The Rules of the Game

*La Règle du jeu* (*The Rules of the Game*) is a 1939 humanist film by Jean Renoir satirizing the French aristocracy at play on the brink of World War Two. Despite a gentle tone, and a lack of any direct reference to politics or world events, its subject matter angered some of the audience upon its premiere; it was banned and cuts were ordered. With the original negative destroyed during the war, the film was later reconstructed. Inspiration to make what Renoir called a “more classical, more poetic” film (Durgnat 192) came to the director when he was working on 1938’s naturalist *La Bête Humaine* (*The Human Beast*), but his characteristic realism also remains intact. Renoir took an improvisatory approach to the film, beginning with a script he had written inspired by French writers that included de Musset and Marivaux, and then revising it constantly based on the performances of his actors. The film is known for its pioneering use of deep focus, which had become technically difficult with the start of the sound era. It had a great influence on the modernist directors of the Nouvelle Vague, in particular François Truffaut, who called it “the greatest film in the history of cinema” (De Baecque and Toubiana 35).

Jean Renoir in 1962 discussing his intentions in making The Rules of the Game and his reaction to the film’s reception.

**References and Further Reading:**

Bazin, A. (1973) *Jean Renoir*,edited with an introduction by François Truffaut, trans: W. W. Halsey II and William H. Simon, New York: Simon and Schuster.

De Baecque, A. and Toubiana, S. (1999) *François Truffaut*, Trans. Catherine Temerson, New York: Alfred A. Knopf,.

Durgat, R. (1974) *Jean Renoir*, University of California Press.

Renoir, J. (1974) *My Life and My Films*, Trans. Norman Denny. New York: Atheneum, 1974.

Renoir, J. (1989) *Renoir on Renoir: Interviews, Essays, and Remarks*, Trans. Carol Volk, Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Jeremy Harley

Independent researcher