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# The Dartmouth Film Society

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## SUNRISE (1927)

The wife	JANET GAYNOR
The man	GEORGE O'BRIEN
The woman from the city	MARGARET LIVINGSTON
The maid	BODIL ROSING
The photographer	J. FARRELL MacDONALD
The barber	RALPH SIPPERLY
The manicure girl	JANE WINTON
The obtrusive gentleman	ARTHUR HOUSMAN
The obliging gentleman	EDDIE BOLAND
	and GINO CORRADO, BARRY NORTON, SALLY EILERS, ROBERT KORTMAN.

Screenplay: CARL MAYER, based on "Die Reise nach Tilsit," a short story by HERMANN SUDERMANN. Photography: CHARLES ROSHER and KARL STRUSS. Editing and titling: KATHERINE HILLIKER and H. H. CALDWELL. Art Direction: ROCHUS GLIESE, EDGAR G. ULMER and ALFRED METSCHER. Musical score: DR. HUGO RIESENFELD. Presented by WILLIAM FOX. Released by FOX FILM CORPORATION September 23, 1927.

Directed by F. W. MURNAU

\* \* \* \* \*

## TABU (1931)

with RERI (ANNA CHEVALIER), MATAHI, HITU

Screenplay: F. W. MURNAU and ROBERT FLAHERTY. Original story: ROBERT FLAHERTY. Photography: FLOYD CROSBY. Additional photography: ROBERT FLAHERTY. Production assistant: DAVID FLAHERTY. Musical score: HUGO RIESENFELD. Assistant Director: W. M. BAMBRIDGE. A PARAMOUNT PICTURE.

Directed by F. W. MURNAU

"Fredrich W. Murnau's directorial genius," writes Andrew Sarris, "demonstrates the difference between viewing the cinema as the sum of its machinery and regarding it as the creation of its artists. Any director can track if he has the facilities at his disposal. Any director can illuminate a dark screen. But only Murnau could have given the meanings of tracking and lighting that he did."

Although some of the more pedantic cogniscenti would argue, Germany has proved a greater training ground for movie-makers than a source for great movies. Partly because of the license that lay in Hollywood in the twenties and thirties, partly because of the lure of Beverly Hills fortunes, and partly due to Germany's constant anti-semitism, a host of refugees departed from their teutonic homeland before World War II and settled in America. Names today as American as apple pie once belonged to some of the most gutteral of people: Wilder, Zinnemann, Preminger, Sternberg, Lubitsch, Stroheim, and Dieterle, for example. Most came with great theatrical training, a few with some experience in the new art of movies, but all in a time when silence was the great universal equalizer. When, finally, sound came, the German colony weathered the change better than many of their high voiced stars.



After having worked as an actor in Berlin, F. W. Murnau entered the movie business, directing among other works, NOSFERATU and THE LAST LAUGH, the latter with Emil Jannings and scripted by Carl Mayer who had also written THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI. American producer William Fox (whose company, Fox Film Corporation, was later to merge with Twentieth Century Pictures to form the familiar Twentieth Century-Fox company that we know today) was so impressed by Murnau and Mayer's innovations in THE LAST LAUGH that he invited the pair to Hollywood.

The project Mayer and Murnau were working on in Germany was based on Hermann Sudermann's short story Die Reise Nach Tilsit (The Excursion from Tilsit) the movie title later being changed to SUNRISE. Mayer was as thorough a scriptwriter as anyone could wish for. He sometimes spent days working out on paper a single production shot to accomplish his very visual and non-verbal visions. But he hated America, and Murnau came to Babylon alone.

Fox placed a red and green carpet at the German director's feet. So impressed with the idea of turning his factory into an artist's studio was the producer that he spared no costs for Murnau's triangular morality play. His foresight reaped its rewards; in a year when WINGS, THE WAY OF ALL FLESH, KING OF KINGS, and FLESH AND THE DEVIL vied for the first Oscar, SUNRISE was awarded best picture. Janet Gaynor became the first Best Actress. Only Murnau was not over-whelmed with joy, and for his next major picture, TABU, he was to leave the film capital for the South Seas.

Murnau held a great deal of admiration for the documentarist Robert Flaherty. Together they formed a production company to film a story written by Flaherty. But the two different personalities, the German romantic and the American realist, differed over the script, and it being Murnau's money that by that time was being shed, Flaherty dropped out. The latter's brother summarized each man's relationship to TABU: "Flaherty led Murnau to this island paradise, gave him a dramatic story, and Murnau made a Murnau picture there."

For silent poetry, Murnau was probably the world's greatest artist. The atmosphere that the man created with a camera, the lyricism with which he used his camera, the economy with which pictures transcended words, saying much more — this is what made Murnau's untimely and mysterious death shortly before TABU's premiere such a tragedy. In a period when Cecil B. DeMille's morality plays were box office boffo, Murnau related the same stories, but with romanticism rather than sentimentality. True, Fox's demands on the second half of SUNRISE, the food that fed up the director with Hollywood, altered the second half of the piece and changed its tempo and ending. Sin versus godliness, black versus white is also a somewhat dated theme for tourists of Peyton Places and other similar valleys. Yet if one can allow himself to be seduced by Murnau's melodious moods and not titter at the "fake sets" or the melodramatic endings and watch the incredible economy with which the director avoided subtitles and sound, then he is in for two pleasant journeys. The American critic Seymour Stern wrote:

"TABU is in my opinion Murnau's primary masterpiece and is one of the supreme achievements of the screen--a work ranking with the best creations of Griffith, Eisenstein and Dovshenko... immortal and tragic beauty on celluloid. Basically this is the product of F. W. Murnau, not of Robert Flaherty, who worked on it as an ethnological advisor; essentially it is a German film, in the same sense in which QUE VIVA MEXICO! is a Russian film. Like QUE VIVA MEXICO! and like BROKEN BLOSSOMS, to which category of lyric poetry and tragedy on the screen it is related, TABU represents a landmark in the exploitation of form, imagery, music and rhythm in the cinema."

Murnau was a strange, almost queer man in Hollywood. He was a sensitive stylist, an artist. He loved Joyce and it was his aim to capture the mind using his camera and film the way Joyce did using his pen and words. The camera's donning of the personalities of both protagonists in SUNRISE and TABU is witness of this. Murnau said: "Real art is simple, but simplicity requires the greatest art. The camera is the director's sketching pencil. It should be as mobile as possible to catch every passing mood, and it is important that the mechanics of the cinema should not be interposed between the spectator and the picture."

--Peter Werner