Clay Cart* (1926).

Mann later interviewed by Claude Chabrol and Charles Bitsch (*Cahiers du Cinema*, May, 1967) indicated that the fledgling actor, who was frequently out of work, put his spare hours to good use. He tells his interviewers how he watched leading New York theatre directors David Belasko, Chester Eskine and Rouben Mamoulian (who was later to become an important Hollywood film director) directing their players, developing their scenes “working the lights” (in Mann’s phrase). Mann observes that after five years of such observations (many of which were made from the theatre wings) he learnt a great deal about theatre craft. Inspired by his observations of watching these theatre icons in action, Mann determined to broaden his abilities in the theatre generally. He tried his hand at every role in the theatre including assistant production manager, stage manager and set designer. In his interview with Chabrol (the substance of which is also recounted in Alberto Morsiani’s Italian biography of Mann) Mann tells how he took time out to become a temporary member of the “Red Barn” Travelling Theatre Co, located on Long Island where he first encountered the actor James Stewart. “Stewart acted for fifty dollars while I directed for twenty five” Mann

observes rather teasingly, giving no details of the play in question.(interview with Claude Chabrol and Charles Bitsch: *Cahiers du Cinéma*; May, 1967).

Both the Chabrol interview and *Basinger's* book concur on the fact that Mann's being appointed to the position of production manager with New York's Theatre Guild, effectively marked the transition from Mann as actor and theatre functionary to Mann the theatre director. Both interview and biography note the moderate success of Mann's first effort at direction *Thunder on the Left* (1933). This was followed by *Cherokee Night* (1936) and *So Proudly We Sail* (1938), - the latter being produced by W.P.A. "Federal Theatre" with both plays enjoying reasonable success with the public.

Mann's minor success on Broadway came to the attention of Hollywood and in 1938 he traveled to California and was hired as a talent scout by producer David O Selznick. From this time his life is more fully documented. As a talent scout he was able to develop what Basinger describes as his "excellent" skill at casting.(Basinger; p.21). More importantly, it gave him his first taste of directing actors on film. Selznick assigned him with the job of directing new talent in screen tests for various productions, including *Gone with the Wind*, *Rebecca* and *Intermezzo*.

in 1937 Mann left Seizick in order to work for Paramount as an assistant director, working for three years in that capacity, serving many eminent directors, among them Preston Sturges. In his interview with Christopher Wicken and Barrie Pattison in *Screen* (October, 1967). Mann tells of his experiences with Sturges and *Sullivan's Travels* (one of this eminent directors most notable works). "He let me go through the whole production watching him direct and I directed a little. I'd stage a scene and he'd tell me how "busy" it was. Then I watched his editing and I was able to gradually build up in knowledge. Preston insisted that I make a film as soon as possible. He said lots of guys stall, and hesitate and falter, and you may never become a director" and Mann concludes: "I think he was right: They'll say: "What have you done?" He said it was better to have done something than to have done nothing, and this was good advice... so the first picture that came along, good or bad, I decided to do."

Mann came to be involved in his first efforts at direction in Paramount's: *Mr Broadway* partly through the efforts of his friend, and the film's male star, McDonald Carey. The script for the film was written by Borden Chase who was to later become one of Hollywood's leading scriptwriters of westerns. As Alberto Morsiani in his Italian biography of Mann recounts, (Morsiani; p29), the film received decidedly mixed reviews from the critics He states that Don Miller in "Focus on Films" described it as a story of gangsters after the style of Damon

Runyon and pronounced it “ a promising work.” But the critic of “Variety” tells us, he found the film’s dialogue “infantile” and the film “directionless,” and comprising a “poverty-stricken production” (which, in financial terms, was an observation that was very close to the mark). Carey’s performance was described as a “blend of Superman with a spastic.” (Morsiani;; 1986:35).

In his interview for “Screen” Mann recounts some of his experiences in the making of this film that can only be seen as extraordinary. In this interview, Mann tells Christopher Wicking that in the middle of his first day of shooting the film’s first sequence (for which he had been allocated three days on a Paramount back lot) one of Paramount studio’s head production men came out and told him “You’re through here by tonight. Mr De Mille wants this set for tomorrow. You’ve got to clear it tonight”. In this same interview Mann claimed: “Nobody else cared a damn about the picture – they said: ‘Don’t build sets. Don’t do anything. You have to be finished in 18 days and if you don’t the camera’s taken from you and OUT’.”(*Screen*; Oct, 1967,p 30-1).

After giving further examples of studio lack of interest in his work, “So that’s how it was....thrown around, pushed,” and indicating, that because he was prepared to put up with such treatment, he perhaps became a “fair” director. To the question of

whether he didn't have greater freedom in a small budget film – was he not left to himself more? Mann almost scoffs “It wasn't a question of leaving me alone – they just said: ‘Get through with it and hurry-don't go over budget’. Mann observed that his supposed “freedom” didn't even extend to his being able to discuss a scene's improvement with his technical staff. “This would take too much time,” Mann adds “and we had no time.”(ibid; p 33).

In her biography of Mann, Basinger notes reasons that Mann had for being frustrated in his work with Paramount, and later in the low budget films he was to make for RKO, Universal and Republic.(Basinger; p.24). She characterizes the type of movies he was making as being B grade projects of two types – musicals and atmospheric thrillers; made with little money, minor stars and having an abbreviated running time of under seventy minutes. They were simply designed to help fill the enormous demand for movies – any kind of movies for escape-hungry audiences in World War II. Basinger claims that Mann's experiences with well-made Broadway plays would have alerted him to the fact that the scripts which he were assigned were, in her words: “lousy”. Not only were the characters cardboard, but the storylines were abstract in their thin development. Basinger observes that the swiftly paced B film counted on an experienced viewing audience being able to fill in the story gaps for themselves, based on knowledge gleaned from more lavish A productions with similar plot lines.

In his interview with Chabrol, Mann reasserts the fact that during the process of making these B films he was aware of having learned his lessons from each of his “rush jobs” and what he had learnt would ensure that he was even more strenuously prepared for the next project. But, he hungered at the time for someone just to confirm that he indeed did have the talent that he was aware he possessed. Mann didn’t hope that he would to be told that he had made a great film but to be told that that his film, to use his own words, “had something.”(Morsiani;1986:33)..

In a chapter in his biography of Mann entitled *Desperate: the second debut* Morsiani details the breakthrough of Mann. The chapter commences with Mann’s observation that being himself “desperate” indeed, he had made his “debut” as a director in making the film *Desperate*. The singular difference which distinguished this movie from all of his previous ones was his sense of control. The film had been made as quickly as his previous efforts but in this instance he had had a hand in the screenplay: he had co-scripted it with Lee Atlas in “a few days”(actually fifteen) (Morsiani; p 37).

Morsiani’s account is consistent with Mann’s response to questions posed by the French critic Jean Claude Missaien in his interview of Mann contained in *Cahiers du Cinema* magazine of May, 1967. To Missaien’s question as to what was particularly special to him about the year 1947, Mann replied that of first

importance was the fact that he had collaborated on a screenplay: he had ultimately directed his own material in making the film *Desperate*. The other two highlights of that year had been for him, making the films *Railroaded* and *T Men*. Having made an impact in *Desperate* the studios had recognized his potential by allowing him better actors (John Ireland in *Railroaded* and Dennis O'Keefe, Alfred Ryder and Wallace Ford in *T Men*) while in the case of *T Men* he had been provided with the services of a very competent photographer (in John Alton) and an experienced scriptwriter (in John Higgins). From the empowerment that working on a script had given Mann, one senses in his subsequent films that there have been few directors who have supervised their shooting scripts more scrupulously than Mann, being aware, as he was of the misfortunes which had plagued his films when he had not been personally involved in either the actual writing process of the script, or the supervision of that process.

With Mann's making of *Desperate*, the film which brought his name to the attention of the film industry, Mann's years as a director of "fill in" films were essentially ended. Mann entered into his period of the film noir (1947-1950) during which time he made a number of films - *Raw Deal*, (1948), *Strange Impersonation*, (1948), *Side Street*, (1949), *Border Incident* (1949) all of which found some measure of critical favour. He was also assigned to a costume picture:

Reign of Terror (1947) concerning the French Revolution and starring Richard Basehart as Robespierre: this film was emphatically not a success with the critics.

When Missaien in his interview with Mann asked him whether his apprenticeship in cop movies and the thriller had been a good influence on the rest of his career Mann replied that it had been a good training ground. "The crudest but the best"; "The maximum of effort with the minimum of means" as he put it, adding "The briefest shot had to be part of the overall signification; the smallest gesture had to describe a character to you." (*Cahiers du Cinema* ; 1967).

Basier observes that by the end of his "film noir" period Mann had acquired a remarkable technical mastery. He had mastered the "film noir" effects of violent swish pans with the camera, off angle compositions and unsettling camera movements that are used to create scenes of substantial impact. She further observes that Mann challenged himself to achieve depth through form and asserts that each film he directed between 1947-50 (the "film noir" period), showed him playing with the technical devices as if they were toys, pushing and stretching his ability to create meaning where none existed.

Mann's basic channel expression is seen to become composition. Mann essentially forced a viewer to confront the characters in the space of the frame and take from

their position and background an understanding of their situation in the narrative. Because the compositions were done with such extreme care, the understanding was not just about the surface level of the story but also the internal psychology of the character.

Basinger observes that the “film noir” tradition itself stressed the darker side of American life and was perfect for Mann’s developing sensibility. It afforded him a wide range of possibilities in using studio work locations. On the one hand, he could photograph realistic locations to look like studio stages, (lit to look as realistic as possible) or the converse. This chance to work in all types of backgrounds prepared the way for his very specific use of backgrounds in the western films that were to come.

Between 1947 and 1950 Basinger notes that Mann also evolved a set of thematic concerns which would recur in all his movies. Where first he stressed psychosis as a means to the end of playing with style, such aberrations became important and useful for their own sake. Mann not only wanted to film his stories but also what he wanted his stories to be about. His own personal world on film emerged, the summation of his form and content in the Mann universe. (ibid; p.24).

Basinger asserts that the heroes in all of Mann's films noir have something to hide. Either they have committed crimes, are escaping from jail or various captors or they are in disguise, like the government agents of *T Men* and *Border Incident*. They are surrounded by 'crazy, violent' haracters and the worlds they inhabit are sleazy, brutal and outside the law. Dialogue is downplayed as a means of explanation for the audience. The stories are simple, dramatic and primarily pictorial. Whatever political or moral issues are presented are either de-emphasized, undermined or localised in the hero's personal world. In even these circumstances, Basinger claims, the audience is aligned with the hero, who is established for them as the centre of the film. Even though he may be weak, criminal or psychotic, the audience is set up to identify with him and his situation. The hero's position in the narrative dictates the emotional situation the audience is also going to experience.

From film noir to Western

In his treatment of the western, Mann utilizes a similar psychological strategy with his protagonists as he had done with the major characters of his film noir works. With these protagonists there is the same concomitant psychological alignment with the audience which springs from a depiction of men who had a secret past

from which they were trying to break free, or at least minimize its detrimental effect on their present lives. Also, men whose desire for revenge on an enemy is seen to be a motivating force behind their every action.

In: *The Tin Star* the protagonist, Morg Hickman, is an ex-sheriff turned bounty hunter.

- In *Bend of the River*, Link McAdam, a former raider on the Missouri border (whose rope burns on his neck bear witness to an attempted lynching of him by an outraged community) is determined in this film's narrative to build a new life and reputation for himself.
- Link Jones, in *The Man of the West* has succeeded in building a new life finds that he has to obliterate his former evil associates along with making his present mode of life a secure one.
- In *The Naked Spur* Howie Kemp has turned bounty hunter in order to recover the money for the ranch which was appropriated from him by his fiancée.
- In *The Far Country* Jeb Websters' self-professed status as a loner (in the hectic times of the Klondike gold rush) nurses a hurt caused by a failed romance and determines never to become involved with society in general

and individual humans in particular again – the “far country” constituting his medium of escape.

- The hero/protagonists of *Winchester 73* and *The Man from Laramie*, Lin McAdam, and Will Lockhart are seen to be bent towards pure revenge; the first on his brother for his murder of their father; Lockhart for the man who sold repeating rifles to an Apache war party who subsequently attacked a travelling infantry regiment, killing his brother.

But if the thematic content of Mann’s film noir works can be seen to carry over into his westerns, his very style of directing these stories can be seen to change rather abruptly.

In moving into westerns Mann was, as it were, moving out from the shadows of film noir where camera trickery and heightened images were the norm, into the broad daylight of a genre which possessed other established conventions. As Basinger points out, the tradition of a stranger with no name who came into town seeking vengeance for an action to which the audience had not been witness, was an established one - it did not need to be spelled out in advance; (Basinger; p. 84). Though Mann was to continue to employ his skill with deep focus photography (seen to notably good effect in the interior scenes of *Winchester 73* (1) and *The Tin Star*) his general cinematic technique, stressing composition within the frame and exploring the possibilities of juxtaposing specific types of landscape to evoke the

protagonist's specific psychological state. In his first two westerns Mann effectively refrained from the practice of employing film noir techniques (the camerawork in *The Furies* (1950) in particular was highly expressionistic; the last of such camerawork that was to be seen in a Mann western. the camera trickery that was seen as necessary to convey a sense of mystery and atmosphere in the shadowy film noir world was largely foregone by Mann as being redundant baggage in favour of the more straightforward narrative drive that the western genre, by its more forward conventions, encouraged.'

Basinger observes Mann's work in westerns as consisting primarily in a simplification and a stripping down of his film noir techniques. The westerns, she says, are far less stylistically baroque than the films of the noir years. But she observes that despite their austerity, these films are equally intense. (ibid; p.77). Western scripts are seen to have afforded Mann the opportunity to tone down his formal experimentation as there was no longer any need to provide depth where none existed (as had been the case in so many of his film noir stories). In his westerns Mann was served by a group of screenwriters whose work contained what he needed and wanted to express visually and formally. Borden Chase who wrote *Winchester 73* (with Robert L. Richards) *Bend of the River*, and *The Far Country*; along with Philip Yordan who co-authored (with Frank Burt) *The Man from Laramie*, Dudley Nichols (*The Tin Star*) and Reginald Rose (*Man of the West*)

provided Mann with taut, spare scripts about powerful events that served his idea for purity and clarity in film.

Basinger goes on to observe that since all the formal elements of a Mann western are unified around a central narrative meaning, a discussion of these elements is in her words: “inevitably redundant.” She observes that Mann’s composition, editing, camera movements, lighting and use of space all served the same ends. For the purposes of analysis however, Basinger treats these elements separately.

Use of landscape

The landscape is seen to both frame and embody action. A character’s position in the narrative (as well as his psychological state) is to be read from his relationship to the landscape. As events occur which change a character’s position in the story, the space he occupies is altered accordingly. Not only does the background change but the character’s position in the frame changes also. These changes demonstrate both the character’s emotional and his inner psychological states. Yet it cannot be said that all there is in a Mann western a direct matching of character to landscape; such as rocks equal bad man; trees equal good man. Tension is created by the constant shifting and revising of backgrounds, so that although a character is defined by his landscape, that landscape is not static. Thus, the logical story form for a Mann western is that of a journey, which enables a changing terrain to unfold naturally, in accordance with characterisation

Mann's landscapes are not those about which one says "How beautiful!" Without their characters, his western spaces look ordinary; meaningless.

It is the character placed *within* the landscape that brings meaning – and its relevance to the settings he chooses.(*ibid*; p.85).

Composition:

By 1950, composition is clearly the basic unit of Mann's style.

Obviously, in the western films, it is through the use of the landscape that this characteristic is demonstrated. As indicated above, the hero's position in the narrative may be read via his compositional position within the frame.

In the vast snow-clad mountains of the Yukon in *The Far Country*, James Stewart, the protagonist who knows that these serene peaks are capable of unleashing fierce avalanches, advocates to Ruth Roman, a saloonkeeper that they make a long detour to the side of the mountains. As he speaks, his head fills almost half the film's frame with a snowy peak filling the remainder. By contrast, the saloonkeeper (who disdains his advice and proceeds without him) is displayed on the screen (from her waist upwards) as if the mountains were towering malevolently over her. (Several days later, an avalanche disperses her wagon train and Roman barely escapes with her life).

Editing:

Since Mann's work is based primarily on composition, rather than editing, cuts occur when the compositional possibilities of a scene have been exhausted. The cut either transfers the same unfolding compositional relationship onto the next scene, or releases it (and thus redefines it) through a violent explosion of cuts.

Relationships are usually established within a shot, rather than across a cut. Cuts are dependent on the requirements of the events unfolding within the frame. Thus, no logical rhythm of shots is developed. Cutting tends to be arrhythmic. Shots are not linked together in a smooth, ordered pattern (which would form an order of its own). Sometimes they are, sometimes they aren't. There is no particular predictability or rhythm to the editing patterns of the Mann westerns. (ibid; p. 86).

Camera Movement

Whether the movement of the camera is functional or dramatic, it serves the same purpose, which is the presentation of the characters in a unified physical, psychological, and emotional world. Often the movement functions to follow the hero through space, not to follow the main action. At other times, it is used dramatically, to reveal sudden dangers that were present in the landscape of which the hero, and thus the audience, were not aware. The main device for this is the swish pan to frame right or left. By rapidly moving the camera through space with the swish pan, Mann illustrates both the violent nature of his world as well as the potential for treachery it contains. This sudden revelation of the larger world,

visually redefines the narrative situation and the character's position in it (and thus, the audience's relation to it).

The camera is moved slowly up or down (with cranes or booms), to provide a larger perspective on the landscape. This method of showing what is above or below the hero's world with camera movements is also a type of redefinition of space.

Lighting

The use of natural sunlight for outdoor sequences creates sequences of great beauty which provide dramatic contrast when violent action takes place in the dappled sunlight of forests. Thus lighting enhances the paradoxes of the story – hero/villain, good/bad, action/repose, safety/danger – and the sense of contrast and conflict. Interior lighting of sets in the western films often follows that of the noir period. (Basinger; p. 87). In *Bend of the River* and *The Naked Spur* Mann renders two violent events – James Stewart's drowning of Arthur Kennedy in the first and the sudden Indian attack on the traveling group in the second; both grimly emphatic and almost totally unexpected by having them seem filtered through the dappled sunshine and shadows cast over them in a benign natural atmosphere.

Use of Space

In his westerns, Mann's use of space expanded to include the entire outdoor western landscape, in a variety of geographical locations. As Mann perfected his style, he mastered the use of the entire world as personal space. The westerns use his real space (with outdoor location), but also artificial space (with sets).

The important thing is that, as the hero's relationship to his space shifts through narrative development, the viewer's look at the space also changes. For Bassinger, the remarkable thing about Mann's westerns is that physical space becomes the equivalent of psychological space. Mann's importance as an artist is linked to the fact that because all of the formal elements in his westerns serve the same purpose, the audience undergoes the same emotional experience as the characters.(ibid; pp 85-90).

Personal History.

Frustratingly, none of the biographies on Mann tells us much about his personal life beyond the fact that he was married twice, with two children being born as a result of his first marriage. In 1931 Mann was married to Mildred Kenyon by whom he had two children, a daughter, and a son. His son Anthony; was to play a key role (as a juvenile) in Mann's 1957 western *The Tin Star*.

In 1956 Mann divorced his first wife. He married his second wife, Sorita Montiel in 1957. She had been the leading female star of his star of his 1956 film *Serenade* in 1957). Their marriage was annulled in 1963.

His personal physical appearance is captured on a photograph located in the first few pages of Basinger's biography where he is seen with a large camera explaining the mysteries of Vistavision to his son at the time of the shooting of *Tin Star*.

We know that apart from the notable exception of his first western, *Devil's Doorway* Mann, in his preference for narrative clarity in his films, endeavoured to stay well clear of what might be called the *issues*, when making films. In actuality, there seems to be no information as to what his politics might have been. About his position on the McCarthy issue, so prevalent in Hollywood in the early fifties, nothing seems to be documented.

In 1950, James Stewart, an old friend who had admired Mann's work in *Devil's Doorway* suggested that Mann be hired to take over the stalled production of *Winchester 73* (originally a Fritz Lang project). Universal Studios duly made the offer to Mann, which he accepted on the basis that the script for this film should be completely rewritten; a stipulation which the studio was willing to observe.

From the various interviews he gave, it is clear that Mann's enthusiasm for the western was largely due to the freedom from studio supervision which outdoor location filming ensured. The only occasion in which a studio producer seems to have crossed Mann in this regard was Edmund Granger the M.G.M. producer of

Cimarron who dictated that the film be shot mainly on studio locations, thereby alienating Mann who insisted that at least 80% of the film should be shot in Oklahoma locations. Indeed, so displeased was Mann with this studio truncated work that he disowned it (a gesture which did not alter the fact that his name, as director, remains on the film's credits). Of all the westerns Mann made, this last film is regarded as being by far his least successful. In his review of this film the *Time Out* critic, Trevor Johnson specifically notes that the producer added material to this film without Mann's consent. The critic's overall view of the film was: "Occasionally spectacular, mostly baggy." (ed. John Pym; 1999, p.156).

Two other incidents suggest that in the latter part of his film career the director was very much his own man.

In 1967 he was listed as director for the western *Night Passage* starring James Stewart but quit the film at the last minute on the grounds that Borden Chase's script was totally unfocussed. In his words "The story was one of such incoherence that I said 'The audience isn't going to understand any of it. But Jimmy (James Stewart) was very set on that film. He had to play an accordion to do a bunch of stunts that actors adore. He didn't care about the script at all; and I abandoned the production.'" (The film was ultimately completed by James Neilson). "The film was nearly a total failure and Jimmy has always held it against me." (Basinger; p30). Mann was never to work with either James Stewart or Borden Chase again.

In 1958 Mann gave up the direction of *Spartacus*, a film epic about an uprising of slave/gladiators during the ascendancy of Julius Caesar in Rome. The film contained a strong script (by Dalton Trumbo), a truly powerhouse cast (among them: Kirk Douglas, Laurence Olivier, Charles Laughton, Jean Simmons, Tony Curtis, John Gavin, Herbert Lom, Charles McGraw), and Mann's initial shooting showed promise. Mann's explanation of his decision to quit: "Kirk Douglas was the producer of *Spartacus* and wanted to insist on the message angle. I thought the message would go over more easily by showing, physically, all the horror of slavery. A film must be visual. Too much dialogue kills it. From then on we disagreed. I left." (Basinger: 1979:p31). Basinger notes that Mann directed all the scenes taking place in the desert and those in the school of gladiator (excepting those with Jean Simmons). She observes that these scenes are "notably done in Mann's compositional style" and describes the scenes as being "markedly superior to many in the remainder of the picture." In an Internet advertisement for the laser disc copy of this film, Mann is credited (with Stanley Kubrick who replaced him) as being co director of this film, which proved a notable success at the box office.

In the years 1961 and 1964 respectively, Mann put to good advantage the experience he had gained from his work on *Spartacus*. In these years working in conjunction with a producer (Samuel Bronston), who respected his independence,

Mann directed two epics: *El Cid* and *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, which were to establish him in the eyes of critics as a master of the film epic. (Robin Wood; *Cine-Action* 46; summer 1988; p.28).

Summary Interview

In 1967, at the age of 60, Mann died of a heart attack during the filming of the espionage thriller *A Dandy in Aspic*. (The film was completed by Laurence Harvey, the film's male lead, substituting as director). The interview which Anthony Mann gave to *Sight and Sound* in its autumn edition of 1965 may thus be one of the last recorded of Mann which is still readily accessible. In this interview Mann is questioned by two English critics, J.H. Fenwick and Jonathan Green-Armitage who in their later summation of the interview make it clear that they are sceptical of Mann's status as a cinema artist, commenting that "James Stewart" (the leading actor in five Mann westerns) "is easily a strong enough actor to hang a film on", while Borden Chase "is probably one of the best writers on westerns there is;" (the strong implication being that any merely competent director could succeed with one of his well-crafted scripts). However, their very scepticism helps to turn this interview (from which excerpts are frequently cited in critical writings)

into a seminal, almost historical document. As not particularly sympathetic critics, these interviewers pose a series of succinct leading questions which prompt Mann into revealing, with great lucidity, the prime motivations and rationale which governed his particular approach to the cinema. The following paragraphs contain excerpts from the interview, with Mann's responses to the questions being word-by-word replies to his interviewers as contained in the *Sight and Sound* text. When asked whether he still held the view that the most important element in a film was its story, Mann replied: "Yes, I would still say the story is primary". As for what he particularly looked for in a story, Mann replied "Probably, most essentially, of "people who start out to do something and do it" adding, "not failure stories. People don't like to see things that are down," observing:

Most people are down anyway. They want to see an achievement so that they could have done it. I mean, Hamlet is the most reluctant hero ever, but if he hadn't killed his uncle, the story wouldn't have been a success. A play like *Macbeth*, a completely defeatist play has never been a popular success. It's the driving force, I think characters, interesting, that people want to participate in. Every time I deviate from this pattern, the film doesn't reach as many people. I've done pictures without this theme – like *The Furies* (Mann's second western; made in 1950). It had marvelous notices but it failed because nobody in it cared about anything – they were all rudderless, rootless, and haters. (*Sight and Sound* ;autumn; 1965,p.186-7)..

Bearing in mind the almost existentially ambivalent endings that characterize almost all of Mann's psychological westerns, the above statement could be viewed as misleadingly bold. Under Mann's direction these later westerns are certainly not

“rudderless” and the protagonist’s goal of revenge, like Hamlet’s, is ultimately achieved. What renders his endings so ambiguous is the sense conveyed of the magnitude of the cost to the protagonist of his achieving his deadly aim - might it not call at least temporarily into question his ability to form meaningful relationships with others? Mann’s endings to his films, far from being “defeatist” are adult. A mature adult film watcher would be likely to look beyond the film’s final situation and would feel insulted if the film’s loose ends were unrealistically tied up for him - something that never happens in a Mann western.

To the question what other qualities he might look for in a film, Mann replied .

Well, a film above everything is visual and therefore if you’re going to tell a story, instead of telling an intellectual story – which of necessity requires a number of words – you should pick one that has great pictorial qualities to start with.

Mann is then asked how much he had to do with the writing. In his reply Mann talks about details of what was to be his penultimate film, *Heroes of Telemark* a story with a basis in fact concerning the Allies attempt to disrupt Germany’s intended nuclear programme towards the end of W.W.II.

Oh, for instance (on the subject of his writing contribution) with this one: *Heroes of Telemark*, we had two books and got a war film from Colin Wilson. Out of these materials we started formulating a story; then we went to Norway and everything for the story was there. I saw all the visual possibilities. I would say that I went to Rjukan and looked at the whole place and picked locations because of the pictorialness of it. You keep elaborating and collaborating and eventually the place brings ideas to you that aren’t in

the scenario. Films above everything else are pictures and you ground them pictorially. I don't believe in talk; not for films. That's for the theatre. Here you see it.(ibid p.188).

At this point Mann is asked a question he has already answered: "Do you like a simple story?" To which he responds briefly; "The simpler and more primitive the better, yes." To the succeeding question as to whether he would ever make a complex story, Mann asserts: "I would fight it. I might eventually find myself involved in a movie that was complicated, but I would fight it."

Mann is then asked whether (specifically relating to his epic *El Cid* or to his film adaptation of Erskine Caldwell's novel *Gods little Acre*) the writing for his film projects gets done only after he has chosen the locations. Mann's answer is in the affirmative.

Mann is then bluntly asked by the interviewers whether he tries to ever bring out the moral issues which might devolve from histories. Mann's answer:

No...not necessarily, I don't...I'm interested in drama and I try to do what is effective dramatically. The juxtaposition of good against evil is of course in every drama; no matter how we slice it, in one form or the other.

Mann is then asked whether his reply to the last question means that he doesn't stress the issues in his films? Mann's reply

Not as moral issues, I'm sorry to say. I don't think so. No I don't think we're here to preach, or moralize – or even socialize; I think we're here to...All I

now is that when I see something *great*; for instance when I saw John Barrymore's Hamlet, probably the greatest Hamlet I've ever seen, and I've seen about fifteen, I came out of that theatre feeling like God. He made me feel and reach heights. *Hamlet* in itself has some moral issues but it's not really a moral play. It's a very immoral play, in fact. But this thrilled me – I soared to places I had never been before and; felt things I had never felt before. This is what I try to do. I don't bring out moral issues. (Ibid : 189).

Mann's response to Barrymore's Hamlet was primarily, if not totally an emotional one; evidently likely to affect him far more than might a sermon directed at him to calculatedly inspire an emotional response, or a political speech tailored to decisively "influence" him. Mann's concern when director of the epic film *Spartacus* was to pictorialize the sufferings of the slaves and gladiators so that these elements could speak to the audiences in themselves. Kirk Douglas, the film's producer, felt, by contrast, that the inhumanity which was so manifestly being visited on the slaves needed to be buttressed by vigorous hectoring delivered by him as slave leader.

That Mann should have been so emotionally overwhelmed by the presentation of Hamlet particularly is itself interesting. For, like the protagonists of Mann's later westerns, Hamlet is more an anti-hero than hero, one who is wholly motivated by self vindication at any cost.

The interviewers remark on the fact that in his last completed film: *The Heroes of Telemark* Mann does most of the location shooting first, and ask if this is always his practice. Mann's reply:

I much prefer to do locations first. Then the actors and everybody else gets the feelings of location and what it does for them: they have to climb a mountain, and they're out of breath and it's not a phoney out-of-breath. They're cold – they wrap themselves with things because they're cold.(Ibid;190).

The interviewers note that Mann composes his landscape and figure sets with extreme care. They ask him whether he has any particular principles in his selection of landscape composition. ∴

It all depends on what you are doing. You look for them, of course, and see what you can see and not all cameramen can feel. You keep on looking and you are always amazed at what you can find. This is the director's art. It's what he sees and nobody else sees it like him, because everyone of us is different and each one of us would see it differently. We see it through our own eyes and through our blood and energies and all our experience. This is the exciting thing; when you are able to capture what you saw on film because you have a great cameraman. Not all cameramen can see what you can see, and not all camera men can capture what you feel.

Mann is then asked by his interviewers whether he has any particular preferences for any camera setups. Mann's reply:

Again it depends on the story you're telling. Wasn't it Lubitsch who said there are a thousand ways to point a camera, but really only one? You can't find it in every shot, that's for sure. If you find it fifty percent of the time you're very lucky; but if you find it then the scene immediately plays. If it doesn't play, it's not only the writing, because writing can be easily changed, but it's the set up of the cameras, that juxtaposition to the actors. This becomes an individual thing, it's a measure of your personality.(ibid p.186-188).

Footnote

1. *Winchester 73* displays Mann employing a particularly effective use of *deep focus photography* during one of this western's interior scenes. An outpost trader is seen playing poker with the owner of a stolen Winchester 73 rifle who is hoping to earn enough from his winnings at the game to buy ammunition for the gun. Outside

the store's window to the extreme rear the threatening face of an Indian (whom we know to be intent on stealing the rifle) is also perceptible. The camera's view is taken from the shoulder of the man playing for ammunition for his gun but with Mann's effective use of deep focus photography, the other two significant points in the film's frame: the eager storekeeper and the threatening Indian (whose faces under normal filming conditions would be at least somewhat blurred for the viewer) are sharply in focus, thereby greatly enhancing the realism of this particular scene.

Chapter 2

AMERICAN CRITICS' VIEWS OF THE WESTERNS OF MANN

In the section of *The Film Book*; (Pam Cook ed, 1985) devoted to "Film Narrative and the Structuralist Controversy" in p223 the critic Robin Wood is identified through his writings in the *Movie* magazine as being responsible for pioneering the auteur movement among British critics. Wood has also been a strong proponent of Mann's work and I shall later examine his recent substantial article on what he considers are Mann's claims to auteurship. (His article "Man(n) of the West(ern)" appeared in *Cine-Action* 46 Summer, 1998.)

Andrew Sarris is the critic who effectively introduced auteur theory to the Hollywood critics and public by the publication of his influential book: *The American Cinema: Directors and Directions* (Sarris; 1968). In the book's chapter "The Far Side of Paradise," Sarris included Anthony Mann in his list of *auteurs*, a list which included a number of talented directors; among them Douglas Sirk, Nicholas Ray, Samuel Fuller and Otto Preminger. About Mann himself, Sarris made a comment of singular interest. He described him as someone "who directed action movies with a kind of tough guy authority that never found favor among the cultivated critics of the medium."

In Geoff Andrew's book *The Film Companion* Andrews pronounces himself a staunch admirer of Mann. In a work that is almost post modern in its deconstruction of directors of the past; in particular the Hollywood directors who made films between the years 1940-65, Mann is one of the few directors to emerge with his reputation unscathed; enhanced in fact. In his entry on Mann Andrew makes the point that although the director worked in a variety of genres

His reputation rests firmly on a series of classic westerns made in the 50's, many starring James Stewart. Their use of landscape, emotional and psychological intensity, and structural complexity signal his contribution to the genre as crucial to its development (Andrew;1989:190).

Later in his entry when talking about Mann's westerns *Bend of the River* and

The Naked Spur, Andrew observes:that

:

In both films, geographical odysseys reflect the hero's spiritual struggles; with landscapes lush or bleakly hostile serving as an elemental symbol of his emotions; only by coming to terms with, rather than repressing, his own violence may he find redemption and exorcise the lethal influence of the past. (Andrew; 1989; pp 190-191).

Andrew here shows an intuitive insight into the excitement that Mann was able to convey to audiences but not to English language critics.

In the preface to her biography of Mann, Jeannine Basinger spells out with considerable emphasis, the reason for the neglect of Mann by English language critics. After proclaiming Mann's achievement in westerns as "one of the greatest

in film” she goes on to observe “ but because its nature is primarily emotional for the audience, it has been overlooked by scholars attuned only to intellectual and sociological achievements in film.” (Bassinger;1979;28).

By rendering his westerns as purely narrative in their form, shorn of intentions of social comment; calculated nostalgia for a bygone age a la Ford; postmodern examinations of the west in its death throes a la Peckinpah: (*The Wild Bunch*; *The Ballad of Cable Hogue*); Penn:(*The Missouri Breaks*, *Little Big Man*); Altman: (*McCabe and Mrs Miller*); intrigues of revisionism a la Fred Perry: (*Doc*); Walter Hill: (*The Long Riders*) Philip Kauffmann: (*The Great Northfield Minnesota Raid*); it would seem that Mann did not provide the critics with requisite intellectual diversion.

It is true that the legendary Wyatt Earp makes an appearance in *Winchester 73* but as played by the actor Will Geer his manner is amusingly avuncular. Earp is revealed as a character totally deficient in the charisma with which his image is only imbued by other leading actors who played him (Burt Lancaster, Henry Fonda et al);. One suspects that his presence in this film could be viewed as a touch of tongue-in cheek (if not downright mischief making) on the part of Mann.

As well as claiming Mann’s westerns lack the intellectual inventiveness that might be calculated to disarm Anglo Saxon critics; Bassinger claims (on p. 20 of her

biography on Mann), the very timing of his westerns (the fifties) can be seen as a principal factor mitigating against them earning him, in Hollywood or Britain the same status as unquestioned *auteur* of his works (as he was so evidently perceived on the Continent). John Ford and Howard Hawks were well established by the fifties, and it would be a bold critic indeed who would suggest that Ford's westerns were unthinkable without Fonda, Wayne, or more latterly Stewart in the leading roles. Whereas with Mann who was not an established director, critics come very close to claiming his westerns as "Stewart" westerns (see summary interview above). Alternatively, no critic would be likely to characterize *Stagecoach* as being a "Dudley Nichols movie" (I am shifting my attention to the screenwriters of the respective films mentioned) or *The Searchers* as being a "Frank Nugent movie" nor Hawks' *Rio Bravo*, *El Dorado*, or *Rio Lobo* as being "Leigh Brackett" movies. The director's name in all these cases holds sway over that of his screenwriters. But in the case of Mann's three westerns in which he employed Borden Chase as scenarist (*Winchester 73* is co-scripted by him, *Bend of the River*, *The Far Country*) this writer is talked of in such auteuristic terms by some critics (Jim Kitses in *Horizons West*; 1969:31) (see as well summary interview above) that one is almost left with the impression that Chase might have directed the respective movies as well as providing the screenplays for them.

David Thomson's article on Mann in his *Biographical Dictionary of Film* (Thomson, 1994) is a typical case of the qualifying imperative that tends to be applied to the westerns of Mann by Anglo-Saxon critics. Thomson follows his first paragraph, in which he speaks favourably of Mann's westerns, with an almost equally long paragraph beginning: "Even so, he (Mann) owed a good deal to his collaborators" whom he proceeds to name at length. In the next paragraph he states: "It's worth stressing these collaborators because, despite my admiration, I'm not sure that Mann was always master of his films. For instance," he later observes, "As a rule Mann does not touch his actors very much", claiming rather that "if they (i.e. the actors) are not well cast" (the suggestion that this might be the case can be seen as an implicit slur on Mann's judgment for a start) "he is prepared to ignore them and withdraw his camera to (rather) observe...moments of combat." (Thomson; p 146-47).

This charge of Thomson's - that Mann does not influence his actors to any particular degree can, on a close viewing of his westerns, be seen to be a statement by him of patent inaccuracy; indeed he may be the only one to hold it. In his discussion of Mann in his book *A-Z of Movie Directors* Ronald Bergan (1979) after observing that Mann's five westerns with James Stewart were "key films of the genre" insists Mann discovered "*a new Stewart* a tougher, more uncompromising Stewart than the drawling charmer of previous pictures" (1979, p.89). In the film

High Noon (1952) – whose chief character was, in any case, the town clock – Gary Cooper was seen to sleepwalk through his part as the town marshal seeming plainly overage for the role. Under Mann's direction six years later in *Man of the West*, Cooper gave a performance of potent virility being involved in what film critic Robin Wood describes as (in terms of its violence) one of the three scenes most painful to watch in modern cinema. The scene involves a fight precipitated by a number of denigrating remarks made by Cooper on the manhood of his cousin Coley (who had organized the strip scene involving Julie London the previous evening). In the titanic fight which follows Cooper rips off Coley's outer garments down to his underwear mockingly enquiring of his combatant what it felt like to be stripped himself. In impotent rage, Coley reaches for his rifle but is gunned down by this uncle, Cobb. (1). As Wood observes "Cooper and his opponent perform with seemingly inexhaustible stamina until one of them (not Cooper) abruptly falls to the floor". (Wood, 1998; p.32). Danny Peary in his book: *Cult Films* (Peary: 1981,226) gives another indication of Cooper's rejuvenation in this film. He observes that Cooper's playing against a father/uncle in this film is credible despite the fact that this father/uncle (Lee J.Cobb), was ten years younger than Cooper.

It is probably true to say that Anthony Mann did not make life easy for himself by neglecting to have a cartel of stock characters like Ford (Victor McLaglen, Ben Johnson, Ward Bond and Harry Carey on the male side, and Vera Miles and

Joanne Dru on the female), Mann, chose in roles other than his male protagonist, to use fresh actors in supporting roles; letting their very “untried” quality render its own surprise.

In this connection, John McIntire’s playing of the Alaskan version of Judge Roy Bean - described as “Dickensian” by Nigel Andrews.-(Andrews; 1989;p,191) is recognized as a major creation, of the kind that this actor has never achieved under any other director. It is hard to imagine that behind the square-jawed detective officer of the T. V. reruns of *Hawaii 50’* lay an actor (Jack Lord) with a superb talent for villainy as uncovered by Anthony Mann in this actor’s playing of Coley in *Man of the West*. Two actors that are better known, Arthur Kennedy and Robert Ryan give in *Bend of the River* and *The Naked Spur* respectively, performances which neither has surpassed, Kennedy astonishing in the smiling duplicity of the friend who so effortlessly turns renegade, while Ryan’s portrayal of the hunted outlaw is the most contemptuously smiling depiction of evil ever recorded on film. The actor Neville Brand is, by definition, an “outlaw” type (1).(described by Ian and Elisabeth Cameron in their book *The Heavies* as being “the best thug in Hollywood.”(Ian and Elisabeth Cameron; 1967; p24) But never has he managed to assume such menace as he does in Mann’s film *The Tin Star*. The very name of his character “Bogardis” is whispered in such appropriately hushed and fearful tones by the townsfolk he holds at bay that it stays in the audience’s memory too. Which

is to say that Neville Brand's performance is memorable indeed. To claim that the above performances (and many besides them) were *untouched* by the director in the films in which they are contained is a patent absurdity. In Ian and Elisabeth Cameron's book *The Heavies*; (previously cited) whereas these writers have included (as memorable villains or shifty secondary characters) actors from all of Mann's psychological westerns: *Man of the West*; Lee J. Cobb; John Dehner: *Man from Laramie*; Alex Nicol, Jack Elam; *The Naked Spur*; Robert Ryan; Ralph Meeker: *Winchester 73*; Dan Duryea: *Bend of the River*; Arthur Kennedy: *The Far Country*; John McIntire; *The Tin Star*; Neville Brand; not one space is reserved in their book for a character-villain performance that is derived from a western directed by John Ford.

Cine-Action 46 (summer 1998; in a feature entitled "The Western Then as Now.") contains a feature article by Robin Wood, the magazine's editor. This article is which is entitled by him "Man(n) of the West(ern) is perhaps the most uncompromisingly written in English on Mann which does not come from Continental sources. This is not excepting the would-be proponent of Mann, Jim Kitses, who in his *Horizons West* fatally undercuts his remarks on Mann by crucially diminishing his westerns generally, and his psychological westerns in particular, by applying to them the epithet "small". If Mann's westerns are to be characterized as "small" it follows that many others are the veritable size of

pygmies. In Mann's *Winchester 73* there is an Indian charge on a cavalry fixed position which for its violent excitement surpasses anything to be seen in the cavalry trilogy of John Ford (*Fort Apache* - 1948, *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* - 1940, *Rio Grande* - 1950) and this comprises only ten minutes of a film which probably contains a greater compendium of western incident than any film ever made. In Mann's *The Tin Star* there is a sequence that deals more eloquently in nine minutes running time with the subject of cowering town officialdom than does Fred Zinnemann's *High Noon* (1952) in 90 minutes (the passing of which is explicitly detailed on the town clock).

That Robin Wood believes auteurship in westerns is a credible base for analysis is very evident in his *Cine-Action* 46 article of summer, 1998. After a preliminary paragraph in which he nominates Mann's film *Man of the West* as being one of the ten greatest westerns of all time, Wood seems to digress from his subject, but in terms of the article's message it can be seen as a calculated digression on his part. The beginning of the next section, announced in bold print is the proclamation: **"L'Auteur est Mort – Vive L'Auteur"** (The Author is Dead – Long live the Author). Wood proceeds to remind the reader of Roland Barthes' (so-called) "Death of the author" and goes on to personally lament "The ink spilled and reputations disestablished" on the strength of Barthes' theory. He observes "many a misguided career and enormous quantities of obfusatory verbiage grew out of

this (denial of auteurship theory) proliferating into a protective forest of impenetrable branches and foliage...in the midst of which the initiated elite could bathe in the bleak cold sunlight of eternal admiration and emulation”(Cine-Action 46; Summer; 32.). After observing that this group’s arguments proved crucial to the development of post-modernism Wood continues: “One hears very little today, of the Author’s demise, s/he has gradually and unobtrusively slipped back in a variety of careful but flimsy disguises, into the general critical/theoretical discourse, though usually without acknowledgement or explicit recognition and definitely without the decency of retraction” (Cine-Action 46; summer, 1998: p32) What is of particular note following this discussion is Wood’s claim that Mann was a consummate *auteur*. The next section of his article is headed, in bold type, simply: **Mann the Author.**

Wood goes on to elucidate the fact that the author that he is here concerned with (in his magazine’s article) is the director of a series of westerns beginning with *Winchester 73* and culminating in *Man of the West*. He observes the author of the earlier (“and very impressive”) films noir and author of the later (“and also very impressive”) epics: *El Cid* (1961) and *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (1964). He states that one can trace through all of these specifiable, recurring characteristics of style and theme that would point to an overall author called Anthony Mann. He points out however, that when an artist shifts into a new genre he becomes,

inevitably, a different author; the characteristics modified, extended by the generic peculiarities. Wood observes that the Shakespeare of the romantic comedies is not the same Shakespeare as the writer of the tragedies, though no one, he suggests, would fail to see close resemblances. Which is to say that Wood affirms one cannot isolate "authorship" from the conventions, narrative patterns and audience expectations through which it is expressed.

To help define the Mann of the westerns, Wood uses the westerns of John Ford as an elementary comparison/contrast. In particular he remarks on their vastly different concerns with landscape, with Ford's typical use of Monument Valley being seen by him as an attempt to ennoble his characters and the action. Mann's emphasis on the characters' physical and metaphorical journey in his westerns means however that his landscapes, rather than seeming picturesque, are areas that are moved through by the characters.

In relation to violence in their films, Wood sees a great deal of difference in the approach of Ford as against Mann. He observes that considering the amount of violence that necessarily occurs in Ford's westerns, the director seems curiously reticent about its effects, seldom lingering on pain inflicted. He observes that in these westerns one might reasonably complain that people in his films die too

easily; the “bad” (especially if they are Indians) simply falling over; the “good” preserving their courage to the end.

Wood observes, by contrast, that Mann consistently emphasizes the effort and horror of killing; the pain of an inflicted wound, the agony of a violent death. Where Ford keeps us at a distance, Mann forces us in close, sparing us as little as the censorship of the day would permit. Wood notes that the most extreme incident (although he allows that it has several rivals) is the deliberate, point blank, shooting of James Stewart’s gun hand in *The Man from Laramie*, the audience’s view being transferred from the gun pressing into the forcibly extended hand, to a close up of Stewart’s face as the gun is fired. Wood observes that in the overall context this “in your face” insistence is placed, balanced, but never cancelled out by the equally characteristic use of long shot, crane shots, depth of field and in *Man of the West*, Mann’s “superb” use of the CinemaScope screen.

Leaving aside the comparison of Mann with Ford, Wood emphasizes the development in the fifties westerns of an internal as well as an external conflict. The struggle in the “psychological westerns” was new, he observes, taking place *within* the protagonist’s individual psyche. In Wood’s opinion Mann’s westerns offer: “the finest, most fully elaborated, example of this development.”(Wood; 1998:32).

Wood, in so unequivocally describing Mann as a cinematic “author” is not unaware of the collaborative argument against authorship that has been raised against the status of more contemporary directors by some (western) critics.

While not trying to underestimate the importance of James Stewart’s contribution to Mann’s westerns, Wood points out that Mann’s most critically distinctive movie *Man of the West* was probably a more powerful film because of Gary Cooper’s involvement in it as protagonist. His view is that the near-hysteria which is at the core of the character played by Cooper, is portrayed (in this film) the more powerfully because, “it is rigorously repressed behind a stony face and clenched teeth.” (Wood;1998:31). (Further, the fact that Henry Fonda’s performance in Mann’s previous western *The Tin Star* did not disappoint is suggested by the fact that he was signed up for a television series: *The Deputy* shortly after the release of Mann’s film – his character being a reworking of the one he had portrayed in that film).

As far as the scripts in Mann’s westerns are concerned, Wood argues that while these scripts may have different writers, for him they all show distinct marks of Mann’s influence. Wood finds it altogether too coincidental that in his “summary” western (*Man of the West*) Mann could have achieved the allegorical quality which he required in the script, of Reginald Rose, with whom he had not previously

worked without there having been substantial input from the director himself. Although Wood is sure in his mind on this point, he admits that he can find no internal evidence to support this theory. The fact though that John Howard Reid in his article: "Mann and his Environment" written for *Films and Filming* (February, 1962) gives details of films made from short stories written by Mann, together with films in which he is billed as a co-scenarist would certainly seem to suggest that Mann was indeed not without considerable writing skills.

Because of the apparent lack of intellectual robustness with which he approached his films, Anthony Mann's westerns were evidently not held in great favour by the (mostly British) genre critics – I shall shortly give an example that illustrates this point. It is important to note however, that the genre critics view (put succinctly; that all westerns have a similar structure and a variations on a single theme) is one that is not shared by all critics. For instance, in his substantial book on the western: *The American Western: Critic Approaches to the Western*, John Tunks admits that for him a survey of the westerns (with a view to a kind of reduction to their structural elements) is for him not a possibility. He has, he claims, seen 8000 westerns and does not think it is possible to generalize about them (Tunks;1988; xlv introduction). In the view of Andre Bazin, the French theorist on film, "A true western does defy criticism"(*Cahiers du Cinema*; Jan 1956; 166); a statement

which in its context implies , for Bazin, denies the categorization and pigeonholing to which the genre critics are ever eager to subject it.

In *Film Genre Reader II* (1995; p.29) Tag Gallagher contributes an essay in which he seeks to expose the wrongheadedness of an octet of western genre theorists (a list including Will Wright) of whom none would seem likely to share even a morsel of Wood's enthusiasm. His article entitled "Shoot-out at the Genre Corral: Problems in the Evolution of the Western" (*Film Genre Reader II*; 1994;p 31-35) shows how criticism of the western has evolved in the privately held beliefs of these men (and, by implication, their disciples) which Gallagher believes has no bearing on the historical development of the western as film. Rather than being thought by them as a structure which is likely to convey excitement to those who observe it, the western is seen by these men to consist of pure form. He quotes Robert Warshow, one of his octet of western genre critics, who describes the western as "an art form for connoisseurs", where "the spectator derives his pleasure from the appreciation of minor variations out of the pre-established order" (R.Warshow: *Movie Chronicle*; p.144). Gallagher's response to Warshow's observation is a querulous "Really?" In summary, he asks whether his pleasure in loving a particular woman consists in nothing more than his appreciation of her minor variations from other women? Whether his enjoyment of a good dish of

pasta is contingent on his appreciating its variations from a dish of chop suey? He concludes that, Thomas Schatz, another of his octet of western genre film critics would see it this way (Schatz being the critic who contributed the section on the western genre in the standard work of genre study *Handbook of American Film Genre*) having declared that “our ultimate goal is to discern a genre film’s quality, its social and aesthetic value. To do this, we will attempt to see its relations to the various systems that inform it.” (Schatz: *Hollywood Genres*;1981:p 37)). Gallagher grants that comparisons and contrasts may aid us in evaluating a film but is compelled to ask, exasperatedly, “What of the thing itself.” To him the possibly illuminating contrasts are ultimately peripheral to the actual work in question.

The Movie Book of the Westerns (edited by Ian Cameron and Douglas Pye; 1996) contains an essay on Mann by Douglas Pye: “The Collapse of Masculinity in the Westerns of Anthony Mann.” In this essay, Pye effectively strips away all of the films’ marks of individuality, their unparalleled narrative drive, and discusses them solely in terms of a construction of masculinity which the writer has obviously defined in his own mind. In terms of this construction, Mann’s protagonists are seen to behave consistently illogically – not at all in the way that would conform to the expectation of many genre theorists. Indeed, by the end of Pye’s article Mann’s protagonists are seen to be in a veritable Jean Paul Satre “No Exit” situation. But if Mann’s westerns can be shown to succeed with the public *on their own terms* ((and

Wright's survey shows this to be the case) Pye's conclusions can be seen to be pointless, probably inaccurate and at the very best, esoteric.

In terms of those cinematographers who he was to use in his western films (and particularly in his "psychological westerns") it is interesting to note that apart from employing the venerable William Daniels on two occasions, Mann used different cinematographers in each of his remaining films: (Irving Glassberg in *Bend of the River*; William Mellor in *The Naked Spur*; Loyal Griggs in *The Tin Star*; Ernest Haller in *Man of the West*; and Charles Lang Jnr and Morris Stodoff in *The Man from Laramie*). The quality of the cinematography in all these films was regarded as almost uniformly excellent by the critics.

In his article "Some Thoughts on my Profession" (in Mast & Cohens: eds *Film Theory & Criticism*: 1984) the renowned cinematographer Nestor Almendros identifies the director as being the key person in a film; observing that it is up to the cinematographer to do his best to understand the director's particular style. He remarks that the film is not seen by him as being "our film" (i.e. the cinematographer's film) but rather "his film" (i.e. the film of the director).

Bearing this observation of Almendros in mind, it seems certainly arguable that Mann should have received more credit for the compositions in these later

westerns than was the case. The opening two minutes and twenty second silent sequence of *The Tin Star* in which the protagonist/bounty hunter (played by Henry Fonda) rides into town with a dead body slung over his horse, disregards the disapproving stares of the townsfolk; locates by sheer force of logic the sheriff's office, then opens this door and finds the sheriff playing with his guns (and fumbling with them) is, an audacious case illustrating Mann's confidence with the camera. As assured as Orson Welles, in fact.

In summary, though Anthony Mann has been accorded the recognition of the English proponent of the auteur theory among British critics; Robin Cook, and as well the recognition of the same status by Andrew Sarris the leading proponent of the auteur theory with the American critics, his career has not been marked by the same upsurge in critical enthusiasm which characterized the careers of other directors who were similarly recognized to have distinctive talent: (Douglas Sirk, Nicholas Ray, Otto Preminger).

Mann's westerns were always popular with a public who instead of being presented with the chivalric cowboy conqueror were offered a "real life" protagonist with whom they could identify, as well as a collection of superbly characterized villains and lesser characters. Add to this the fact that a director (who by comparison with John Ford and Howard Hawks who always filmed on the same

terrain) (2) who filmed in locations spread right across the west from New Mexico to Alaska, not only capturing the aesthetic beauties of these terrains but their very atmosphere; the varieties of which he used to interpret by means of his camera, his protagonist's inner feelings and contradictions; and it is easy to see why Mann's films broke box office records for westerns throughout the 1950s.

Despite their picturesque landscapes, Mann's westerns are not thought by English language critics to have been made by a man in a reflective mood. There is not in their narratives enough that is *thought provoking*, that reflects seriously enough on western traditions and its very historicity: no effort is made by the director to evoke nostalgia for the Old West. On these counts these westerns of Mann's have fallen into critical neglect.

That this has been by no means the case with critics on the Continent is the observation put forward by the western critic John Tuksa. In turning to a discussion of the Continental critic's views on Mann I shall commence with the details of Tuksa's observations.

Footnotes

1. The two other scenes referred to by Wood occur in *Mandingo* dir: Richard Fleischer, 1965; and *Raging Bull* dir Martin Scorsese; 1980.

2 Neville Brand Filmography .Films include: *D.O.A.*(1949) *Where the Sidewalk Ends* (1950). *Halls of Montezuma*, *Only the Valiant* *The Mob* ; 1951 *Red Mountain*, *Kansas City Confidential* 1952 : *Stalag 17*, *The Charge at Feather River*, *Gun Fury* 1953: *Return from the Sea* , *Riot in Cell Block 11* 1954; *The Prodigal*, *Bobby Ware is Missing* 1955: *Mohawk*, *Raw Edge*, *Love Me Tender* 1956: *The Tin Star*, *The Way to the Gold* 1957; *Cry Terror* 1958; *Five Graces to Hell* 1959; *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* 1960; *The Last Sunset*, *The George Raft story* 1961; *The Scarface Mob*, *The Birdman of Alcatraz*, *Hero's Island* 1962; *That Darn Cat* 1965; *Three Guns for Texas* 1968. *The Desperados*, *Backtrack* 1969; *Tora, Tora, Tora* 1970; *Cahill, U.S. Marshall*. *The Mad Bomber*, *The Deadly Trackers*, *Scalawag* 1973; *Psychic Killer* 1975; *Eaten Alive/Death Trap* 1977 *Five Days from Home* 1958; *Seven from Heaven* 1979. 2;
(*International Film Encyclopedia*; ed; Ephraim Katz; 1979:155

3.. The western films of John Ford were filmed by the director in or nearby Monument Valley, Utah.. Hawks' westerns were filmed in and around Tuscon, Arizona.

Chapter 3

CONTINENTAL VIEWS OF THE WESTERNS OF MANN

The American author John Tuksa's substantial book on the western: *The American Western Film: Critical Approaches to the Western* contains a key section which is devoted to western directors. To each of those he deems important, he devotes a separate chapter: John Ford,; Howard Hawks; Raoul Walsh; Sam Peckinpah; Clint Eastwood.

One might think that the chapter devoted to Anthony Mann (Tuksa; pp 85-99) would surprise some of its readers when Tuksa rather dramatically claims: "I can think of no director of western films – including Ford and Hawks – who has inspired such enthusiastic accolades among French critics as Anthony Mann." (Tuksa; p.85). The film critic and theorist Andre Bazin (whose importance in the role of film theory is recognized by Pauline Kael as being second only to that of the American film critic, James Agee) in his essay: "The Evolution of the Western" observes:

each of (Anthony Mann's) films reveals a touching freshness of attitude towards the western, an effortless sincerity to get inside its themes; to bring to life appealing characters and to invent captivating situations (Bazin; 1971; 65).

Tuksa further observes, that Bazin went so far as to insist that: "anyone who wants to know what a western is, and the qualities it presupposes in a director, has to

have seen *The Devil's Doorway* (MGM, 1950) with Robert Taylor, *Bend of the River* (Universal, 1952), and *The Far Country* (Universal, 1954) with James Stewart (Bazin, "Evolution of a Western", 1971). Bazin further observes that if (the viewer) does not know they have simply to witness the finest of all: *The Naked Spur* (M.G.M., 1953). Tuksa concludes by observing that Bazin celebrated:

Mann's natural gift for direct and discreet use of the lyrical and above all his sureness of touch in bringing together man and nature, the feeling of open air which in his films seems to be the very soul of the western (Bazin; 1971:67).

In an earlier article of Bazin's entitled "Beauty of a Western" written for *Cahiers du Cinema* (a French journal of film criticism which Bazin was himself responsible for founding) which comments particularly on Mann's western of 1956: *The Man from Laramie* (Columbia Pictures), Bazin makes an introductory observation about the overly facile way in which westerns are treated by the critics. He expands on this observation:

" It is glaringly obvious that the critics are on slippery ground with a western, and have no firmer intellectual foothold than the sand of psychology or moral argument which the writer might scatter in his path (*Cahiers du Cinema* Jan 1956, p 165).

Bazin states that, in fact,

The true western does defy criticism", its equalities or weaknesses being evident but not demonstrable. They are seen to reside less in the presence of the ingredients that make up a western than in the subtle originality produced by their proportions. Analysis therefore, Bazin concludes: "can yield but a crude enumeration which overlooks the essence which can only be uncovered by taste"(*Cahiers du Cinema*, Jan, 1956 p. 166).

But how is one to make this “taste” the subject of criticism? Bazin goes on to declare that, ultimately, the essential qualities of a western come from its lyricism and that, as far as its *mise-en-scene* is concerned what matters is not that it should sing loud but that it should sing true.” He affirms:

“Anthony Mann has this musical truth, to the highest degree...every one of his westerns that we have seen has been extraordinary” (ibid, p.166).

In talking of Mann’s use of landscape Bazin explicates “this musical truth” in Mann:

“If the landscapes of which Anthony Mann seems fond are sometimes grandiose or wild, they are still on the scale of human feeling or action. Grass is mixed up with rocks, trees with desert, snow with pastures and clouds with the blue of the sky.” This blending is said by Bazin to be like the secret tenderness nature holds for man, “even in the most arduous trials of its seasons.”(ibid; 1956:166).

Whereas in most westerns, even the best ones of Ford, the landscape is presented as an expressionist framework where human trajectories are seen to come to make their mark. By contrast, for Bazin, the landscapes of Anthony Mann are revealed as atmosphere: “Air is not separate from earth and water.” Bazin observes:

“like Cézanne who wanted to paint it, Anthony Mann wants us to *feel* aerial space, not like a geometric container; a vacuum from one horizon to the other, but like the concrete quality of space.” Bazin further observes “when his camera pans, it *breathes*.”(ibid, 1956:166).

Bazin goes on to discuss Mann’s use of CinemaScope which he characterizes as “extraordinary” in that it is never used as a new frame.

“Quite simply, like a fish in a bigger tank, the cowboy is more at home on the wide screen. If he moves across the whole field of vision it just gives us twice as much pleasure to see him for twice as long.”

Bazin continues::

“For Anthony Mann contemplation is indeed the ultimate goal of the western’s *mise-en-scene*. Not that Mann lacks the taste for action and its violence, even its cruelty.” “On the contrary” Bazin observes: “he can make it explode with a dazzling suddenness, but we are well aware that it both shatters peace and aims to restore it, just as the great contemplatives make the best men of action because they at once take the measure of its futility and its necessity. Anthony Mann watches his heroes suffer with tenderness and sympathy. He finds their violence beautiful because it is human; but its dramatic interest is of no interest to him. In *The Man from Laramie* there is a long fight with no winner” (ibid p. 167). Bazin concludes: “Thus from this admirable film there emanates a wisdom of more depth than can be attributed to the organic elements of the genre alone. A kind of virile and tender serenity that is indisputably superior to the more explicit moral lessons of those films which the critics reserve for their favors because they are ‘better than a western’ (ibid p.167).

Jean- Luc Godard, the French film critic who was to become one of the original *New Wave* directors, (establishing himself eventually as one of Europe’s most influential contemporary filmmakers) regards Mann in a similar light. A particular review of *Man of the West* (United Artists, 1958) which appeared in *Cahiers du Cinema* Feb, 1959; has acquired a near legendary status. The piece’s very title: “SuperMann” indicates that its contents are to be highly laudatory.

Godard, in this piece, after detailing the film’s plot, observing how Mann’s two previous films (*The Man from Laramie* and *The Tin Star*) have seen him stripping away what seemed to him inessential, peripheral elements in a western, debates

with himself how he should characterize *Man of the West*. "Conrad with a certain touch of Simenon?" But, he dismisses this comment as being an over-facile description. Then he clears his throat, as it were, and goes on to say, remarkably, that he has not seen anything like the style of this film since ("Why not admit it") D.W. Griffith. He says that in the same way that the legendary director of *Birth of a Nation* gave to each scene the impetus and impression of inventing the cinema:

Each scene of *Man of the West* gives the impression that Anthony Mann is reinventing the western; as one would say the brush of Matisse would on a portrait of Piero Della Francesca...and besides, it is better than an impression. I repeat that he *reinvents*; or, to put it differently, innovates at the same time as copying; the western is both course and discourse; beautiful landscapes and the explanation of this beauty; both the mystery of firearms and the secret of this mystery; the art at the same time as the theory of art...that is to say, in the genre that is the most cinematographic of all - *Man of the West* is quite simply an admirable lesson in cinema - in modern cinema." (*Cahiers du Cinema*; February, 1959).

Godard observes that while John Ford's western *The Searchers* is notable for its images and while Fritz Lang's *Rancho Notorious* is notable for its (Brechtian) ideas; *Man of the West* has a superabundance of both qualities.

The first scene of Mann's picture about which Godard comments is that in which the villain, Jack Lord, with his knife at Gary Cooper's throat forces Julie London to strip in front of him. Godard observes that although she only undresses to her chemise, with Mann's mastery of the camera as well as psychology, it seems to the spectator that she veritably strips to the skin.

Godard continues:

With Anthony Mann, we rediscover the western like arithmetic in a class of elementary mathematics. Which is to say that *Man of the West* is the most intelligent of films and at the same time one of the simplest. The originality of Anthony Mann is to know how to enrich all elements of the western with extreme simplicity.

Referring to the ghost town of Lassoo, Godard sees the town's desolation eloquently mirrored in the desolated features of Gary Cooper. Godard remarks: "the passive face of Cooper belongs in *Man of the West* as the equivalent of the surviving mineral." (Godard; 1959; pp 48-50).

J.P. Missaien, the critic who wrote the French biography of Mann which appears in the "Classiques du Cinema" French series, before discussing the westerns of Mann individually, in chronological order, makes the following general statement about Mann's westerns:

If one were to say that the films of Anthony Mann have a value exactly proportionate to the beauty of their countrysides, that does not mean that their charm is all decorative – rather that the author finds the source of his most sure inspiration - the field of his objective in the elements of nature." (*Anthony Mann*; p.26-27).

Employing a relatively simple and linear structure he maps it out on the paper and realizes it on the terrain. His manner one could say is situated between the 'premeditation' of Alfred Hitchcock' and the 'improvisation' of a Roberto Rossellini.

Exiling himself from the cherished plains of John Ford, among the mountains he discovers another style, more tormented, which resides in the land. Better ~~aligned~~ aligned with the rapport found in geometry than with finesse,

the man loves to excite his imagination on the obstacles of nature which comprise rocks, promontories, rushing rivers and valleys; their capricious figures enrich the action, being unexpected poles of attraction which comport protruding things (like the huge log in the river which kills Ralph Meeker in *The Naked Spur*) and unexpected events (like the sequence of rock slides that almost kill James Stewart and Willard Mitchell in the same film). The new lines of force from the western's asperities and the threat of hazard comes almost bursting through the monotony of a design that can be seen at times over calculated. While other directors content themselves with "studio" desert, Anthony Mann stretches his network and fixes it to the side of mountains (Anthony Mann 1964:30-35).. Missaïen quotes Philip Yordan (writer of most of the scripts for the latter-day Mann films) as saying: "Give him (i.e. Mann) a mountain, a plain; and he will place his camera in the best position so you will encounter that mountain, that plain, as you have never seen it before." (ibid; p 28-30).

Alberto Morsiani, Mann's Italian biographer, particularizes Mann's westerns in a rather different manner from his colleagues on the Continent.

Anthony Mann lets loose these westerns with the living sensibility of a frontier scout; with a strong sense of morality, elaborating and clarifying his themes by means of screen space. In many of his films the frontier is real; the law is not established; the nation's statehoods are still in the shadows – much of the action is symbolized by a *machine* that talks all too eloquently. This world Mann's cameras observes in the most natural of manners. As Jean-Luc Godard wrote: 'with Anthony Mann each frame of the film proceeds naturally from analysis to synthesis.' (*Anthony Mann*; La Nuova Italia; 1986; pp 47-48).

That the European critics have a different conception of cinematic art is rendered palpable by the above examples. So much is this the case that they (and in particular Bazin and Godard) in their discussions try to convey the film's tactile sense to the reader. Rather than using other film examples to disparage the work they are discussing, they rather give the impression of leaping onto the shoulders

of others in discussing the films that they love in order to express their feelings to the reader with a sharpened sensibility. There is with them, no sense of the *a priori* rationalism that encumbers Anglo Saxon critics (“I have seen all this before”); rather the sense expressed in a Cole Porter song title “This is New!” .

These are existential critics responding to the film in the only way that seems important to them, through their instincts – how the film makes them *feel*. It is clear from the above that Robin Wood and Jeanine Bassinger share with them this primeval means of *connecting* to a film while Anthony Mann’s description of how the emotion generated for him by an actor’s performance in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* proved one of the most galvanizing influences of his life (refer pp 41-42) seems evidence that he is also of their number.

But in terms of British and American film making, the last three above mentioned authors can be seen as miraculous survivors of an Anglo-American tradition in which rationalism is the predominant force. The existential *essence*; spirit; feeling; aura; sensuous impact of a film being rarely touched on by their Anglo-Saxon peers; “the thing they (could) love” being drowned for them in a sea of rationality.

Where Bazin and Godard are likely to be profligate with their comments when they see “the thing itself” presented on screen, Anglo Saxon critics are likely, filtering as they do their judgment through endless assessments of film convention and

comparison with received *great* films, end up (in exhaustion!) being parsimonious with their praise.

To give an example which illustrates this division of critical worlds. The British book on film studies entitled *The Cinema Book* (ed. Pam Cook, 1985) on none of its 377 pages gives the impression that any of the multitudinous films which are discussed by the book's contributors is considered worthy to be *enjoyed* in any way. Rather, 'Film Studies', in this book, is portrayed as a supremely rational discipline (spartan, with a touch of the hairshirt for discomfort) where anything more than an intellectual dissection of a film is seen, inferentially, to be redundant. One reads, for instance the section on *auteurism* in the English cinema which contains all the "supposed" classic English dramas of the sixties: *A Taste of Honey*; *Morgan*, *a Suitable Case for Treatment*; *If*; *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*; *This Sporting Life*; *Billy Liar*; *Loneliness of a Long Distance Runner*; *A Kind of Loving*; and so forth. In this book the only *respect* that is accorded these films is that they were considered worthy to be included in its pages. To encourage enjoyment of these movies (i.e. via one's emotions) is clearly for this book's editorial staff something which is not evidently feasible - much as if such considerations could only be addressed in another universe. In this *present* universe, by comparison, note the eagerness and warmth that the renowned French critic and film director, Francois Truffaut shares with the reader his filmic "discoveries" in his book of his

retrospective reviews: *The Films of My Life*; (1980). This list of films is not simply reeled off by him as an intellectual exercise (as it might have been by a British or American critic) but is rather lovingly detailed, rendering clearly the fact that these films had made great impressions on Truffaut's *feelings* as well as on his critical thought.

Chapter 4

MANN'S WESTERNS – THE NARRATIVES

It must be palpably evident that Mann in closely examining the psychology and motivations of his protagonists in his most notable westerns was attempting something very different from the veritable legion of Hollywood directors who had essayed to mark out the physical positions taken up by the Clanton gang in the Gunfight of O. K. Corral as their movies' theme. Mann's subjects, far from being theoretical, are elemental to their core; being concerned with the same inner wrestlings of humans first brought to light on the Western dramatic stage by the classical Greek dramatists of the Fifth Century B.C: Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. For these legendary dramatists the elemental human drive towards vengeance and self vindication by their plays' protagonists is a paramount driving force behind almost all their dramas

The phenomenal international success of William Shakespeare's play: *Hamlet* which has been translated into all the major foreign languages of the world and performed on the stages of all the major foreign nations bears testimony, surely, to the fact that the human drives toward revenge and self vindication are well understood to be important elements of the human psyche.

Such is the simplicity and starkness of Mann's narratives in his westerns that subtitles are barely needed for foreign audiences to understand them. Although these audiences may not be fully aware of the peripherals of the western genre's conventions, Mann's subjective camera and the mirroring effects of his landscapes as significations of the inner conflicts occurring with his protagonist are almost as likely as any subtitled information, to render the audience keenly aware of the turbulent emotions which Mann's protagonists are undergoing.

Two preludes to Mann's first outstanding western.

The year 1950 proved to be one of the busiest that Mann was to spend in Hollywood. During this year he completed three westerns, the third of which *Winchester 73* proved to be a huge success with audiences and critics alike. Its success was to launch Mann into making western movies of similar popularity for the next seven years.

However, despite the fact that neither of Mann's two first westerns (*Devil's Doorway*, or *The Furies*) were particularly successful in critical or commercial terms, these movies should by no means be regarded as being unimportant. They can indeed be seen as crucially important in retrospect, as in them we can see Mann experimenting, developing and refining the idea of the western that he wanted to make (and with *Winchester 73* did make).

Devil's Doorway, Mann's first western was shot in monochrome and, according to the film's reviewer in "Time Out's 1999 Film Guide", (ed. John Pym), Chris Wicking was shot in Mann's film noir style, was bleak in aspect, and was held up by a nervous M.G.M, allowing the Delmer Daves colour film *Broken Arrow* (actually shot somewhat later) to reap all the benefits for spearheading the pro Indian style of westerns. Although the film drew some notice – it is reported to be the direct cause of James Stewart's recommendation that Anthony Mann be appointed as director for *Winchester 73* after the film's original director, Fritz Lang had abandoned the project, it was not a success with the public. *Devil's Doorway* received only moderate critical attention, and it seems safe to infer that it was not a happy experience for Mann, proving to be the only film in his career in which he saddled his story with a message.. In this film a Shoshone chief (Robert Taylor), having served with distinction in the Union army returns home to find that the Homesteaders Act has legislated his land away from him simply because he is an Indian. His efforts to gain redress are thwarted by officialdom and vested interests. The film concludes with Taylor, and a handful of Shoshone braves who have fled the reservation to join him, being wiped out by the locals reinforced by a contingent of U. S. cavalry. Mann's clear intent in this film was to show the white racial hypocrisy embedded in this (factually based) story. However, the film (shot in black and white) proved an unrelievedly downbeat experience for viewers and

proved no challenge to Daves' later colour film *Broken Arrow*; (1950) which explored a similar theme and was far more optimistic in its general tone. As noted (in the summary interview; p40) Mann was to later voice his judgment against the practice of introducing messages into westerns. "We (i.e.. directors of film) are not here to preach..." etc.

The Furies, Mann's second western, is also characterized by Mann's camera "tricks" and expressionist lighting, but it is the last of his films in which they play a notable feature. With the completion of this film their presence was to be a rare occurrence in films directed by Mann.

Dramatically speaking, *The Furies* is a distinctly odd work, exploring the relationship, as it develops over time, between an aging rancher and his daughter whose behaviour seems characterized by an Electra complex.⁽¹⁾ Though the parts are expertly played by Walter Huston and Barbara Stanwyck respectively, the audience's attention is so evenly split between the two characters both of whom are portrayed as equally faulty in their basic judgments that the spectator is likely to be thoroughly confused as to which of them they are expected to identify with. Who, in other words, is the film's protagonist? In Mann's subsequent westerns the audience is to be left in no doubt as to the clear identity of the protagonist – the person with whom he will encourage them to identify.

Winchester 73 (1950); Universal

What distinguishes this film from the two earlier westerns made by Mann in the same year (*Devil's Doorway*, *The Furies*) is the confidence that characterizes his photographic style. Both of Mann's earlier westerns are marked by strong expressionistic tendencies in their cinematography, these tendencies being a legacy from the techniques Mann employed during the years when he concentrated on films noir.

Winchester 73 however, is evidence that such expressionistic "camera trickery", as it is referred to by Basinger, has been foregone by Mann in this film. An examination of this film's most famous scene - the brothers' pantomimed duel without guns - reveals that throughout Mann resists bravura camerawork in favour of more straightforward "classical" photography with the camera building gradually to the tension, instead of leaping into it, unpredictably. It was a film described by Leonard Maltin as being a "landmark" film in the western genre; a film that was largely responsible for the renewed popularity of the westerns in the 1950s. (Maltin;1998) .

By his employment of a renowned repeating rifle as his focus of attention in this film; a rifle that is so valued that it is repeatedly stolen , passing from greedy hand to greedy hand, Mann gives himself the opportunity to quickly switch sets of

characters, rendering this western the most charged with incident that he was ever to make. Indeed, it is arguable whether any other western contains as much incident as Mann has contrived to cram into *Winchester* 73.

It contains:(1) a rifle shooting contest in which the hero and villain are equally matched;(2) an attack by outlaws on a carriage with a woman helplessly trapped inside it;(3) an Indian attack on a cavalry's entrenched position;(4) a shoot out in the streets of a town;(5) a final confrontation between hero and villain that takes place out of doors on a rocky landscape;(6) a revenge theme;(7) a last stand;(8) a poker game; (9) an outlaw's meeting at an isolated way station;(10) a group of ruthless outlaws holding an innocent farm family hostage;(11) a bank robbery;(12) a saloon fight;(13) an Indian uprising.(14).

The basic plot situations involve familiar western characters and sets: (a)saloon girl;(b) cowardly Easterner;(c) grizzled cavalry officer;(d) Wyatt Earp;(e) crooked gambler;(f) noble Indian savage; etc and a western town (g) with a main street;(h) saloon;(i) bank;(j) isolated out-station;(k) outlaw hideout;(l) campfire;(m) settlers' farm;(n) stagecoach;(n) etc.

As Basinger observes in her biography of Mann (ibid p101) even the love relationship is worked out through the metaphor of guns. When Shelley Winters,

the saloon girl, is trapped with Stewart and the cavalry, surrounded by Indians, he gives her a gun. "I know how to use it" she says, and when he hesitates she tells him "And I understand about the last one".(i.e. bullet). She accepts the idea that she must kill herself rather than fall into the hands of the Indians. Later, after they have successfully withstood the Indian attack she returns the gun to Stewart but asks to have the last bullet – the one she was meant to use on herself. "If you want it." he says, looking at her carefully. "I want it", she replies, looking him straight in the eye.

Basinger claims the meaning of this exchange is definitely sexual. The bullet was the symbol of his protection of her of his concern, but also of her own independence and courage at the moment of crisis. It represents her ability to choose for herself – and she chooses him. When she takes the bullet from him, she is both accepting his offer and making one herself. They are united through the dominant metaphor of the gun.

The film's most famous scene occurs within the film's first ten minutes, taking place in a saloon where Stewart is having a drink with a sidekick. Wyatt Earp, the marshal of Dodge City is also in notable attendance having exercised his version of the law by depriving all visitors to the town of their guns for the duration of the shooting contest. Into this saloon walks Stewart's elder brother on whom Stewart is

seeking revenge for his murder of their father. Instinctively, on seeing Stewart, McNally reaches for his (absent) guns while Stewart's sharp look of surprise at this reaction quickly turns to a look of contemptuous disdain. The viewer (as well as Wyatt Earp) is left to imagine how Stewart might have reacted had he been wearing his guns.

Basinger observes that this scene has a shocking effect. She observes:

For the first time the devoted western viewer is forced to confront a subversive fact; that this noble hero of the west, that man who rides tall in the saddle off into the sunset, may be psychologically disturbed. 'Furthermore' she adds, 'the violence of the pantomimed behavior of drawing to shoot forces a viewer to evaluate the ritual. Where one once gloried in the action and accepted it as not only necessary, but right, suddenly a new awareness arises. The action itself is called into question. By removing the weapons Mann makes an audience see the implications of the action. Suddenly it becomes all too evident that a man who solves his problems by shooting may not be a hero at all. Stripped of the violent glory of the gunfight, the reach and draw scene is laid bare as a psychotic event.' ...From *Winchester 73* onward the idea of a man besieged by personal problems – violent and even psychotic – becomes increasingly prevalent in American films.' (Basinger: 1979; pp 99-102).

Basinger observes that Mann clearly understood the success of, as he put it, the "externalization" of the conflict of the film into the physical form of a rifle that could be passed from hand to hand and thus from episode to episode. By following this method, Mann was able to sum up an era of western filmmaking and revitalize it at the same time. In *Winchester 73* the hero undertakes a journey which,

Basinger asserts, "might rightly be said to cover the whole history of the western genre." (Basinger; p. 103).

Mann's comment – "As for *Winchester 73*, that was one of my biggest successes. And it's also my favorite western. The gun which passed from hand to hand allowed me to embrace a whole epoch, a whole atmosphere. I really believe that it contains all the ingredients of the western; and that it summarizes them". (ibid ; p 105).

The audience senses, as the film draws to its climax that there will be an end to the journey for one of the two brothers, Stewart having stalked his prey into the rocky mountains. The fact that the audience knows that McNally is in possession of the prized Winchester renders the final shoot out between the brothers particularly tense. After five minutes of ricocheting rocks and bullets, Stewart eventually wins the battle, McNally's body plummeting noiselessly from the high ledge which had given him the visual advantage. But from Stewart's body language one might almost suppose that he had lost the fight. In this respect he is emblematic of the Mann protagonists who are to follow him; men who do not want to kill but feel that no other option is left them. With the hero having blood and guilt on his hands the film's final fadeout (as he rejoins Shelley Winters and Willard Mitchell), his

companion, is very far from the tidy resolution with which one is presented at the conclusion of so many westerns.

Bend of the River (1952) Universal

Whereas in Mann's film *Winchester 73* the protagonist seemed to be a law-abiding man before being spurred to savage violence against his brother, the protagonist/hero of *Bend of the River* (also played by James Stewart), is presented as a man who has had a violent past as a Missouri border raider (rope burns on his neck bearing witness to a past attempted lynching of him) but who is determined to go straight. Early in the movie he saves an old friend, Arthur Kennedy, from a lynch mob, and this former associate becomes his alter ego; attracting the attentions of the girl (Julia Adams) who Stewart himself fancies, and at various points in the narrative slyly reminding Stewart of his past and the fact that it is sure to catch up with him at some point.

In order to prove himself to himself (as well as to others) Stewart has taken up the responsibility of leading a wagon train of supplies from the port of Portland, Oregon to a group of settlers who are stationed inland and who are dependent on these supplies for their ~~winter~~ resources. In normal times, Stewart's task as wagon leader might prove one that was relatively straightforward but on this occasion the territory through which they are traveling has ~~been~~ hit with gold fever. The result,

as it affects Stewart, is that the value of the supplies his wagons are carrying is now seen to be vastly more than the settlers have paid. Stewart determinedly refuses to re sell them for ten times this price. 'But the longer the journey proceeds the greater is the impression that Stewart is isolated in his position; with even Kennedy tempting him to accept "another offer".

The breaking of a wheel on one of the wagons (and Stewart's desperate effort to take charge of the situation) provides the catalyst towards which the film has been moving for twenty minutes. With Stewart's increasing isolation Mann's camera has been concentrating on Stewart's form and particularly his facial features. When the predictable beating up of Stewart takes place (an ugly scene with all of the wagoners taking their turn to beat him) Stewart's face fills the frame, in close-up; his cuts and bruises being minutely recorded. Extraordinarily in the circumstances the camera is able to witness the fact that although Stewart's face and body are broken, his spirit is not.

In his book *A-Z of Movie Directors* Ronald Bergman speaks of each of Anthony Mann's westerns as "having the inevitability of a Jacobean tragedy".

For example, when the duplicitous Kennedy rides off from the wagon train with a mild "I'll be seeing you " Stewart shrieks his response in words that are strongly reminiscent of the Jacobean dramatists Tourneur and Webster: "You'll be seeing

me. Every time you bed down for the night, you'll look back in the darkness and wonder if I'm there. And some day I will be! You'll be seeing me!"

As it happens, the audience sees little of Stewart on the screen for some time – only the occasional sound of rifle fire is heard for which we suspect he may be responsible. Each time this sound is heard, Kennedy is given to twitching so dramatically that his companions ask him why he is disturbed. Suspecting (accurately) that it is a well-hidden Stewart that is steadily picking off his men with his rifle, Kennedy is seen to become somewhat paranoid in his own behaviour, remembering Stewart's earlier threat to him.

The close concentration of Mann's camera on the protagonist's face during the climactic act of the beating leaves the audience with little choice but to identify with this outlaw who is trying to outlive his past. The character will still have to face the difficulty which his past reputation may keep alive before his being accepted into the community as a truly "changed" man but Mann's camera records this change for the viewer with eloquence as it closely observes a solitary man defying the multitude.

The journey of the protagonist is seen to be both literal and figurative. The beauty of the Oregon forest land with, as Basinger observes "the dappled sunlight filtering through the trees" and the majestic Mt Hood ever in the background ; such

visual beauty has the effect of rendering man's acts of intrusive violence the more sinister. Particularly does this seem the case when Stewart, after the wagons have eventually been safely delivered to the settlers, tracks down Kennedy and drowns him in a nearby gently flowing river.

In his chapter on Mann's westerns in: *The American West on Film: Critical Approaches to the Western* John Tuxa comments on the hard work which James Stewart put into practising with the Winchester rifle (during the making of his previous film) in his effort to make his employment of the rifle look totally realistic. Tuxa goes on to comment "It is this sense of expertise which combines with the atmosphere of violence in Mann's westerns which make them so dramatically compelling," adding, "but it remains the potential for violence that is most important. Although individual acts of violence may erupt and pass quickly, it is the intimations that hover and their repercussions reverberate and distantly echo." (Tuxa; 1985; :91). He continues with a remark of Mann's reported in Jim Kitkes' book: *Horizons West*: "It is true of great drama; that it needs violence; because the audience is sitting there and experiencing things...and then in order for it really to take hold the dramatist needs...to express an emotion, for the character to go through something that the audience *feel* for." (Kitses; 1969: p. 72). thus reinforcing the dominant appeal so noted by the French and Italian critics.

The Naked Spur – 1953 – MGM

The Naked Spur is a film of extraordinary symmetry, a film to which western film buffs are likely to repeatedly return to examine its rare fusion of character interaction.

In this film, all of the action takes place in an outdoor setting. There are initially five characters who are seen beginning on a journey at the film's commencement while only two survivors remain at the journey's end. Also one of these two survivors, the protagonist (James Stewart) ends the film paradoxically safe and yet more wretched than he had been in any of the journey's many points of danger. As noted, film lovers are likely to revisit the film to see how its apparently disparate plot elements (as they can be viewed in the film's original script – by Sam Rolfe and Harold Jack Bloom) together with such a limited number of actors can be made to flow with such remorseless logic. It is perhaps impossible to believe that any other western director given this script and basic situation, could have bettered Mann in his treatment of this project.

This would I think, certainly be the view of the English language biographer of Mann, Jeanine Bassinger, who writes in the preface to her biography:

I first became interested in Anthony Mann in 1955 when I watched *The Naked Spur* fifteen times in four days. What was initially an entertaining

experience.became a sobering experience and ultimately, an overwhelming experience The film's impact grew. On the fifteenth go-round, I was as much a set of exposed raw nerves as Jimmy Stewart himself, and my reactions to events were as shaky and psychotic as his. For the first time in which I was clearly aware of it I did not identify with the female character the film (Janet Leigh) but instead allied myself with Stewart. I seemed to have no choice in the matter. (Bassinger; 1979: p11).

Basinger goes on to make another observation, in consideration of which it should be remembered that this particular film was produced in the days preceding the arrival of digital sound technology of the sort than can today contribute so much to the audience's sense of "being there" (as in the case of *Saving Private Ryan*, for example). "Furthermore", she adds, " the audiences that watched the film with me all reacted to the events of the film as a united group. Of course, it was not unusual for an audience to laugh together, or cry together, or to scream out together." "But", she observes, "it was peculiar to see them ducking their heads, leaning back in their seats, raising their hands to ward off blows, in a kind of one-two-three viewer's ballet. Why did they do this?" (Basinger; 1979: pp 11-14). Basinger admits that she has given the matter much thought and the basis of her book on Mann's work forms the attempt, as she puts it, "to figure it out".

The story of the film: *The Naked Spur*, begins and ends in the mountainous, wooded terrain of Oregon. A frustrated former farmer and would-be bounty hunter (the protagonist, James Stewart) enlists the help of an itinerant gold prospector (Willard Mitchell) in his effort to track down an outlaw killer for whom a reward

of \$5,000 has been posted. While they are proceeding through the statuesque mountain scenery a series of boulder slides erupt so realistically (filmed by Mann's cameras in a manner that makes the rocks seem to leap from the screen, providing one of the notable effects to which Basinger alludes in her preface) - she states that she and her fellow students were "ducking their heads." when confronted with the film's realistic camera effects.

Mann's crane cameras record that these rock- slides are the work of man and not nature as we are given a view of the presumed villain precipitating the rock slides. We recognize this man as being Robert Ryan from his appearance on the poster which Stewart had earlier displayed.

Against the urgings of Mitchell, Stewart tries to pull himself by rope up a ridge with the intention of surprising the outlaw but has to abandon his attempt when his hands are severely burned on the rope. His place is taken by Ralph Meeker (who we are to learn is a former member of the cavalry who has been recently dishonourably discharged) who without so much as introducing himself, assesses the crag's distance and leaps with a sublime animal grace up the ridge, completely surprising Ryan whom he attacks from behind. He himself is attacked in turn by

Ryan's tomboyish companion (Janet Leigh) whom we are to learn Ryan has promised to escort to California and to a better life.

All this action occupies the film's first fifteen minutes establishing the characters who are to dominate the action until the film's conclusion until which time the audience is not to enjoy the luxury of a single moment of respite. Ryan (who is a self confessed killer who realizes that his life will be a short one if he is returned to formal imprisonment) immediately starts engaging in the ploy which he will use to extraordinary effectiveness throughout most of the rest of the film –simply reminding his three captors (Stewart, Mitchell, and Meeker) that the smaller the force that brings him in, the greater will be the reward. Ryan, posing as the very devil himself, not only takes every opportunity to play his captors off against one another, but is ever at Leigh's ear whispering that it is her function to sexually distract the men. His reasoning is that the longer the journey can be protracted the greater is his chance of escape. Leigh plays an essentially neutral role being clearly not impressed with Ben (Ryan) but afraid of him, as she is of Meeker (whose rejection from the army was caused by his having been discovered in the act of raping a Blackfoot squaw). He makes it very clear to Leigh that he will try to have his way with her if he is given the slightest chance.

Almost paradoxically Leigh allows herself to be talked, by Ben, into using her wiles on the most vulnerable of the group, Stewart. From the moment that Ryan was captured Stewart has taken upon himself the sole charge of overseeing this group and the longer the journey progresses the more (logically?) paranoid he seems to become squinting his eyes with effort to ensure no false move eventuates from anyone. To add to his evident distress he is shot in the leg by the Blackfoot brave who was trying to avenge his tribe's dishonour on the elusive Meeker.

The shrieks to which Stewart gives voice at night when in the grips of the fever caused by his recent wound are likely to prove a revelation to even the staunchest of this actor's admirers. He seems to howl in a manner of one who is prepared to sacrifice proprieties for the sake of realism. Being in such a distraught state Leigh's cool hand on his fevered brow serves to disarm him literally and figuratively with a beguiling ease, an ease which is instantly regretted by her.

This couple's quasi-serious embrace leads into the film's final act. With Stewart being distracted, Ryan makes his escape, conning Mitchell into handing him his rifle and shooting him with it when he does. As in the film's early sequences he moves up to a high crag where he begins to shoot at Meeker and a revived Stewart. Stewart uses the "naked spur" of the film's title in conjunction with a rope to haul

himself above Ryan and surprise and kill him, his body falling from the crag into the river. Meeker, being aware that Ryan's body is worth the same value dead or alive, ties a rope around the corpse but in doing so is struck by a huge log in the torrent of water and disappears from view.

The final scene is thus played out by Stewart and Leigh, the two survivors of this rigorous journey. In order to proceed with Leigh (to California or wherever) Stewart realizes he has to bury the body he has almost sold his soul to acquire. The audience is left to be the judge of whether the tears that fill his eyes as he commences to dig the grave are prompted by a display of remorse or of regret at a pecuniary loss. In any event, as in all Mann's westerns, the ending is here very far from formulaic and clearly ambiguous.

The difference between this and Mann's other westerns is in the nature of the protagonist who in this film (partly on account of his own hubris) is rendered more physically and (particularly) emotionally vulnerable than he is in any other western of Mann's. In terms of the landscape through which he travels, its vast variety in this film serves to indeed emphasize the huge inner conflicts which are taking place in the protagonist.

The revenge motive on the protagonist's part is presented again with force, but in this film it is instructively abstracted. Stewart is here venting upon Ryan his

revenge for his betrayal by his fiancée to whom he entrusted his farm (while he went to serve in the Civil War) and who promptly sold it, rendering him penniless. The bounty money that Stewart hopes to earn by capturing Ryan will thus serve to retrieve his financial situation – as well as (so it seems to him), provide him with an appropriate means of venting his pent-up anger over his betrayal.

The Far Country – 1955 – Universal

The protagonist in Anthony Mann's *The Far Country* (again played by James Stewart) is initially presented as an almost two-dimensional character with a cynicism later to be shown by Stewart in his films for John Ford (particularly *Two Rode Together*). The character retains his semi-alloofness and apparent independence from the concerns and claims of society until well into the film when a violent incident serves to have a galvanizing effect on his temperament.

The only clue given to his enforced solitariness, is when in sympathy to the recounting of a failed relationship told to him by the similarly independent saloonkeeper (Ruth Roman) he ruefully remarks: "I trusted a woman once..."

He is, though, a man also given to quick and summary action, having killed his two partners on the cattle drive to Skagway (from Seattle) because (so he claimed) they were riding the wrong way (and with his cattle). The only person in the world he

seems to care about is a male companion twenty years his senior, Ben (played by Walter Brennan) who sums up Stewart's restless independence in his observation that Stewart is always moving on and talking about that "Far Country" (which may not exist?). For himself, Brennan is always talking about settling down with Stewart in a ranch in Utah (a prospect that Stewart at no point sees fit to discourage).

It is at the point when this harmless old man whose friendship is dear to Stewart is casually gunned down by an associate of Chief Justice Gannon (a kind of Judge Roy Bean of the Yukon) that Stewart discovers in himself human feelings that had long lain idle. Something in him snaps and his repressed humanity surfaces.

Whereas he had shunned the badge of sheriff in this outpost (in the Yukon) where gold had been recently discovered and lawlessness was becoming rife, he is now galvanized into spreading abroad the need for a sense of community amongst the gold mining community who are held in thrall by Gannon and his men. Central to his efforts is his vocalized vehement scorn on all that Gannon and his henchmen represent, calling into question this man's tyranny and, crucially, being prepared to back his invective with a gun. To watch this formerly would-be detached character develop to the point of such manifest *engagement* is a sight to behold but in fact the seeds of this development were always visible in Stewart's expert performance

and in Mann's direction of this performance. Still, the sense of renaissance is an achievement in itself.

Stewart hones his thirst for vengeance on one man – Gannon. But this man is surrounded by so many lackeys that it seems to be a question of Stewart against a whole saloon. As the tension mounts Ruth Roman (Gannon's partner as well as Stewart's lover), in an effort to warn Stewart of a gun in the alley, flings herself bodily in front of that gun (in the manner of Dietrich in *Destry Rides Again* and *Rancho Notorious*). But the fade out in this scene is typical of Mann's positive resistance to the formula western man-woman fade out. To Stewart's anguished query: "Why didn't you look after you?" Roman, expiring, responds with the rather exquisitely ironic: "Is that supposed to be a question?"

Following this brief interlude, Stewart uses the shadows to good advantage (having judiciously chosen to confront Gannon in the dark) – Mann using his film noir lessons to good effect. The very climax of the film is a feint of Stewart's (which spells the ultimate end for Gannon). The sound of Stewart's horse lumbering through the town is mistaken for the man, allowing Stewart some fruitful shots with his gun. Around the horse's neck is heard jingling the bell that Ben had bought Stewart for their ranch in Utah.

Man from Laramie was the first western in which Mann used the CinemaScope technique. Bazin, the French film critic, said that this venture was to prove particularly successful for Mann in that it increased the depth of Mann's compositions. Basinger, expands on this viewpoint. "The scope image provided the viewer with a great sense of continuous space.

"Thus (she observes) "it was not only ideal for the western genre but practically perfect for the Mann western. The expanded frame gave Mann a chance to increase the complexity of his compositions. In particular he used its wider space and potential for greater depth to strengthen his theme of duality; or link between the hero and the villain" (Basinger 1979:122).

Basinger further observes that in his westerns Mann had always set up a complex relationship between two forces inside the frame, adding that his film *Bend of the River* was a masterful example of the operation of these opposed elements. But, she observes, with CinemaScope Mann could present the two equal, but opposing forces in one shot with greater space and depth. Furthermore, she notes, large close-ups inside the wide space provided a striking contrast, perfect for his violent stories. The formal demonstration of a long take, abruptly cut, followed by a series of rapid cuts was the equivalent of the eruption of violence in the narrative line. The effect on the viewer was obviously one which matched the story's action.

(ibid; 122-123). Basinger quotes Mann as observing “I always tried to build my films on opposition of characters. Putting the accent on two characters ; then making them collide. The story acquires more strength And you obtain greater intensity.” (ibid; p 26).

Basinger adds that Cinemascope lent itself perfectly to this concept. This film, which was the last to include James Stewart as its protagonist, opens with the actor riding over the border of a settlement in New Mexico accompanied to the sound of a semi mystical ballad and chorus which was to later presage the entrance of Clint Eastwood in his westerns (and those of the Italian director who was his mentor; Sergio Leone) as “the man with no name.”

The town of Coronado, which is Stewart’s destination, is virtually controlled by old Dave Waggerman who theoretically shares part of his territory with the Apaches. A patriarchal figure who prides himself on the fact that he has built his town up from nothing, this man seems wary of an independent stranger who rides into town asking pointed questions. We are to learn his health is failing; that he is going steadily blind; but what seems to trouble him most, is a recurrent nightmare which has plagued his sleep. The image presented to him in his dream is that of a stranger who rides into town with the express intention of ~~harm~~ harming his “boys”.

Waggerman has one natural son (Alex Nicol) and one who may be described as quasi adopted (Arthur Kennedy).

Stewart, a soldier on leave from Fort Laramie, has come to Coronado to track down the the men who sold repeating rifles to the Apaches – a recent attack of the Indians assisted by these weapons having been responsible for his younger brother's death. Despite the attempts of various Coronado citizens (allied to Waggerman) to dissuade Stewart from continuing his search, (most notably an attack on him with a knife at night by a "paid" drunk [Jack Elam],) Stewart holds fast.

Finally, on the slightest of pretexts, Waggerman's son, Dave, has his cowhands hold open Stewart's hand while he shoots through the middle at point-blank range. At one point the whole screen image consists of Stewart's bloodied hand.

This particular sequence is, for the viewer, shocking to watch. Stewart the actor almost seems to pass out following the shot; but on recovering his wits, he shouts vilification at Nicol particularly emphasizing the fact that this incident will not curtail his stay in the district.

In this film, Mann uses his CinemaScope camera to excellent advantage on the terrain of New Mexico which consists of vast expanses of sand relieved only by

outcrops of mesas and poses for the viewer the same question as it posed for Stewart; what part of this featureless space could a wagon containing repeating rifles (such as were reportedly to be sold to the Apaches in the near future) be camouflaged from sight? The tracks of such a wagon have left clear marks in the sand, but its eventual whereabouts remain a mystery. To find the man he is stalking, (whose identity is not yet known to him), Stewart must first find the rifles.

Eventually (unknown to Stewart) we see another man, Dave Waggerman thunder up a ravine. The man is in physical distress, having been wounded by Stewart (in a fight which he provoked). However, we conclude from the shifty look in his eyes as he races along that he is riding to a secret destination or hiding place. At the top of a ridge he pulls aside some tree branches and a wagon full of carbines is exposed. He checks them over (their condition seems pristine, neatly stacked, and looking very menacing) moves to the top of the ridge and lights a fire; partially covering it with a blanket and starts sending what the audience interpret as smoke signals to the Indians.

Mann's camera is in crane position during this rider's ascent into territory which we did not previously know existed. The camera in crane position indicates the steepness of the slope by showing that only by riding at full speed can the rider progress to this ledge; Mann, by these crane shots indulges in some clever

manipulation of the audience allowing them to discover the whereabouts of the deadly weapons well before the protagonist and making it clear to them that he is going to have to spur his horse mightily if he is to gain access to our vision.

Seeing that Stewart's determination persists after his son's mistreatment of him, Alex Waggerman becomes the more convinced that Stewart is the figure that invades his dreams. Having forewarned Stewart of his intention, Waggerman rides up to the ranch, where Stewart is staying, spraying aimless bullets into space. Stewart the resolute protagonist informs him that he is not the man of his dreams.

This proves to be only partly true however, for Stewart, if nothing else, proves the catalyst to Waggerman discovering the vile truth that during his days as a megalomaniac rancher he has so lost touch with his sons - (i. e.-been spiritually blind as to his sons' real selves reveals that his heritage is all but in ruins. He learns that his son Dave was the instigator of the scheme for rifles for the Apaches while Kennedy was a more passive collaborator in the deal. Kennedy has killed the unstable Nicol to keep him from talking but Stewart forgoes an excellent opportunity of dispatching Kennedy by dismissing him with a gesture of disgust. Appropriately perhaps, Kennedy is shot by an Apache because of his not delivering the repeating rifles on time.

Andre Bazin (*Cahiers du Cinema* ;January, 1956) compliments Mann on the intelligence of his narrative in *The Man from Laramie*. The story is a complex one, he observes, with the audience at certain points knowing a good deal more than the hero, but its ambiguities, he says, owe nothing to psychology, but are rather born of an interweaving of circumstance and characters and therefore, in Bazin's view, "their subtlety is objective and aesthetic".(Bazin 1956:166).

Later in this same review Bazin goes on to comment on the "unique atmosphere" which Anthony Mann achieves in this film as well as the film's 'depths of wisdom'; comments which have already been recorded in the section devoted to foreign critics' assessment of this director.

The Tin Star - 1957 – Paramount

Mann's 1957 film was shot by him in black and white (in the Vistavision wide screen process) and though perceived as the lowest keyed of Mann's psychological westerns, displays many fine elements; not least being its Academy Award nominated script (by Dudley Nichols who had often worked as screenwriter with John Ford), its celebrated wordless opening sequence, as well as its exemplary use of deep focus photography (more of the action being confined to the indoors than is usual in a Mann western). In his role as the embittered bounty hunter whose wife

and child died (as he supposed) due to the parsimony of the townspeople who had elected him as their sheriff. Fonda is fine, proving himself a worthy Mann protagonist. As the young and yet untried sheriff of the town into which Fonda's interests (the bounty money) have brought him, Anthony Perkins gives a performance of initial nervous coltishness which it becomes clear Fonda must learn how to tame. As a rather fumbling young sheriff this man has much to learn about the ways of the west; and gunplay in particular, if he is to survive for any period in his present role. In *The Tin Star* Mann makes the basic assumption that if Anthony Perkins, the apprentice sheriff, learns Henry Fonda's (ex sheriff turned bounty hunter)'s knowledge of form, he can take over the role Fonda plays within that form. If he can possess and dominate space the way Fonda, the protagonist, does, he will then become the hero. For in Anthony Mann's films the heroes are always the men who control the space. Thus as the film unfolds, the audience first sees Fonda exert control over the image, and then Perkins begin to exert that control.

The changeover takes place subtly in the story. At first it is Fonda who is clearly aligned with the landscape. In addition, he moves inside the frame with grace and ease, particularly in comparison with the awkward, almost maladroit Perkins. By the end of the film, Perkins movements smooth out, become more fluid as he becomes a man, and finally a hero.

Fonda is the man of the west, the hero with a guilty secret. He is a bounty hunter – a despised character in western terms but once he was a rejected sheriff. He refuses to talk about himself but finally tells Perkins his story. He gave up the tin star in bitterness and anger when his wife and son died. He chose his present occupation because polite society rejects a bounty hunter; and Fonda rejects polite society.

Perkins does not have the same guilty secret, but he has a problem. He doesn't know how to be a sheriff. Since he lives in a small town his insecurity in his role is exposed, and it has become a source of worry (guilt) for him.

In *Tin Star* Mann works a variation on his usual pattern. Having provided himself with two heroes, he lets Fonda and Perkins change places. Perkins learns to dominate the town and become a successful sheriff. He moves outdoors and captures the secondary villains in their lair. Fonda, on the other hand is integrated back into society by his regard for Perkins and also by his relationship with the young widow (Betsy Palmer) and her son. When Perkins is confronted by the town's most notorious villain (Neville Brand) he skillfully defuses the situation by himself, with Fonda content just to stay in the background. However, the fact that Fonda has also found it in himself to pick up a deputy's star is a further indication that his reintegration into the community has begun to take place.

Man of the West – 1958 (United Artists)

The French biographer of Mann, J.C. Missaien in discussing this film (which has over the years come to be regarded as Mann's most seminal western) makes the interesting note that this film was thought pretentious by a certain section of the French critics. "Pretentious," that is, by comparison with the model Mann western with its straightforward (and exciting) narrative drive. The complaints were directed mainly against the film's screenplay (written by Reginald Rose – under Anthony Mann's close supervision, one would surmise). The critics' objection seemed to be that the place names in the film, like the characters, were given names which were strikingly allusive, their very emphasis seeming to suggest a director who was by inference saying "This is an important film" or to take the point a step further: "This film is an important allegory. Please note this."

To give instances of the allusiveness in names of towns and characters that worried these critics: Gary Cooper plays the protagonist whose name is Link Jones. He has a sordid link to the past in the sense that he was a member of a gang of vicious killers but has a present link with his cherished wife and two children who live in a town called New Hope. In this town Cooper has lived down his reputation to the point that he is entrusted by the citizens with a large amount of money (amounting to a teacher's salary for a year) in order that he might, hopefully, acquire the services of a teacher at Fort Worth, his ultimate destination. To reach Fort Worth

he has to take a train from Crosscut (read Crossways?) where Cooper makes an amusing (Capraesque) (2) spectacle of himself when he sees his first “raging beast” of a train. To disguise his identity Cooper gives two false names to railroad officials. The train moves only seventy miles out of town before it is robbed, leaving himself, Julie London a saloon singer , and Arthur O’Connell, a con artist on the tracks. O’Connell is badly injured and Cooper takes the option of seeking shelter in one of his former gang’ old huts. He is greeted with warmth and no little wariness by his evil old uncle who had overseen his former life in crime Dock (signifying a poisonous weed) Tobin. And the name given to the town, “Lassoo”, the town on which the villains plan to make their “big” raid, turns out to be, unsurprisingly, a ghost town, its very name seeming almost a metaphor for an idealized territory that attracts the naïve.

This talk of pretension on the part of Mann seems to have quickly evaporated as the film became better known on the continent. As already noted, the French film critic Jean-Luc Godard was rapturously eloquent in praise of the film, heading the article containing his criticism “SuperMann” (Godard; Feb, 1959). And whether one chooses to trace out the finer allegorical elements, one is still left with the ultimate question of how well Mann told the story he was filming.

Several features about this film which have rendered it notable have already been referred to. Godard spoke of Mann's extraordinary artistry in making Julie London seem psychologically, rather than physically stripped by the Cooper's evil cousin Coley. Robin Cook has adjudged the ensuing fight between Cooper and Coley to be one of the three most realistically staged and brutal from the time of this film to the present (3). Of the film's many extraordinary scenes, one in particular stays in the mind. It is the image of Cooper's brokenness - expressed to London when he realizes that the gang have robbed him of the money to be used to pay for the teacher. His self-lacerating: "They trusted me! They trusted me!" is spoken with similar force to Micheal Cassio's agonized recognition in Shakespeare's *Othello* :

"Reputation, reputation, reputation! O, I have lost my reputation!" (Act III l. 255).

Cooper's hard earned reputation has been won by distancing himself from the activities of his ex gang and contriving to lead the life of a model citizen. In this picture of Cooper's torment lies the key to the action which is to follow. It is evident to Cooper himself, and London, and even the audience that Cooper's new found reputation has been won by him at such cost that he would without compunction destroy anything which stood in the way of his reacquiring it. From this point in the film, Cooper's face (with considerable help from Mann's probing close up camera) is characterized by the grimmest of expressions His posture

becomes more stooped; a sign, one senses, of his greater resignation. Although admitting to London that his lust to kill all of the gang makes him no better than them he finds by the film's end he must perforce do this.

In strictly practical terms, his own cover has been effectively blown, - the local sheriff having had a telegraph message about him. However Cooper calculates that if he demolishes his past by eliminating the gang, recovering the money in the process and returning to his wife in New Hope (accompanying London back to her saloon along the way) he may be able to reclaim his reputation.

The film ends with Cooper riding into the sunset with London, leaving the question about his ultimate destination a rather open ended one. Not so the fate of "Dock" Tobin who during Link's absence on the abortive "Lasso venture" had raped London and is summarily shot by Link on his return. Claude, the cousin for whom Link has respect, but cannot trust had been earlier dispatched by Link (following a thrilling gun battle). The incident immediately preceding this was Claude's apparently motiveless gunning down of Poncho, a mute member of the Tobin gang. His death is signaled by an horrendous shriek, all the more effective for being so unexpected.

In his article Godard states that for the confirmed cineaste this film provides a veritable treasure trove of effects; but observes that above these rarities lies the

importance of Mann's dramatic compositions (compositions which the critic Bazin might have added, are amplified by Mann's use of the CinemaScope format in this film). It is the very simplicity of Mann's compositions that strike Godard (he has noted Mann's apparent stripping away of elements that he saw as inessential in his two previous films; *The Man from Laramie* and *The Tin Star*. When Godard talks of Mann in his review of "painting as it were with the brush of Matisse on a portrait of Piero della Francesca" (Godard, 1958: 48) it is clear that he feels no more stripping away is required. Nor in this film should Mann's acknowledged ability to depict landscape be overlooked; Mann's Arizona grasslands so closely resemble the very terrain that George Eliot made her own in her famous novels that one is hardly sure that they aren't set in this same terrain, Godard observes. One can only wish that every director of westerns had the same sure eye for natural beauty.

Footnotes

1. Unconscious sexual desire of a daughter for her father." (*Websters Universal Dictionary*; 1975;p, 450).
2. In a popular comedy of the American director Frank Capra: *Mr Deeds Goes to Town* (1936) Cooper played the leading role of Longfellow Deeds a naïve and easily bedazzled newcomer to the big city.

3. (Robert de Niro's excruciating pummeling of his despised "pretty" opponent in Martin Scorsese's film *Raging Bull* being one of the two others).

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

The psychological westerns of Anthony Mann, so popular with American and British audiences as well as proving a *success d'estime* with audiences on the Continent, have had a negligible influence, ultimately, upon the Anglo Saxon critical establishment. The first two leading critics to be proponents of the French auteur theory in the English language (Robin Wood in England; Andrew Sarris in America) in nominating Mann respectively, to be in their opinions a true film “artist” seem not to have furthered Mann’s subsequent career in film by their plaudits; at least not as far as the Anglo-Saxon critical establishment was concerned. When one considers the highly favourable reviews of Mann’s westerns as contained in *B.F. I. Companion to the Western* (Ed Buscombe ed;1988) one realizes, in retrospect, that these are intended to be more genuflections to the films’ popular appeal at the time, rather than discussions of seminal works. If proof of this fact were needed it can be found in the contents of Buscombe’s latest book of essays on the western: (Edward and Roberta Pearson (eds); 1998). Whereas in the former book the entries on Mann seemed to render him a figure of some note, here his name does not warrant a single index entry. This despite the fact that the book contains a photograph of the protagonist (played by Robert Taylor) of Mann’s first

western (*Devil's Doorway*) as well as a two-page synopsis of the film. By comparison, the legendary western director John Ford is accorded seventy index references in this book while his name occurs, on average, in one out of every three of the book's pages. Omissions of Mann's name from even the index reference section of film writers' retrospective collections of reviews is currently so commonplace as to be almost universal.

Such critical neglect of Mann was essentially foretold by Sarris when in his influential book: *American Cinema; Director and Directions 1929-1968* he described Mann as someone who "directed action movies with a kind of tough guy authority that never found favour among the more cultivated critics of the medium." (Bassinger;1979;p 14). Jeannine Basinger in her biography of Mann gives more insight into the critical criteria which might motivate these "cultivated critics" to whom Sarris was referring. Early in her biography of Mann after observing that this director's achievement (in his distinctive type of revenge\psychological western in which an extremely subjective camera is employed) "is one of the greatest in film," she delivers a benumbing caveat: "But because its nature is primarily emotional for the audience, it has been totally overlooked by scholars attuned only to intellectual or sociological achievements on film." (Basinger, 1979:28). The current dearth of interest in Mann's westerns

among the English language critics is testimony to the prescience of both Sarris and Basinger.

The signal failure of Mann's westerns with English language critics seems to be born out of the fact that this director never essays in them, a straight narrative leap into the terrain of ideas which might have endowed them with some critical respectability and authority. By contrast, however, these same westerns have become veritable cult items on the Continent. The very sparseness of their scripts , the fact that they make no pretensions to challenge the intellect (with historical issues which would have dubious relevance to the Continent nor be likely to be understood by its viewers); but that they are rather charged with primeval emotions of hate, fear, revenge; emotions that are reflected even in the director's cunning choice of landscape; and with a protagonist at their centre of interest with whom a probing camera veritably *demands* they identify - these ingredients the Continentals find almost irresistible. To Continental critics like Andre Bazin; Jean Luc-Godard; J. P. Messaien;and Alberto Morsiani; Mann's ability to make his camera almost "breathe" and convey an almost tactile sense of the scene's atmosphere as it follows the film's protagonist on his invariable path of revenge has rendered his westerns to be accorded by them an esteem even surpassing that of Ford and Hawks. The fact that Mann is one of the five English language directors (out of a total group of eighteen international filmmakers) to have had a

biography written about him in the prestigious French *Classiques de Cinema* is testimony to the regard with which his work is held in that country.

Happily the fact that all Mann's (seven) psychological westerns, so hugely popular with the American and English public in the 1950s, are still very much in the public domain is encouragement to the hope that at some future date a new brand of English speaking critic; more attuned to a film's overall instinctual qualities rather than to its intellectual content may arise to accord the psychological westerns of Anthony Mann the critical reassessment they so richly deserve.

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1943 *Nobody's Darling*

1944 *MyBest Gal, Strangers in the Night.*

1945 *The Gteat Flamarion, Two O'Clock Courage, Sing Your Way Home*

1946 *Strange Impersonation, The Bamboo Blonde*

1947 *Desperate* (also story with Dorothy Atlas), *Railroaded*, *T-men* (also script, uncredited, with John C. Higgins).

1948 *Raw Deal*

1949 *Reign of Terror*, *Border Incident*, *Side Street*

1950 *Devil's Doorway*, *The Furies*, *Winchester 73*

1951 (*Quo Vadis*) (Director Mervyn Leroy. Mann directed the Fire of Rome sequences), *The tall Target*.

1952 *Bend of the River*, *The Naked Spur*.

1953 *Thunder Bay*

1954 *The Glenn Mille Story*, *The Far Country*

1955 *Strategic Air Command*. *The Man From Laramie*, *The Last Frontier*

1956 *Serenade*, *Men in War*

1957 *The Tin Star*, *God's Little Acre* (also produced, with Sidney Harmon).

1958 *Man of the West*

1960 *Cimarron*

1961 *El Cid*

1964 *The Fall of the Roman Empire*

1965 *The Heroes of Telemark*

1967 *A Dandy in Aspic* (also produced. Completed by Laurence Harvey after Mann's death).