

Although it <THE FAR COUNTRY> tells a clear story, its meaning is best understood by thinking of it as an abstraction of the basic Mann pattern. The audience is never given the whole story, just pieces of it. Similarly, they are never given the entire realistic picture of the settings, just strangely shaped, artificial pieces of them. The film refers.

*Jeanine Basinger: Anthony Mann. Boston 1979.*

#### 49th parallel

In a crucial distortion of history, Mann presents Canada's sensible policy of turning back at the border any would-be prospectors without enough food to support themselves as one of <corrupt Judge> McIntire's scams rather than as one of the reasons why the Yukon was never as colourful (ie, violent) as the American gold camps.

*Kim Newman: Wild West Movies. London 1990*

#### Spiel mir das Lied von der Glocke

Der Gag mit dem Glöckchen ist eine filmische Delikatesse. Man hört zunächst die Glocke, dann zeigt eine Kamerafahrt die Beine eines reiterlosen Pferdes. Die Kamera geht hoch zum Kopf des Tieres, dann zum Sattel und bleibt schließlich auf dem Glöckchen, das dort befestigt ist, stehen. Diese Kamerafahrt wurde von Sam Fuller als Eröffnungsszene zu HÖLLE DER 1000 MARTERN (RUN OF THE ARROW) komplett übernommen. Der Sinn dieser Szene: Jeff an die Ermordung seines Freundes Ben zu erinnern. Sergio Leone kopierte sie in FÜR EIN PAAR DOLLAR MEHR ebenfalls, wobei das Glöckchen durch eine musikalische Taschenuhr ersetzt wurde.

*Jean-Marc Bouineau, Alain Charlot, Jean-Pierre Frimbois, a.a.O.*

## WESTERN 1939 – 1962

### THE FAR COUNTRY

USA 1954

Regie: Anthony Mann

Buch: Borden Chase,  
nach dem Roman von Ernest Haycox

Kamera: William Daniels

Schnitt: Russell Schoengarth

Musik: Joseph Gershenson

Bauten: Alexander Golitzen, Bernard Herzbrun

Ausstattung: Russell A. Gausman, Oliver Emert

Kostüme: Jay A. Morley, Jr.

Regieassistent: John Sherwood, Ronnie Rondell, Terry Nelson

Darsteller:

James Stewart (Jeff Webster), Corinne Calvet (Renée Vallon),

Walter Brennan (Ben Tatem), Ruth Roman (Ronda Castle),

John McIntire (Mr. Gannon), Jay C. Flippen (Rube),

Henry Morgan (Ketchum), Steve Brodie (Yves),

Royal Dano (Luke), Gregg Barton (Rounds),

Chubby Johnson (Dusty), Connie Gilchrist (Hominy),

Bob Wilke (Madden), Royal Dano (Luke),

Jack Elam (Newberry), Kathleen Freeman (Grits),

Guy Wilkerson (Tanana Pete), Eddy C. Waller (Yukon Sam),

Robert Foulk (Kingman), Eugene Borden (Dr. Vallon),

John Doucette (Miner), Allan Ray (Bosun),

Paul Bryar (Sheriff), Edwin Parker (Carson),

Angeline Engler (Mrs. Kingman), Andy Brennan (Mann).

Produktion: Universal Pictures (Aaron Rosenberg)

New Yorker Premiere: 13. Februar 1955

Deutsche Erstaufführung: 21.12.1954

97 Min, 35 mm, Technicolor

Kopie: Originalfassung, 16 mm

Jeff Webster und Ben Tatem treiben 1896 eine Viehherde von Wyoming nach Kanada. In Alaska angekommen, verläßt Jeff, der des Mordes an zwei Männern beschuldigt wird, mit seinen Tieren überstürzt das Schiff und löst in der Stadt, in der gerade einer aufgehängt wird, eine Panik aus. Er wird ins Gefängnis geworfen und seine Tiere konfisziert. Als er wieder entlassen wird, hat er weder Geld noch Arbeit und schlägt sich mühsam durchs Leben. Später kommt er wieder in den Besitz seiner Tiere und kann sich eine Konzession zum Goldschürfen verschaffen. Sheriff Gannon verfolgt ihn bis über die kanadische Grenze...

*Jean-Marc Bouineau, Alain Charlot, Jean-Pierre Frimbois:  
Die 100 besten Western-Filme. München 1991*

### **Oppositions**

The film is built round a careful set of oppositions: corrupt Skagway and the emerging community of Dawson; the motifs of gold, which 'drives a man crazy', and food, especially coffee, which comes to represent neighbourliness and sharing; Rhonda who balances Jeff in looking after herself, and Renée who believes that helping other people is part of living. But the key opposition is between the fascistic Gannon, who represents the logical outcome of that half of Jeff that rejects the community, and the paternal Ben, Jeff's partner, who evokes human and democratic ideals.

*Jim Kitses: Horizons West. London 1969*

### **Landschaft**

In THE FAR COUNTRY gibt es zwei Augenblicke, die für die Entwicklung und Erklärung des Helden entscheidend sind. Der erste dieser Momente ist, wenn Stewart im Vordergrund steht und beobachtet, wie ein Treck sich durch den Schnee auf einen Bergpaß zu arbeitet; er weiß, daß der Treck von Lawinen bedroht ist, aber er will nichts damit zu tun haben. Der zweite Moment ist, wenn Stewart und sein Freund bei der versuchten Flucht über einen Fluß von den steilen Uferfelsen herab beschossen werden. In den beiden Situationen trägt die besondere Qualität der Landschaft in großem Maße zur Darstellung der Situation bei, nicht wegen ihrer Schönheit, sondern wegen ihrer Möglichkeit, die Menschen in ihr zu bedrohen. Man versteht sofort, was diese Art von Landschaft bedeutet und was die Menschen, die ihr ausgesetzt sind, fühlen. Das gilt für weite, überschaubare wie für geschlossene, intime Landschaften. Anthony Mann spürt und nützt die Möglichkeiten einer Landschaft auf die gleiche Weise, wie ein Scharfschütze das tun würde.

*J.H. Fenwick, in: Sight and Sound; zitiert nach Joe Hembus:  
Western-Lexikon. München/Wien 1976*

### **Artificial Quality**

Where WINCHESTER '73 explored and defined the traditional western, THE FAR COUNTRY explores and defines the Anthony Mann western. Although it follows the pattern of the three other core films <BEND OF THE RIVER, THE NAKED SPUR, THE MAN FROM LARAMIE>, it has a self-conscious, artificial quality. It is, as if Mann, understanding his own game, decided to abstract it, treat it almost as a joke - while still preserving its broad outlines. His respect for the basic narrative makes THE FAR COUNTRY function at the entertainment level, yet the film has an odd quality that leaves a viewer slightly bemused. It is best understood in relation to the other Mann westerns.

It is in the use of space that THE FAR COUNTRY differs from BEND OF THE RIVER, THE NAKED SPUR, and THE MAN FROM LARAMIE. The frame is treated as a two-dimensional area, whereas Mann's tendency in his other westerns (and in most of his other films) was to provide an enormous depth of field, so much so that the frame seemed to be opening and receding in the center of the screen. There is no such sense of space in THE FAR COUNTRY.

Instead of natural settings, THE FAR COUNTRY presents a viewer with a great deal of artificial space mixed with outdoor locations. In its elimination of some of the location work associated with westerns, THE FAR COUNTRY ranks with Lang's RANCHO NOTORIOUS and Ray's JOHNNY GUITAR as a directorial exercise in abstraction of his own familiar territory. Just as Hitchcock elected to use painted backdrops and rear projection in MARNIE, Mann elected to use similar devices here. The mining town of Skagway looks like a representational "western town" set...The interior spaces of these settings are false and often not matched to their exteriors...The deliberate use of a falsified reality in films that present themselves as real is a justifiable artistic decision, but one that Mann seldom opted for in the westerns. In THE FAR COUNTRY he not only proves that he could do it, but, by doing it, offers proof that he thoroughly understood his own work, that it was not intuitive.

This awareness is announced with the very first image of the film, in which the credits are presented against a picture that is meant to represent "the far country". This image, static and unchanged, is seen repeatedly in the film, most notably when the hero first moves out into the landscape. It is an icy image of a distant space, set against a hard blue sky. It is an unreachable distance, not a place, but a concept. As they gaze at it together, Jay C. Flippen remarks to James Stewart, "The constable up there has a hard job. Sometimes he doesn't get home for two or three months...ridin' up in that far country." By using this single image to represent the physical and emotional setting of the film, and by repeating it often, Mann sets the tone of the film. From that moment on the use of backdrops, mattes, rear projection, and day-for-night shooting carries out this idea. Although the sight of these devices in the middle of an outdoor western film disconcerts many viewers, it is consistent to the intent of the film.