Between Mittel-Europa and the American West: Sunrise as a 'Landscape Text'

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Cinema's place within the constellation of 'experience' in modernity becomes more concrete in scrutinizing the landscapes of one of the most written-about of all silent Hollywood films, F.W. Murnau's *Sunrise* (1927). Rather than resorting to yet another production history or an auteurist analysis, the work's standing as a hybrid 'landscape-text' has far more to contribute to debates about the depiction of place within modernism when we open it up to contemporary photography and art, instead of limiting it to Murnau's vision or to a (loosely defined) poetic realism that represented the summit of artistry in late silent cinema. In this case, the contributions of set designer Rochus Gliese were key in positioning *Sunrise* as one of the chief instances where landscape was an integral part of the visual syntax of a film. This artist's work will also furnish the opportunity to contextualize the film in light of contemporary theories of modern experience as one revolving around a perpetual and perceptual oscillation between the city and the countryside[1].

Whose Film? Murnau, Gliese and the Production of Sunrise

In the same December 1924 issue of *Motion Picture Magazine* where Warren Newcombe was recognized as "a practical dreamer" and his creative contribution in Griffith's *America* was duly noted, another article focused on German emigré director Ernst Lubitsch and his first two years in the United States. Lubitsch declared that America "stirred his blood" and offered him the opportunity to revitalize his art, learned in Europe[2]. A few days later in January of 1925, a different German director and a former colleague of Lubitsch's at UFA, Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau, was signing his first contract with

William Fox in Berlin, a week after the premiere of *The Last Laugh* (1924) which Fox had proclaimed a masterpiece[3]. Yet another émigré, or "German invader" as a film reporter called them at the time, would soon take the road to Hollywood[4]. The four films he would finish there before his untimely death in 1931 would cement his reputation as an artist at the pinnacle of silent film art. When Murnau arrived in New York in June 1926, he brought with him the European sensibility and intellect which Fox meant to capitalize on in his effort to distinguish his company – and American cinema itself – in terms of artistic prestige. Murnau's work, that of his collaborators, and the locations and studio backdrops they would use later that year all contributed in making his first American work, *Sunrise*, into a film that, more than any other made during the silent period, placed such a pronounced pictorial and narrative emphasis on moving and 'moving' landscapes [Fig. 1]. Lotte Eisner, the first to consider *Sunrise* as a visual landmark of silent cinema, insisted on this aspect of the film, singling out the construction for its production of "every kind of landscape, from fields and meadows, through an industrial area and the sparse gardens of the suburbs to the city itself"[5].

By now Murnau's creative endeavors on this side of the Atlantic, his collaboration with Fox, the production history of *Sunrise*, its reception and afterlife are well represented in the scholarly bibliography[6]. This is a sign of the importance placed on the film as inaugurating a new era in American cinema, a paradigmatic case of 'old world' art produced within a 'new world' context. But *Sunrise* was also a hybrid film during the transition of the industry to sound and, above all, an exemplar of visual storytelling, fluid camerawork and minimal textual distractions. Given Murnau's prior work as one of the chief figures of cinematic expressionism in Germany (alongside others like Carl Mayer – who would write the screenplay for *Sunrise*), it is reasonable that most historical analyses of the film are of a decidedly auteurist bent. What such approaches tend to obscure, however, is the significant contributions of Murnau's creative partner, especially those who shaped the visual world of the film to a considerable extent. It is only by examining Rochus Gliese's work as an art director that we can

fully situate *Sunrise* not only within this transitional phase for Hollywood at the end of the 1920s, but also within contemporaneous currents in the fine arts and jazz-age attitudes toward the film's main subject matter: the dialectic between the city and the (fading) American countryside.

This tension between nature and culture represents the second major bias that commentators of *Sunrise* have developed: the interpretation according to which the film represents a pastoral paean to small-town, rural America and the dangers of the big city – coming at the tail-end of a period of unprecedented urban prosperity and the decay of morals resulting from it. This model also casts *City Girl* (1930), Murnau's third US film (after the now lost *4 Devils*), as the other side of the coin, portraying the disappointment of that film's titular character with the more sinister aspects of her agrarian new home community, as opposed to the idealistic (quasi-Jeffersonian) ideals she had previously held for the countryside[7]. However, reducing these two films to the two extremes on an urban-rural scale misses the complexities – narrative but most of all visual – that make location such a prime feature of modern man's experience as theorized by, among others, Murnau's contemporary Georg Simmel. *Sunrise* as a visual text approaches landscape as a dialectic, or *movement* between European and American modernist artistic models, as well as an oscillation between the city and the countryside as *interdependent* spaces. It is therefore imperative, in the words of environmental historian William Cronon, to dissolve "the boundary between the abstraction called city and the abstraction called country"[8]. Such a boundary, as will become apparent, cannot account for the film's imagistic, unabashedly artificial version of natural landscape and the genuine naturalism with which it often represents the city.

Is *Sunrise* Gliese's film, as much it is Murnau's most famous creation, the "only picture Murnau himself counted"?[9] It has certainly not come down to the present day as such; nor can it only be credited to these three artists, given Carl Meyer's or William Fox's contributions (as the initial instigators). A claim can be made, however, for this triumvirate as sharing the creative vision behind the film [Fig. 2]. In fact Gliese

(along with co-cameramen Charles Rosher and Karl Struss) were the only crew members listed alongside Murnau in the programs for the New York and Los Angeles premieres of the film[10]. Eventually all were nominated for Academy Awards for their work, with Struss winning one[11]. In an interview he gave years later, Gliese (whom Murnau had expressly brought over with him from Germany on the same boat) remembered that his own ideas about production design were given more or less "free rein" by Murnau[12]. Edgar G. Ulmer, who was an assistant art director (or "co-architect" as Gliese calls him) on loan from Universal also recalls the "unusually collaborative nature of the enterprise" and Gliese's "enormous talent" that made him both a great protagonist and an antagonist from Murnau's point of view[13].

A Prussian Aristocrat in Lake Arrowhead: Rochus Gliese's Landscapes

Gliese's influence on the film's representation of landscape was of "capital" importance[14]. By 1926 Gliese was acclaimed as a craftsman within the German film industry and as an illustrious student of Max Reinhardt. He had had a hand in the design of such landmarks of German expressionism as *The Golem* (1920) and Murnau's own *The Finances of the Grand Duke* (1924)[15]. His background as a 'scene architect' meant that his involvement in determining the look of a film was much greater than the corresponding American studio term 'set designer' would imply. He had received a classical training in art and architecture (as was the case for Newcombe) in the Academy of Fine Arts in Berlin and then worked extensively in the theater in a style ranging from naturalism to pronounced expressionism[16].

Gliese's aforementioned 'free rein' for *Sunrise* resulted in the construction of multiple set pieces: from a railroad station, to a Bavarian-looking village complete with cottages, a fully illuminated city plaza, a full-scale electric tram (and the rails it ran on), a fairground, a restaurant, a church (Ulmer's design) and more, with a reputed "scenic" budget of $200,000 which was equal to the average *total* budget of a studio feature in the mid-1920s[17]. He produced some two hundred sketches, many of them artworks in their own right, from which scale plaster models were constructed during pre-production. What sur-

vives of them shows that in constructing both exteriors and interiors, Murnau adhered very closely to Gliese's original designs [Figs 3-4].
The attention of those scholars and critics that do consider the film from a visual point of view has disproportionately focused on the claustrophobic expressionist interiors with forced perspectives and painted shadows[18]. Little more than isolated allusions have been made to the filming locations or the film's more general endeavor to recreate an entire world, "an enveloping *Stimmung*"[19]. Austrian film journalist Arnold Höllriegel who was present during production and incorporated some of his observations in his cine-roman *Hollywood Picture-Book* (1927), called this tendency (paraphrasing Schopenhauer): "the world as will and photographic representation"[20].
'Re-creation' might be a more appropriate term than 'world-creation' with regard to the film's urban and rural vistas. These are the two extremes between which the characters in *Sunrise* are in perpetual oscillation, suspended between nature and artifice – or alternatively, a European and an American aesthetic. This is not least because both the village and the city sets had been designed in Germany, to be subsequently assembled in California and thus bore "no resemblance to American small towns"[21]. Gliese's vaguely 'Mittel Europa' village was constructed in Fox's back lot with additional facades erected on location at Lake Arrowhead, as shown in several production photographs [Figs 5-6][22]. The same was true for the city plaza where George O'Brien as "The Man" is lured by Margaret Livingston's "Woman from the City". The enormous cityscape complete with an elevated railway was, according to a reporter for the *Motion Picture World*, the largest ever constructed for a motion picture and, in true Hollywood fashion, abutted scenery from every corner of the world on the Fox lot: "from the jungles of the tropics to the steppes of Siberia"[23].
The ambivalence surrounding the story's setting that so marked the film's reception stems from William Fox's negotiations with Murnau and Gliese. The latter recalled that the only thing that Fox asked them before giving them *carte blanche* was that "the city not be Tilsitt" (on the Baltic Sea) as in the original novel, to which the two replied that "it wouldn't be an American city either"[24]. The studio encouraged this

cosmopolitan pastiche: in the studio publicity one finds a graphic map labeled "Where Fox Pictures are Made" that matches the hills in what is now Century City, to the various world locations that they stood for in Fox films: a perfect illustration of Murnau's own vision for the film "of no place and every place" [Fig. 7][25]. 'Fox Hills' ("the waste-land of Foxhills," as Lotte Eisner calls it) was promoted by the studio at the time as "180 acres of landscape exteriors where are produced the big scenes you see in Fox Pictures"[26]. The two sets of *Sunrise* were often juxtaposed in photographic accounts published in the press, both during its production and after the release of the film thus priming the audience for a reception dominated by the contrasting locations[27].

For all its bucolic appearance there was nothing particularly 'natural' about Lake Arrowhead, the film's primary off-set location in the hills of San Bernardino[28]. The 'lake' was really a privately-owned artificial reservoir (originally called Little Bear Lake) that was starting to become something of a tourist destination when the film crew arrived there in late 1926[29]. The studio touted the beauty of the exterior locations in its publicity even before filming began: an article for the in-house publication *Fox Folks* that was also sent to exhibitors is entitled "Murnau selects his First American Location". Lake Arrowhead had been chosen after "a long tour through the United States" and Canada that included many national parks. Murnau spoke eloquently about the scenery of California and emphasized its versatility compared to some better known and more untouched, but less accessible locations: "California, in particular, is Nature's own perfect location for the consummation of motion picture ideals". Landscape was thus represented as a useful catalyst for the industry's own development, rather than something untouched to be featured on the screen[30].

As far as the city set (the urban pole) in *Sunrise* is concerned, John Orr has argued that it "seems on first sight to be a continuation of the design Murnau had used at Neubabelsberg for *The Last Laugh*"[31]. Indeed, the arrangement of buildings and vehicles is highly reminiscent of photographs of Weimar-era *plätze* in German cities: from Berlin's Potsdamer Platz to Munich's Max Weber Platz[32]. Höllriegel,

who particularly praised Gliese as "the most notable art director [*Film Arkitekt*] of our time," specified that:

> this was not a copy of Potsdamer Platz, only of its proportions […] with plastered facades and asphalt roads. […] The sum total is no American town square but a European one, though coldly modern without a blade of grass or horse cart in sight[33].

Judging by these remarks, could one conclude that Murnau was being disingenuous in praising "Los Angeles, the wonder city of your Western coast"[34], while simultaneously constructing a city that looked like no American downtown anywhere on the coasts or in-between?
It would be accurate – but only partly – to state the obvious: that *Sunrise* is more of a German film produced in an American context than the peak of *American* silent cinema[35]. After all *Sunrise* was attacked by several critics at the time who viewed it as excessively "Teutonic". One such article under the syntactically suspect title "German Films, Hollywood Style, Not so Good", singled out for derision "the work of the Westphalian Frederick Wilhelm Murnau", even going so far as to remind his readers of the director's service in the German army during the recent war[36]. Another writer was even more condescending: "Fred Murnau" and others of his ilk with provenance "in Central Europe", hinder the development of "one hundred per cent American films […] It is doubtless high time for some sort of action by the Klan". Despite the ad hominem tone of such diatribes, it is telling that this particular writer emphasized the film's visual style as a mark of its foreign-ness:

> While the scheme is well designed to make the pictorial artist happy, the total outcome is unmistakably soggy. I doubt if it will touch even the simple hearts of the American peasantry, brought up with such strict reverence for "The Angelus" and "The Man with the Hoe"[37].

If the film was too "Teutonic" to appeal to "American peasantry," it was also too "streamlined" to appeal to traditional European notions of high art. After seeing the film, the screenwriter Carl Mayer complained that Gliese had "slicked up" the original designs once in Hollywood[38.] German critics were also divided on *Sunrise*; for one of them the film failed "in producing a satisfying synthesis of German

and American taste," with its turn toward pure comedy reminiscent of "a Harold Lloyd or a Buster Keaton film"[39].

Landscapes of Transition: Between City and Countryside

It is particularly revealing that one of the main justifications for the "double-bind" that the film was caught in with regards to its national origin had to do with its visual style, specifically the way it handled the pastoral and the urban aesthetic[40]. Nevertheless, it is misleading to suggest that this problem stemmed from Murnau's own status as a misunderstood visionary expat in Hollywood (German vs American identity) dealing with the two extremes of nature and culture (city vs countryside). Rather it is more fruitful to focus on the work of the artists that actively shaped the film's style and the way they *moved* between those extremes in practice, given their training and contemporaneous artistic references. This way, a more complex and more accurate picture of the film's genesis arises. There is no better way to trace it than by considering the film's transitional scenes between the city and the village[41]. These segments are not only transitional as changes of setting and as movements through the landscape, but are also hybrid in that they bear disparate stylistic influences, instead of the single, authorial imprint of Murnau.

One of these rightly famous sequences is the trolley ride of "The Man" and "The Woman" from the forest down to the city. This scene has come to be identified with the film as a whole and is a focal point of *Sunrise* in the opinion of many filmmakers, including that of master cinematographer Nestor Almendros[42]. Quite beside its magnificent beauty, it is an excellent example of technical collaboration that surpasses the director's control over the film's style, while also encapsulating the film's dominant thematic oscillation between nature and culture, revealing their *interpenetration* rather than mutual exclusion. The sequence was simply entitled "THE FOREST!" in Carl Mayer's screenplay and it plays out over sixteen shots without a single intertitle in the Movietone version of the film that was released in the United States[43]. It begins with a panoramic shot of a cliff whose picturesque appearance (reminiscent of period postcards) conceals the tension in

which the film has arrived at this point in the story [Fig. 8a]. We see the woman speedily ascending the hill towards the camera. The urgency in the motion of her body through the scenery contrasts with the rhythm of the preceding sequence on board a boat headed for the village where "The Man" is rowing against a static background, making for a tense, if barely moving, boat ride. The camerawork and the handling of location signal that the dynamic between bodies, landscape and vehicles will become crucial meaning-making devices – a pattern that holds true for the rest of the film.

"The Man" follows in pursuit, tracing the same trajectory as "The Woman" to the top of the hill. When the scene cuts back to the escaping woman, the camera makes a simple pan that is so concise in its illustrative power that it could well serve as a visual shorthand for the entire film: from her frantic dash in the midst of dense forest, the camera, in one unbroken motion, follows the woman as she comes upon an unmistakable sign of the reach of industrial progress, even in this most isolated of locations – a rail track [Figs 8b-c]. A trolley arrives just in time to pick up "The Woman" and, after a brief interval, her pursuer. In a single shot the film has established the inevitability of technological "progress" and its uneasy but expanding presence in the midst of the natural landscape. The visual power of this dialectic can be compared to the tree stumps in the foreground of George Inness' painting *The Lackawanna Valley* (1855), or the smoke billowing from the locomotive on the background of Asher B. Durand's *Progress (The Advance of Civilization)* (1853). Gliese had laid down one mile of tracks, evenly split between Lake Arrowhead, where location shooting took place, and the Fox Hills lot, where the city set was constructed. He thus attempted to literally connect the two settings, without this being explicitly mentioned as a requirement in the script or in Murnau's notes that had only specified a succession of exterior and interior shots evoking a journey[44].

Once aboard the trolley, a sequence lasting slightly more than a minute traces the couple's distance from and the progressive reconciliation with one another (only full achieved once they're in the city). More than any other moment in the film, these ten shots are given over to

a pure, minimally-mediated contemplation of landscape. Höllriegel described this process:

> [Gliese] provided the landscape through which the couple travelled in the tram to the city followed by the camera. The designer rode on the tram and, with the help of the viewfinder, decided on the pictures and angles to use. Only what was strictly necessary was constructed, and the sets never went beyond what the camera itself required[45].

This is not to say that the scenery is presented as "natural" from a diegetic point of view, or that the filmmakers' first priority (as it is sometimes assumed) was to hide the sleight of hand by means of which the protagonists are conveyed from the forest into the city. Indeed, the flatness of the background as seen through the trolley's windows [Fig. 8d], and the frequent incursion of poles and electric lines draw attention to the artificiality of the scene, calling to mind the intermittency of a filmstrip running through a projector.
The background was obviously inserted into the view much in the way Warren Newcombe would use glass shots to transform backgrounds at MGM. "Studio and nature," Lotte Eisner observed, "complemented and harmonized with each other. […] The artificial becomes one with the real lake and its limpid shores: we seem to see only a single shot and a single landscape" [Fig. 8e][46]. The artistic handling of the sequence recalls other shots of *Sunrise* that are explicitly presented as artificial or fantastical: the sequence at the photographer's studio where the couple is photographed against a typically pastoral, "faux arbor" background with the whole process visible to the spectator [Fig. 8f][47]; as well as the daydream that the man had earlier shared with the woman of the city, when the city, its sights and sounds had appeared to them, as if in a mirage, during their initial courtship in the marshes [Fig. 8g]. The scenery that is visible throughout the journey by trolley, "unfolding through the window" according to the script, has a similar oneiric quality. Murnau notes that the view was in fact of the opposite side of Arrowhead (from where the village was constructed), but we also see the lake itself, sailboats, the water glistening in the sun, the pines on the shore framing the view, a composition very reminiscent

of turn-of-the-century American pictorial photography or of Albert Pinkham Ryder seascapes, as Luciano Berriatua has suggested[48].
The camera dwells on "The Woman's" body confined to a corner of the trolley and immersed, as if floating, in the landscape behind her – her association with nature and the relegation of the conductor and "The Man" to the technological realm associated with the city is one of the main visual patterns established by the scene [Figs 8h-i][49]. It is particularly noteworthy that a silent version of the film, made for European distribution, has fewer shots during this specific scene and those featuring the lake in the background are significantly shorter[50.]
The transition to the city (and therefore the set) is made seamlessly as the scenery – now shown in front of the conductor – changes to urban scenes, 'suburbs', then 'factories' and 'storehouses'. In an ironic reversal, the ostensibly natural, unmediated view during this sequence is of the *city*, while the nature views at the trip's start were *manufactured* with the use of back projection. Gliese used the back side of the built sets [Fig. 8j] to suggest a procession towards the center of the city: what looks like construction scaffolding flashing by, is in fact the support beams on the back of these massive sets, built in false perspective[51]. In this manner, the film seems to be equating industrial infrastructure with a behind-the-scenes-view of Hollywood in operation, both contemporary landscapes given over to the manufacturing of products and dreams[52].
The zigzag motion of the trolley that enhances the immersive effect of the vehicle and those on board it as they are traversing the scenery was determined not by any narrative exigencies or directorial choices, but by the fact that Gliese had to build around the set of a Tom Mix Western on the Fox lot. In his interview with Bernard Eisenschitz, Gliese clarified that the entire design for the trolley sequence was "determined by the angles of the camera" and constructed accordingly in collaboration with the cameramen and Struss in particular[53]. People, cars and advertising signs whizzing by give the scenes a documentary look, not unlike the city symphonies produced during the same years [Fig. 8k][54]. The appearance of factories in the scene is equally flat; their geometric rendering evokes that of a precisionist painting

by Charles Sheeler, while the early shots of city streets and bridges closely replicate the New York photography of Alfred Stieglitz and his circle[55].

The film's famous opening montage "Summertime … Vacation time," is similarly a testament to the pioneering integration of art direction and camerawork achieved through representations of landscape in *Sunrise*. Its significance as a synthesis of urban and countryside scenes in a 'moving graphic collage' directly anticipates the style of *Menschen am Sonntag* (1930) among other city symphonies – with Gliese being central to the conception of both. Other transatlantic connections can be made: in the transitional scene on the trolley described above the early views of the lake expertly framed by the trolley's windows and the character's bodies, are highly evocative of a Mediterranean seascape like Lake Como or the Amalfi Coast. As the couple approach the city, the streets and the urban infrastructure outside brings to mind photographs published in early issues of *Camera Work*, one of the premier early venues for artistic photography in America.

Conclusion: "Sunrise" as a 'Landscape-Text'

Gliese's career is a case-in-point as to the disparate sources of movie landscapes in the silent period. His contributions made the shores of an artificial lake in the San Bernandino Mountains look like an Alpine village and turned the Fox backlot into a mixture of Berlin and New York. Gliese's central position within German expressionism speak to the different national and aesthetic loyalties that artists working in Hollywood had to balance. Landscape is thus just as much about craftsmanship as it is about idealized nature. This blend of nature and culture is one of the legacies of *Sunrise* for American cinema, evoked in films like *Days of Heaven* (1978), among many others. It is also a unique mélange of American and German artistic tendencies at a particular moment in time with regard to attitudes towards urban and rural life.

This legacy was first cemented by *City Girl*, which should not be viewed as the obverse side of the earlier film, but as its dialectic pair. In one of the early scenes of *City Girl* – also released under the title

Our Daily Bread – Kate, the protagonist, returns to her room where the last vestiges of the natural world (a flower pot) have withered away and the concrete jungle all around her looks stifling. She stares out her window where a train passes directly in front of her eyes, just like the train in the opening montage of *Sunrise*. Her attention is caught by one of the billboards on the opposite building advertising a vacation to 'Minnetonka Shores' [Figs 9a-e]. Her impulse to escape to the city will eventually lead to her disillusionment about the existence of any and all 'Arcadian utopias'. For that one moment, however, she is enraptured by the graphic representation of a landscape spread out over the concrete, just like the illicit couple of *Sunrise* was enraptured by the city in their shared daydream during the marsh scene. The billboard in *City Girl* portrays a couple during a boat-ride under the moonlight, very much like the moonlight of Ryder's seascapes, the fake moonlight of *Sunrise* that Rochus Gliese painted in the Fox studio, and Karl Struss shot and lit and made 'real'; an ersatz, commercialized version of nature, flattened out and glamorized, to be sure, but a 'moving' landscape nonetheless[56].

Authenticity, *craftsmanship* and *experience*, all converge in the representation of movement in the landscape that artists sought to simulate by building elaborate sets complementing or substituting the natural landscape and bringing it to the foreground of storytelling as a crucial component of the art of filmmaking. This is the very movement that had been long foretold by Emerson when he urged "the Daguerreotypist, with camera-obscura and silver plate now to *traverse the land*, set up his camera also, and let the sun paint the people"[57].

Fig. 1.
An advertisement for *Sunrise* foregrounding the film's scenery. Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

Fig. 2.
Murnau (front center), Struss (left second row behind his camera) and Gliese (seated below Murnau, second from right) during the production of *Sunrise*.

Fig. 3.
One of Rochus Gliese's designs for *Sunrise*.

Fig. 4.
One of Rochus Gliese's designs for *Sunrise*.

Fig. 5.
One of Karl Struss' on-location photographs for *Sunrise* at Lake Arrowhead.

Fig. 6.
One of Karl Struss' on-location photographs for *Sunrise* at Lake Arrowhead.

Fig. 7.
Where Fox Pictures are Made, from *Fox Film Corporation* [annual releases] 1926.

Figg. 8a-k.
The trolley sequence in *Sunrise*.

Figg. 9a-e.
City Girl aka *Our Daily Bread* (four first frames) and *Sunrise* (bottom frame).


"The MOST IMPORTANT PICTURE IN THE HISTORY OF THE MOVIES"
Life
F. W. MURNAU
The Noted Fox Director
of
The film of films, the best picture of this year, last year and all the years
according to the New York Daily News
SHE loved him more than life itself. He was her all, her man. Life was a rosy dream until . . . .
Along came the Woman From the City. Voluptuous, alluring. Her eyes were deep pools of passion. Her voice was the Voice of Sin. He listened. He was tempted and led astray.
"Get rid of your wife," said the temptress. She lured him, even to Murder. And so he planned . . . .
But see for yourself what happens.
You will weep with Janet Gaynor as you wept with her in "Seventh Heaven." You will suffer with George O'Brien the torments of love and temptation, in this, the most romantic role of his career.
All this is the treat awaiting you in "SUNRISE," the great romance of love and laughter and tears.
If- You want the ultimate in screen entertainment
Don't miss this one!

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

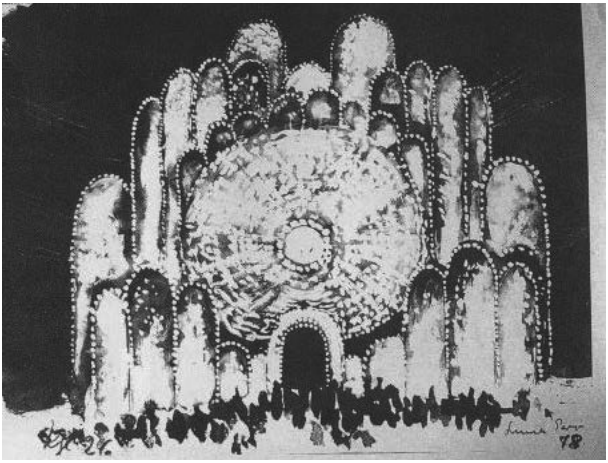
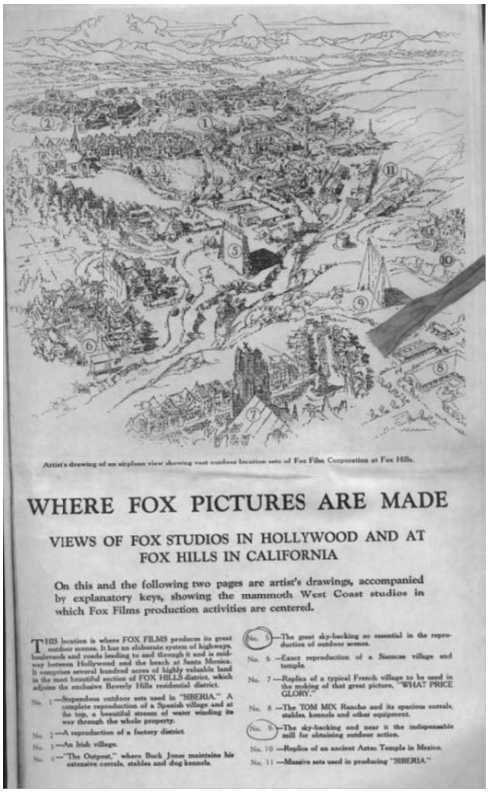


Fig. 4

Fig. 5

Fig. 6



Artist's drawing of an airplane view showing vast outdoor location sets of Fox Film Corporation at Fox Hills.

WHERE FOX PICTURES ARE MADE

VIEWS OF FOX STUDIOS IN HOLLYWOOD AND AT FOX HILLS IN CALIFORNIA

On this and the following two pages are artist's drawings, accompanied by explanatory keys, showing the mammoth West Coast studios in which Fox Films production activities are centered.

THIS location is where FOX FILMS produces its great outdoor scenes. It has an elaborate system of highways, boulevards and roads leading to and through it and is midway between Hollywood and the beach at Santa Monica. It comprises several hundred acres of highly valuable land in the most beautiful section of FOX HILLS district, which adjoins the exclusive Beverly Hills residential district.

No. 1—Stupendous outdoor sets used in "SIBERIA." A complete reproduction of a Spanish village and at its top, a beautiful stream of water winding its way through the whole property.

No. 2—A reproduction of a factory district

No. 3—An Irish village.

No. 4—"The Outpost," where Buck Jones maintains his extensive corrals, stables and dog kennels.

No. 5—The great sky-backing so essential in the reproduction of outdoor scenes.

No. 6—Exact reproduction of a Siamese village and temple.

No. 7—Replica of a typical French village to be used in the making of that great picture, "WHAT PRICE GLORY."

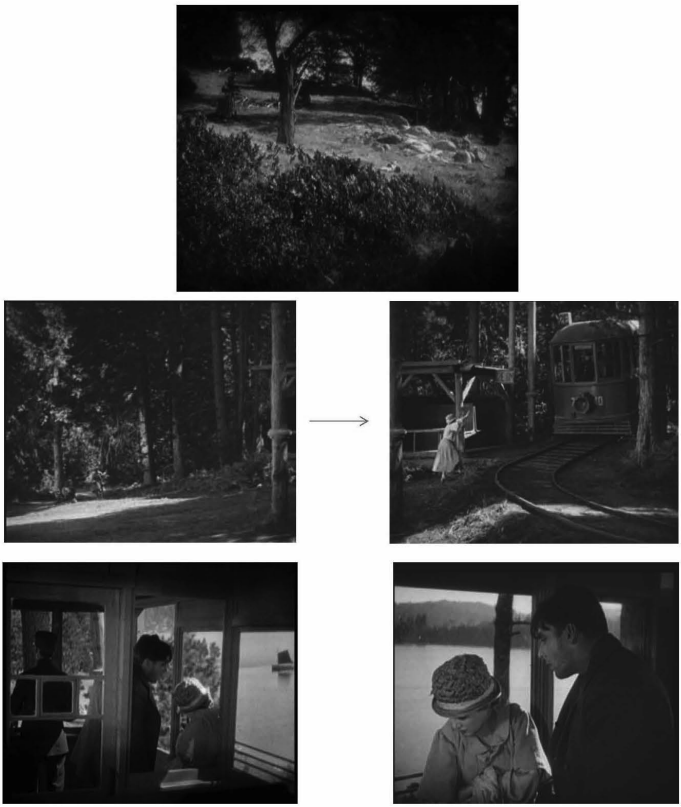
No. 8—The TOM MIX Rancho and its spacious corrals, stables, kennels and other equipment.

No. 9—The sky-backing and near it the indispensable mill for obtaining outdoor action.

No. 10—Replica of an ancient Aztec Temple in Mexico.

No. 11—Massive sets used in producing "SIBERIA."

Fig. 7



Figg. 8a-e






Figg. 8f-k

Figg. 9a-e

[1] My reading of *Sunrise* is intended as a corrective to the disproportionate focus on urban geographies and the 'city' as a hub of spectatorship and production both in studies of modernity and of early film history – in addition to those that focus critical reception of Murnau and this film.

[2] E. Lubitsch, *My Two Years in America*, "Motion Picture Magazine", Vol. XXVIII, no. 11, December 1924, pp. 24-25, 104.

[3] For the background to the negotiations see L. Berriatua, *Los Proverbios Chinos de F.W.Murnau,* Madrid, Filmoteca Española, 1990, pp. 268-269 and pp. 377-394. For the first wave emigré directors in Hollywood during the silent period and their influence on the style of American cinema, see J.C. Horak, *German Directors in Hollywood,* San Francisco, Goethe Institute, 1978.

[4] F.J. Smith, *German Films, Hollywood Style, Not 'So' Good,* "Liberty", November 19, 1927. It should be remembered that the anti-German sentiments of a portion of the American population hardly dissipated after the end of WWI. For more on Murnau's place as a mediator between German film aesthetics and Hollywood see the case study on the backgrounds of *Sunrise* in R.C. Allen, D. Gomery, *Film History: Theory and Practice*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1985, pp. 91-104.

[5] L.H. Eisner, *Sunrise – the American Début*, in *F.W. Murnau,* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973, p. 180. Eisner is actually quoting Arnold Höllriegel, a journalist who visited the set of the film, see note 22 below.

[6] The bibliography on the film is vast. For a good précis see L. Fischer, *Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans,* London, BFI Publishing, 1998 and Id., *Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans*, in R. White, E. Buscombe (eds), *British Film Institute Film Classics*, Vol. I, London, BFI Publishing, 2003, pp. 72-93. Janet Bergstrom's original research and Caitlin McGrath, *"Joy in Motion": Sunrise and the Dynamogenic Effect*, in *Captivating Motion: Late-silent film sequences of perception in the modern urban environment* (PhD Dissertation, University of Chicago, 2010) provided important context for my argument here. Some of the reviews, program notes and screening brochures quoted below can be found in the film files of the USC's Cinematic Arts Library and the Academy's Margaret Herrick Library.

[7] For the few critical considerations of the film see L.H. Eisner, *Our Daily Bread*, in *F. W. Murnau*, cit., pp. 197-201; R. Koszarski, *City Girl*, "Film Comment", Vol. VII, no. 2, Summer 1971, pp. 20-22; S. Goudet, *City Girl: Corps Etranger,* "Positif", no. 523, September 2004, pp. 98-100; N. Droin, *City Girl de Murnau: Ombres et Paysages*, "Jeune Cinéma", no. 336-337, 2011) pp. 107-111; as well as the essay in the recent DVD releases by Masters of Cinema (UK) and Carlotta Films (FR); see also L. Berriatua, *Los Proverbios Chinos de F.W.Murnau*, cit., pp. 535-562.

[8] W. Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West,* New York, Norton, 1991, p. 19.

[9] P. Bogdanovich, *Edgar G Ulmer: An Interview*, "Film Culture", no. 58-60, 1974, reprinted in *Who the Devil Made it: Conversations with Legendary Film Directors,* New York, Ballantine, 1998, p. 565.

[10] Reproduced in Figs 4 and 11 of J. Bergstrom, *Murnau, Movietone and Mussolini*, "*Film History: An International Journal"*, Vol. xvii, 2005, pp. 190, 198.

[11] N. Isenberg, in his biography of Edgar G. Ulmer notes that Gliese's work was singled out by many American reviewers, something almost unheard of for a set designer working in Hollywood at that time. The *Los Angeles Evening Express* praised "the art and camera effects of Rochus Gliese and Edgar Ulmer", N. Isenberg, *Edgar G. Ulmer: A Filmmaker at the Margins*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2014, p. 33.

[12] See Interview in *Rochus Gliese*, "Kinemathek", no. 4 (November 1968), pp. 11-14. In an interview with P. Bogdanovich, Ulmer says that Gliese was "Murnau's closest friend", P. Bogdanovich, *Edgar G. Ulmer: An Interview*, "Film Culture", p. 190. Gliese was involved in *Sunrise* from the very beginning. one of his notebooks from a preparatory trip with Murnau to Hollywood, when the Sudermann novella was chosen as the story for the film, survives; See D. Neumann (ed.), *Film Architecture: Set Designs from Metropolis to Blade Runner,* Munich, Prestel, 1996, pp. 36-37. One of the best-informed sources on Gliese's contributions to *Sunrise* is an unpublished one: *Programme No. 7: Sunrise,* "Toronto Film Society Silent Film Series, 1986-7", found in the film's file at USC's Cinematic Arts Library.

[13] J.-C. Romer, *Entretien avec Edgar G. Ulmer*, "Midi-minuit fantastique 13", 1965, pp. 1-14.

[14] L. Berriatua, *Los Proverbios Chinos de F.W. Murnau*, cit., p. 418.

[15] It is not at all an exaggeration to say that the stylistic idiosyncrasies of cinematic expressionism are owed as much to designers like Gliese, Walter Reimann and Hermann Warm as to directors like Robert Wiene, Murnau and Paul Wegener. All three art directors are featured prominently in what is, sadly, still one of the only major sources of primary research to focus on silent film set design and art direction on both sides of the Atlantic, B. Eisenschitz's dossier *Le décor de film: Berlin, Londres, Hollywood*, in the February 1982 issue of "Cinématographe"; see also the exhibition catalog D. Neumann (ed.), *Film Architecture*, cit.

[16] For a brief biographical sketch in English and further references see D. Neumann (ed.), *Film Architecture*, cit., p. 197.

[17] Gliese later sued Fox for $100,000, though this was likely a bid for free publicity. This enmity is probably the reason why he didn't continue working with Murnau in the rest of his American films (see "Moving Picture World", Oct. 1, 1927, p. 20; Dec. 1, 1927, p. 26). Future director Clarence Brown was among the many artists visiting the set during production (others included Howard Hawks and John Ford), and Brown remembered that when he went to Lake Arrowhead where the countryside

scenes were being filmed, he "crawled over it for a day and half. It was wonderful. We all felt it was great", see R. Koszarski, *An Evening's Entertainment*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1994, p. 255.

[18] For instance, the interiors' expressionistic quality is the main evidence that Chris Lippard employs to argue for "The German [element] in *Sunrise*", in J.Raab, J. Wirrer (eds), *Die deutsche Präsenz in den USA,* Berlin, LIT Verlag, 2008, pp. 425-427.

[19] L.H. Eisner, *F.W.Murnau*, cit., p. 201.

[20] A. Höllriegel, *Hollywood Bilderbuch,* Leipzig, E.P. Tal & Co, 1927, p. 46.

[21] Carl Mayer complained that once in America, Gliese "slicked up" the original designs, but it is not clear what changes if any were made and if Mayer had any say in the film's visual planning; see K. Brownlow, *The Parade's Gone By*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1968, p. 261.

[22] K. Thomas, *Sunrise Opens Karl Struss Series at LACMA*, "Los Angeles Times", January 3, 1977, E1. One reviewer characterized the village as "medieval"; quoted in S. Kauffmann, B. Henstell (eds), *American film criticism, from the beginnings to Citizen Kane,* New York, Liveright, 1972, p. 195. Fischer finds it resembles "one of Europe's reconstructed open-air folk museums"; L. Fischer, *Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans*, cit., p. 88.

[23] *Out Where Fox Begins*, "Moving Picture World", March 26, 1927, pp. 391, 409 and 413.

[24] B. Eisenschitz, *Le Voyage a Hollywood, par Rochus Gliese*, "Cinématographe", February 1982, p. 15.

[25] See the opening intertitle, "This Song of the Man and his Wife is of no place and every place"; see also R. Herring, *Synthetic Dawn*, "Close-Up", Vol. II, no. 3, March 1928, p. 44.

[26] L.H. Eisner, *F.W. Murnau*, cit., p. 176.

[27] See A. Chamberlin, Scrapbook no. 23, pp. 118-123 at the Margaret Herrick Library's Special Collections. This juxtaposition of locations is also to be found in the illustrations of L.H. Eisner's, *F.W. Murnau*, cit., pp. 177-178.

[28] Höllriegel called Arrowhead, "a European Alpine landscape"; A. Höllriegel, *Hollywood Bilderbuch*, cit., p. 40; see also W. Lee Cozad, *Sunrise (1927)*, in *Those Magnificent Mountain Movies,* Lake Arrowhead (CA), Rim of the World Historic Society, 2002, p. 110. Indeed, Arrowhead would later provide the setting for the 'Switzerland' of *Three Smart Girls* (1936). Additional outdoors photography for *Sunrise* took place at the Columbia River in Oregon (anticipating the locales used for *City Girl*), at Coronado Beach (part of the opening 'vacation' montage) and in Mexico. One of the well-known stories about the film's production that Gliese himself repeated in his

interviews and in a letter to Lotte Eisner, reveals the extent of to which every supposedly natural element in the film was carefully designed: a tree that Murnau spotted and wanted placed in a central location of the village set suddenly shed its leaves and the Mexican laborers hired to build the sets had to hand-glue artificial leaves on it which, in turn, also fell off after a while; see R. Gliese, "Kinemathek", p. 12.

[29] Victor Fleming had shot the equally scenic Clara Bow vehicle *Mantrap* (1926) in the vicinity of Lake Arrowhead during the previous spring. Greta Garbo frequently vacationed at Lake Arrowhead where she also met Murnau during the production of *Sunrise*. For illustrated histories of the 'Lake', see Rhea-Frances Tetley, *Lake Arrowhead,* Charleston (SC), Arcadia Publishing, 2004 and R.G. Hatheway, R.L. Keller, *Lake Arrowhead,* Charleston (SC), Arcadia Publishing, 2006.

[30] "Murnau Selects His First American Location and is Honored Guest at Big Hollywood Dinner", *Fox Folks* September 1926, p. 9; reproduced in L. Berriatua, *Los Proverbios Chinos de F.W.Murnau*, cit., p. 468. Later in 1927, Murnau returned to the topic of landscape in an interview, "Nature has given [Hollywood] beautiful and varied landscapes, a variety of life that is not to be found anywhere else, marvelous sunrises and sunsets, the blue of the sea and natural settings in a radius of a thousand miles that are unique in the world", ivi, p. 434.

[31] J. Orr, "Expressive Moments; Hitchcock and Weimar Cinema", in *Hitchcock and Twentieth-century Cinema,* London, Wallflower Press, 2005, p. 72.

[32] *Sunrise*'s city sequences are visually prefigured by the square in *The Finances of the Grand Duke*, Gliese's previous collaboration with Murnau. Murnau had visited the United States in 1926 to take reference pictures (some of them in 3D) to use in the building of sets, two of them are reproduced in D. Neumann (ed.), "Film Architecture", pp. 36-37; see also notes no. 23 and no. 24 on p. 38). However, Gliese's own designs must be credited with turning *Sunrise* into a "test bed for current architectural ideas, bringing modern architecture to America, just ahead of Richard Neutra […] and Le Corbusier" (ivi, p. 104). Gliese did not base his design on New York, but on individual buildings and urban designs in Germany, e.g. Erich Mendelsohn's Mosse Haus (1922) in Berlin.

[33] A. Höllriegel, *Hollywood Bilderbuch*, cit., pp. 42-43.

[34] Murnau Selects His First American Location, "Fox Folks", cit., p. 9.

[35] On this topic see the relevant segment on *Sunrise* in episode 10 of Kevin Brownlow's documentary *Hollywood: A Celebration of the American Silent Film* (1980). Brownlow's collection is one of the main visual sources on the production design of *Sunrise*.

[36] F.J. Smith, *German Films, Hollywood Style, Not* So *Good*, "Liberty", November 19, 1927, p. 29.

[37] P. Reniers, *The Shadow Stage: The Foreign Element*, "The Independent", Vol. CXIX, no. 4040, November 5, 1927, p. 458.

[38] Herbert G. Luft, *Notes on the World and Work of Carl Mayer*, in "The Quarterly of Film, Radio & Television", Vol. VIII, 1954, pp. 387-388.

[39] *Our Films in German Eyes: Sunrise in Berlin*, "New York Times", January 29, 1928, p. 110. The reference to comedy is most likely to the pig chase scene at the fair which was added at the last minute by Murnau.

[40] In this respect see the diagram in W. Spector, *Sunrise* 1927, "Cinema Texas Program Notes", Vol. XXII, no. 1, January 28, 1982, p. 70, which, however, ends up being rather reductive in its Manichean treatment of the film's nature vs city themes. Fischer's *Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans*, is also structured around such oppositions.

[41] Caitlin McGrath alludes to the need for this comparison in what is a rare scholarly consideration of the film's sets, but concedes that she primarily focuses "on the city sequence sets not the country sets. A comparison of the two different styles would be interesting, but falls outside the scope of this current project"; C. McGrath, *"Joy in Motion": Sunrise and the Dynamogenic Effect*, p. 212, note no. 37.

[42] Almendros taught a masterclass on the film at the American Film Institute in 1984. Some of his remarks are transcribed in N. Almendros, *Sunrise*, "American Cinematographer", Vol. LXV, no. 4, April 1984, pp. 28-32 and *Lauding a Landmark,* "American Cinematographer", Vol. LXXXIV, no. 6, June 2003, pp. 94-96; 98-102.

[43] There are some variations in another extant silent version that was released in Europe and which is also discussed below below with respect to landscape. This version is available in the DVD release of the film in the Masters of Cinema collection. The relevant scenes in Mayer's continuity script (C. Mayer and F.W. Murnau, *L'Aurore* [Sunrise], "Avant-Scène Cinéma", no. 148 [June 1974], pp. 26-35) are numbered 58 to 61; see also the scene breakdown (*découpage*) in ivi, p. 49. See also the film's continuity script dated "July 13, 1927" at the University of Southern California's Twentieth Century Fox Collection (copyright number L 25737). Both of these correspond to the Movietone version. The man and woman are still called Ansass and Indre (from Sudermann's novel) in the script as well as in Murnau's handwritten notes. I refer to them by the more generic 'man' and 'woman' or 'he' and 'she' as in the film.

[44] The continuity script notes simply "visible through the foliage, here comes a trolley", which presumably could have been represented with the use of back projection, as is the case of with a lot of other scenes in the film; C. Mayer and F.W. Murnau, *L'Aurore* [Sunrise], cit., p. 26. The script as published in *Avant Scène Cinéma* helps in identifying all the shots made in Lake Arrowhead versus the backlot set. All translations are my own.

[45] A. Höllriegel, *Hollywood Bilderbuch*, cit, p. 47. For Gliese's corroboration of this account, see his interview B. Eisenschitz, *Le Voyage a Hollywood*, cit., p. 15.

[46] L.H. Eisner, *F.W. Murnau*, cit., pp. 179-180. Murnau used a similar process to Warren Newcombe's called "Williams matte shot" (a travelling matte), named after cinematographer Frank Williams; see L. Berriatua, *Los Proverbios Chinos de F.W. Murnau*, p. 425.

[47] On this particular scene see C. McGrath, *"Joy in Motion": Sunrise and the Dynamogenic Effect*, cit., pp. 208-211.

[48] C. Mayer and F.W. Murnau, *L'Aurore* [Sunrise], cit., p. 26. L. Berriatua, *Los Proverbios Chinos de F.W. Murnau*, cit., pp. 418-419, where two of Ryder's paintings are juxtaposed to specific shots in *Sunrise*. Other painterly references cited are Käthe Kollwitz, Adolf von Menzel, Edvard Munch and the Blau Reiter (see L. Fischer, *Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans*, cit., p. 8), although these apply more to interiors and the portrayal of individual characters rather than landscapes. The exteriors, I would argue, were influenced by a specifically American aesthetic. For example, the flashback scene of pastoral bliss between the couple is highly reminiscent of E. Hicks' *The Peaceable Kingdom* (1826).

[49] The woman is also shown in close-up against a backdrop that is highly reminiscent of a cowcatcher shot, a ubiquitous camera perspective in early scenics.

[50] This version was made simultaneously with the American one, following the practice of the era, by using cameras placed side-by-side, which accounts for the different angles in several shots.

[51] See the construction photographs reproduced in H. Helmut Prinzler (ed.), *Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau: ein Melancholiker des Films,* Berlin, Filmmuseum Berlin-Deutsche Kinemathek, 2003, pp. 258-260.

[52] This analogy was also made by A. Höllriegel in his cine-roman, see *Die Filmstadt* and *Das Leben im Traumland*, in *Hollywood Bilderbuch*, cit., pp. 9-19 and pp. 106-116.

[53] B. Eisenschitz, *Le Voyage a Hollywood*, pp. 15-16. The sets of *Sunrise* took two months to construct and, as noted by the "Moving Picture World" (December 1926, p. 408), "certainly went up as rapidly as construction at the heart of New York".

[54] On a direct link between Sunrise and *Menschen am Sonntag* (1930) involving Gliese and Ulmer, see note 56 below.

[55] Compare to Strand and Sheeler's *Manhatta* (1921).

[56] In his 1970 interview with Bernard Eisenschitz, Gliese described how this scene (which is also slightly longer in the version released in America) was shot with a combination of real sets, models and camera tricks that resulted "from a fruitful and amicable collaboration with the cameramen", without Murnau's direct involvement. The opening title card/travel poster of the station that then springs into action via a match cut (mimicking a long-established technique of early cinema) was designed by

Gliese; B. Eisenschitz, *Le Voyage a Hollywood*, cit., p. 16. Struss has also confirmed that the scene was done collaboratively, with Rosher handling the camera. However, given the scene's bold superimpositions and the similarity of the beach scenes with some of Struss' earlier photography, it is very likely that he had a hand in it too; see K. Struss, *Dramatic Cinematography*, "Transaction of SMPE", Vol. XII, no. 34 (1928), p. 318. The opening is thus emblematic of the film's double hybridity, between German and American aesthetics on the one hand, and between representations of nature and the city on the other. The connection with *Men on a Sunday* is justified by the fact that Gliese was involved in planning the latter film for which he was initially to serve a co-director and by the fact that one of the credited directors was Edgar G. Ulmer, Gliese's assistant in *Sunrise*. Almendros also makes the connections with posters of the period, calling the scene "a collage"; N. Almendros, *Sunrise*, cit., p. 29.

[57] R.W. Emerson, *Introductory Lecture*, of the *Lectures on the Times* first published on "The Dial", Vol. III, no. 1, July 1842, p. 4 (my emphasis).