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A Companion to Jean Renoir

Edited by

**Alastair Phillips and
Ginette Vincendeau**

 WILEY-BLACKWELL

A Companion to Jean Renoir

Wiley-Blackwell Companions to Film Directors

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Figure 0.1 Jean Renoir points the camera at Françoise Arnoul on the set of *French Cancan*. Credit: Franco London/British Film Institute.

Acknowledgments

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We are equally grateful to our contributors, who all responded enthusiastically to our request for a chapter, and produced first-rate scholarship, sometimes in the midst of personal or work turmoil. This volume encompasses an extraordinary roll-call of Renoir scholars, experienced and new and, as well as providing innovative, informative, and challenging material, our writers have helped turn the editing of this book into a truly pleasurable experience. Talking of pleasure, we will keep a particularly fond memory of the round table on *La Règle du jeu* that took place at King's College London on June 3, 2011; we want to thank V. F. Perkins, Chris Faulkner, and Martin O'Shaughnessy for a rare experience that perfectly combined scholarship and friendship. We also would like to thank Michèle Lagny, Michael Witt, and Dudley Andrew for their support and advice.

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and friendship of my wonderful colleagues at Warwick. Thank you, too, to the readers of the first draft of my chapter, Ginette Vincendeau, Valerie Orpen, and Alexander Jacoby, for their nurturing and encouraging feedback – it was much appreciated. Many people have offered me other kinds of help and assistance, but I must especially thank Jim Hillier and Fiona, Aaron, and Martha Morey for their vital emotional and culinary support. My chapter is dedicated to my father who gave me my first, and also my most recent, camera. Both he and my late mother taught me how to see.

Ginette Vincendeau is grateful to the School of Arts & Humanities at King's College London for a grant toward the translation of one chapter from the book, and to Sarah Cooper as Head of Department for her support in this matter. The editing of this book was also made possible by a sabbatical leave granted by King's College London. The BFI Southbank released a new, digitally restored, print of *French Cancan* in July–August 2011 and asked me to introduce it – a timely piece of programming that helped me complete the chapter on the film for this volume. Valerie Orpen, Alastair Phillips, Simon Caulkin, and Leila Wimmer read the chapter and provided very useful feedback, for which many thanks. As ever, Simon Caulkin provided unerring and much needed personal support.

In Memoriam

While we were editing this book, we were sad to hear that Cora Vaucaire, who sings “La Complainte de la butte” in *French Cancan*, died on September 17, 2011; Paulette Dubost, the unforgettable Lisette of *La Règle du jeu*, died on September 21, 2011; and Mila Parély, who played the equally unforgettable Geneviève in *La Règle du jeu*, died on January 14, 2012. Luckily, they all live on in Renoir's films.



Figure 0.2 Jean Renoir and his son, Alain, in 1939. Credit: British Film Institute.

Notes on the Text

Foreign-language quotations are translated into English by the authors, unless a published translation has been used (in which case this is the version cited). The original language is retained only if a point is made about language.

French Film Titles

For Renoir's films, the English translation is dispensed with, as the reader will find English-language versions of Renoir's film titles in the complete filmography at the end of the volume. For other films, an English translation is provided after the first mention, and thereafter the French title is used.

Names

Definitive spelling of the names of cast, crew, and characters is notoriously difficult to arrive at. For the sake of consistency across this volume, in any case that is open to debate we have deferred to the original film credits along with standard authoritative texts, assenting always to the fact that the version we have chosen to follow is not the only variant.

Pagination

References throughout the book are as complete as possible. However, a number of daily and weekly press references do not indicate a page number. This is because they were obtained by the authors from either the database at BiFi (Bibliothèque du film)

in which the scanning of articles has deleted page numbers, or the Rondel collection of clippings at the Département des arts du spectacle of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, in which page numbers are also frequently missing. Readers wishing to consult the full articles are directed to the BiFi Library (51 rue de Bercy, 75012 Paris), which offers fast and convenient online access to the material; or the Département des arts du spectacle, Bibliothèque nationale de France, site Richelieu (5 rue Vivienne, 75002 Paris); or the Bibliothèque nationale de France, site François-Mitterrand (quai François-Mauriac, 75013 Paris), which holds full issues of the papers.

Introduction

Renoir In and Out of His Time

Alastair Phillips and Ginette Vincendeau

There is also genius.

V. F. Perkins¹

Renoir's outstanding status in French and world cinema stems from a unique combination of factors: his illustrious father (the painter Pierre-Auguste Renoir), his political commitment to the Left in the 1930s, his long and eventful career spanning four decades and four countries (France, the United States, India, and Italy), his own prolific writing, and last but not least his extraordinary body of films – some of which (*La Grande Illusion*, 1937; *La Règle du jeu*, 1939) are universally considered masterpieces. Over 38 films, Renoir ranged from avant-garde amateur work in the silent era to major popular successes in the 1930s and 1950s; he worked in fiction but also made a celebrated documentary for the Communist Party (*La Vie est à nous*, 1936); he championed location shooting and produced masterpieces in studio sets; and he explored all the possibilities of the French film industry, while also learning Hollywood's methods. He was considered – and considered himself – a quintessential French filmmaker, yet he took American nationality and died in Beverly Hills. The topics of his films ranged hugely: from book adaptations to original scripts, from historical to contemporary subjects, from the farmers of the Midi to Parisian typesetters, and from French cancan dancers to American farmers of the Deep South. Yet if this suggests a chameleon-like or even inconsistent figure, many have argued – convincingly – for a strong coherence in his work, both thematic (a particular kind of humanism) and stylistic (realism as a defining feature). Indeed, Renoir was one of the key exhibits for the *politique des auteurs*; for François Truffaut, his films were “as personal as fingerprints” (de Baecque and Toubiana 1999: 162). The aim of this book is thus to explore what is both a duality and a tension, between the wide-ranging variety and the deep coherence, and



Figure 0.3 Production still of Jacques Lantier (Jean Gabin) in *La Bête humaine* (Production: Paris Film Production (Robert Hakim)). Credit: RMN, with thanks to BiFi.

between the many “Renoirs” and the unique imprint. It does this by exposing its subject to new approaches, by asking different questions, and by re-examining familiar works from different angles and exploring lesser-known ones.

Producing this collection was both daunting and easy. As a canonical filmmaker, Renoir has already generated a vast amount of distinguished writing, not least by himself and by André Bazin, whose collected criticism, first published as *Jean Renoir* in French in 1971, François Truffaut called “the *best* book on the cinema, written by the *best* critic, about the *best* director” (Truffaut in Bazin 1992: 7). After Bazin, French- and English-language scholarship has produced other landmark studies, which the reader will find time and again referred to in these pages: the work of, in particular, Olivier Curchod, Claude Gauteur, Frank Curot, Claude Beylie, François Poulle, and Daniel Serceau in France, and Alexander Sesonske, Raymond Durgnat, Christopher Faulkner, Dudley Andrew, and Martin O’Shaughnessy in the United Kingdom and United States; at the time of completing this book, a new biography by Pascal Mérigeau has just been published. Yet, despite this impressive pedigree, it proved easy to attract new writing. We found that Renoir’s films generate such enduring fascination and pleasure that our invitation to write on his work met with huge enthusiasm – from both long-established Renoir experts and younger scholars, all bringing fresh perspectives to the director’s work.

Our main concern was to offer readers a compendium of new information, new data, as well as new ideas. The book should be stimulating for those already familiar with Renoir’s work, while providing a comprehensive resource for those

new to him. Our contributors have exceeded our expectations in helping us achieve this aim. Their approaches range from close textual analysis to detailed research within the French and American archives. If this book shows the perennial validity of auteur scholarship when supported by solid evidence (textual and contextual), it also productively exposes Renoir to newer approaches in film studies. Chapters deploying philosophy, performance studies, gender studies, and cultural analysis all confirm that if Renoir is a canonical filmmaker, he is certainly not a museum figure.

Like Renoir's films, our approach is wide-ranging. This volume combines thematic chapters on topics such as performance, theatrical adaptation, photography, the figure of the artist, Renoir's critical reception, and anti-Semitism, with chapters on aspects of Renoir's biography and his stylistic features. The book also contains work focusing on just one film. This includes a round table (on *La Règle du jeu*) and, in one case, an analysis of a fragment of just one scene (in *La Bête humaine*, 1938). While we could not possibly cover Renoir's work exhaustively, we hope to have provided a sufficiently comprehensive "road map" to enable readers to find their way through the richness and originality of his work, which justifies his status as, in Truffaut's words, "the *best* director in the world."

Close-Up on Renoir's Aesthetics

It is a fitting testament to the enduring significance of Bazin's book on Renoir that many contributors cite it extensively when discussing the director's complex *mise en scène*. And they have responded eloquently to the challenge of reassessing this vital element of Renoir's practice, either by tackling Bazin head-on or by initiating discussion of relatively neglected aspects of Renoir's filmmaking that take our understanding of his career in new directions. In his discussion of Renoir's practice of shooting in deep space and, in his neat formulation, "deep time," Martin O'Shaughnessy argues that Renoir's greatest work is driven by an aesthetics that actively acknowledges the presence of competing historical possibilities. He shows that if many of Renoir's films constantly connect inside and outside, it is not because the world is a stable, unified whole that must be shown as such, but because the director's conception of the world is uniquely uneven and in flux. As he puts it, "something significant changes in the films' style as history enters their frame." Many of the book's contributors develop this concern with historical transformation, for instance in terms of Renoir's fascination with acting and performance. This is extensively documented in Christophe Damour's chapter, which provides for the first time a comprehensive inventory of Renoirian acting styles. Approaching the topic from a different angle, Susan Hayward embeds her discussion of performance in Renoir's color costume dramas of the 1950s within a detailed analysis of set design, linking production constraints with aesthetics, and

showing how, for instance, sets within sets, frames within frames, function within Renoir's expressive *mise en scène*.

We are especially delighted that so many contributors have taken up the challenge of reassessing Renoir's aesthetics in terms of his use of sound. In his thorough and systematic examination of Renoir's practice in the 1930s, Charles O'Brien argues that while it remains true that Renoir's conception of the medium differed substantially from Hollywood norms, the director remained committed to a system of conventions that was largely characteristic of French cinema as a whole. In this way, he documents how Renoir was, in terms of sound, both "the exception and the norm." In his chapter, Michel Marie tackles sound from a different angle, arguing that Renoir's capacity for audio-visual innovation centered on a unique conception of the expressive potential of the recorded voice, especially the nuances, accents, and registers of the French language. Renoir's soundtracks of the 1930s, he points out, are marked by an astonishing variety of voices and vocal mannerisms that contribute to an almost ethnographic portrayal of France at the time. The importance of the voice is similarly explored in Valerie Orpen's incisive reading of sound in *La Grande Illusion* – a topic which, surprisingly in view of the importance of language in the film, has been until now underexplored.

The reader will note a two-pronged method to the book's appraisal of Renoir's style and aesthetics in that it provides both a macro and a micro approach. While the former privileges one particular aspect of the director's work – such as cinematography or set design or sound – across a number of films, we have also commissioned studies of individual titles that deploy a range of analytical methods. Our aim is to provide a broad chronological framework to fully convey the richness and variety of Renoir's overall career. Anne Kern thus discusses a selection of Renoir's silent films of the 1920s which she connects to "the ethics of play," before we move to Olivier Curchod's meticulous archival work on the mysterious appearance or disappearance of the murder scene in various versions of *La Bête humaine*. To mark the monumental significance of *La Règle du jeu* to Renoir studies, we have brought together three distinguished Renoir scholars – V. F. Perkins, Christopher Faulkner, and Martin O'Shaughnessy – for a round table. Their spirited discussion ranges across a rich array of themes and pinpoints key moments (the offering of a rabbit, a farewell between lovers, etc.), in the process demonstrating the validity of detailed, close textual analysis as well as the fact that this extremely well-known film still has more insights to yield. Finally, in his reflection on the aesthetics of *The River* (1950), Prakash Younger, through a rereading of Bazin's discussion of Renoir's staging of characters in the Bengal setting, is fascinated by how a phenomenological engagement with *The River's* pro-filmic world enables a dynamic interpretation of the film's politics of realism. By reading the film through Bazin he also helps resolve the contradiction of a film that is both "orientalist and imperialist," and yet, at the same time, "a landmark in the history of the cinema."

Renoir's Filmmaking and the Arts

Like all major filmmakers, Jean Renoir has been perceived as an exceptional artist, a figure ahead of his time or even working in opposition to prevailing values. In short, the unique auteur above the run-of-the-mill *metteurs en scène*. When influences have been conceded, they have focused on his relationship to his illustrious father, a view propagated by the director's own book *Renoir, My Father* (2001; first published 1958), developed by much writing on him (including Bazin (1992; first published 1971)), and proposed more recently by an exhibition in Paris that compared the work of father and son (Benoliel and Orléan 2005). We felt, as a result, that it was more urgent to explore other connections between Renoir and the wider culture. To this effect, Alastair Phillips opens up the hitherto neglected, yet surprisingly rich, relationship between Renoir and photography. Renoir lived and worked in an era when many of the world's greatest photographers converged on Paris and his work is testimony to this, in terms of its aesthetics (his street scenes for instance), technical experimentation, and manner of self-presentation. In this fashion, Phillips thus shows Renoir as a cultural figure highly aware of the value of the image.

Equally crucial has been Renoir's interaction with the theater – both explicitly, as a theme that surfaces in many of his films from *Nana* (1926) to *Le Petit Théâtre de Jean Renoir* (1969), and implicitly as a major cultural intertext. Thomas Elsaesser reflects on both the theme and the *mise en scène* of theatricality, finding unexpected echoes between *La Règle du jeu* in 1939 and postwar costume films such *Le Carrosse d'or* (1953) and *Éléna et les hommes* (1956). He challenges the dichotomy between Renoir's early political films and his late "entertainment" films, concluding that "the game, the spectacle, and theater suddenly appear as the most difficult, the most serious, and the most dedicated forms of being political." Whereas Renoir's seeking inspiration in French eighteenth-century theater, or in the Italian *commedia dell'arte*, has long been recognized, as discussed by Elsaesser and also by Hayward in her chapter on decor, equally important, yet often ignored, are his adaptations of popular nineteenth- and twentieth-century plays. In her study of Renoir's early 1930s films, Geneviève Sellier unearths an unexpected reliance on the generally disparaged tradition of boulevard theater – from pieces that are considered "minor," such as *Tire au flanc* (1928) and *Chotard et Cie* (1933), to great classics like *Boudu sauvé des eaux* (1932). While Renoir often reworked the original texts from an innovative aesthetic perspective, Sellier also demonstrates that he was not immune to the tropes, characters, or ideology of the popular theater of his time and that, in this respect, his films fitted a major pattern of French cinema at the coming of sound. But Renoir's love of popular stage entertainment also encompassed the cabaret and the music hall. Kelley Conway and Ginette Vincendeau show how, at different stages of his career, he used popular song, and in particular the traditional *chanson réaliste*. Ranging

from *La Chienne* (1931) to *La Bête humaine*, Conway shows the astonishing variety of approaches that Renoir took to the use of diegetic music and songs, thereby helping the reader to “better understand [Renoir’s] aesthetic and political commitments as well as the importance of music in French classical cinema more generally.” In her chapter on *French Cancan*, a work made in the very different context of Renoir’s return to France after several years in the United States, and after detours to India and Italy, Vincendeau explores the film’s controversial sexual politics by focusing on its reflection on myths of femininity in traditions of popular entertainment ranging from the melodramatic *chanson réaliste* to the exuberant cancan.

Renoir’s cultural interests varied impressively from high culture to popular spectacle, and speak of a very modern – if not postmodern – approach to art. This versatility has clearly informed his films in a number of intangible ways, but it is also reproduced more literally in the extraordinary diversity of artistic figures present in his films. As Charles Musser discusses, the figure of the artist in society has been one of Renoir’s preoccupations throughout his entire career. Looking more precisely across the director’s films from 1928 to 1939, Musser explores this range, from the effete poet of *Tire au flanc* to the poignant figure of Octave, the “failed” artist of *La Règle du jeu*, demonstrating in the process that Renoir emerges as “an author striving to find his own sense of artistic integrity.”

Shifting Places in the Critical Canon

The centrality of Renoir in French and world cinema is paralleled by his prominence in the critical and academic canon. All the major developments in film studies can be traced, quite literally, through Renoir while, as Ian Christie shows, his own place as an object of study has significantly shifted over the years. The natural place to start this investigation is with Bazin, whose writing provides the bedrock of all subsequent work. Indeed, as Dudley Andrew puts it in his chapter on the bond between the critic and the director, their actual meeting brought “the best film critic face to face with the best director.” Exploring the relationship through themes such as realism and adaptation, Andrew also charts the complex process whereby their combined work – not to mention talent – helped move the cinema, in practice and in theory, to full recognition as an art form.

As significant as Bazin’s role in Renoir criticism might be, notably from the point of view of aesthetics, other approaches have revealed different layers of meaning to the films. Sarah Cooper’s chapter performs a dual task in this respect. On the one hand, as her case study of *The River* shows, the phenomenological method of Henri Agel’s unjustly forgotten work reveals a more spiritual dimension to Renoir’s cinema. On the other hand, her chapter also brings the cutting

edge of contemporary film studies to Renoirian critical practice, namely the twinning of film with philosophy. Shifting away from spirituality, though not from concerns with realism, a counter-approach is offered by Laurent Marie in his detailed account of the reception of Renoir's films by communist critics. In his evocatively titled "The Grand Disillusion," Marie traces the relationship between Renoir and communist artists and critics – among whom Georges Sadoul – from their closeness in the mid-1930s to their subsequent parting of the ways. He shows how these fluctuations had as much to do with Renoir's work as with the communist cultural agenda, but that Renoir ultimately remained the exemplary figure of a great artist who also knew how to address a popular audience. If the communist reception of Renoir's work as a whole was uneven, the broader critical reception of *La Règle du jeu* was even more dramatic. Indeed, perhaps the most deeply entrenched "fact" in Renoir studies remains that the film today revered as Renoir's masterpiece was originally received with such hostility in the summer of 1939 that it was subsequently banned during the war because of its unsettlingly radical nature. This is why we decided to include Claude Gauteur's painstaking archival research into the critical reception and fate of the film which shows this, beyond doubt, to be a myth. Gauteur reveals that if the reception was not uniformly positive, the film had its early champions and its fate – like that of many other films – was linked to the historical moment of the war and the German occupation – another way in which Renoir is productively replaced in his context.

La Règle du jeu would of course become a major harbinger of modern cinema, in part through its enormous influence on the band of young French critics in the 1950s who became the New Wave filmmakers. Richard Neupert, in his chapter, traces Renoir's relationship with the New Wave as a two-way one. He charts the various ways in which Renoir provided a model for young critics such as Truffaut and Eric Rohmer to develop their *politique des auteurs*, and how his films exerted a major influence on other budding filmmakers such as Louis Malle and Claude Chabrol. Neupert also shows how, in turn, the young critics had an influence on the veteran director, not least in reviving his critical standing in the postwar period by arguing, against prevailing opinion, for a continuity between the prewar and American work. Renoir's changing fortunes in the 1950s are Ian Christie's starting point in his wide-ranging exploration of the director's critical and academic reputation over the years. While Renoir – especially for his 1930s films – has always been regarded as one of the great European directors, Christie shows how his reputation as a "realist" and a great "humanist" fell out of favor in the 1970s when the dominant critical agenda was antirealist. This slowly changed, in part through several landmark scholarly works, which productively married precisely documented historical contextualization with close textual analysis. Renoir has remained in the pantheon of film connoisseurship and film studies ever since, and as Christie puts it, "We are now all free to find the Renoir who speaks to us most directly."

French Renoir

In his chapter on the communist reception of Renoir's work, Laurent Marie mentions that critical disappointment reached a peak with his decision "first to go to Mussolini's Italy and, a few months later [. . .] to embark for the United States in December 1940." If a certain chauvinism cannot be disregarded here, the French Communist Party's (widely shared) reaction stemmed from the sense of Renoir as a uniquely French filmmaker – a view which he himself promoted on many occasions, with retrospectively perhaps unwise declarations such as: "I am absolutely certain that I would be unable to produce a proper film outside my own national community. This is why I refuse to leave my country and work in America" (Renoir 1977 [1938]: 20).

Many, in fact, would agree that Renoir produced his finest work in France. Leaving these debates aside, Renoir's French work, especially in the 1930s, indeed provides a unique chronicle of French society, through his realist aesthetics (shooting on location, attention to sociological detail, socially embedded dialogue), his interest in French history, and his overt left-wing political agenda. Supreme in this respect is his work during the Popular Front,² a period of huge political and cultural turmoil, which Brett Bowles surveys in a comprehensive and finely documented manner. Bringing long-standing debates on the topic up to date, Bowles challenges the classic dichotomy between Renoir's political work and his "disengaged" work, seemingly epitomized by the famous phrase uttered by Octave (played by Renoir) in *La Règle du jeu*, that in this world, "everyone has their reasons." In the process, he reassesses Renoir's major films of the period, in particular *Le Crime de Monsieur Lange*, *Les Bas-fonds* (1936) and *La Bête humaine* – revealing Renoir's work as an "ambitious long-term struggle to implement a personal aesthetic agenda that simultaneously promoted the collective welfare of his nation." *La Marseillaise* (1938) plays an ambivalent part in Renoir's Popular Front films. A clearly ideological project that aimed to link the Popular Front of 1936 to the Revolution of 1789, the film was coolly received, in part for its perceived lack of criticism toward the king. In his chapter, Tom Brown considers how questions of self-presentation, artifice, and authenticity are embedded within the film's rhetorical style. Concerned to find a middle way between traditional Marxist analysis and "humanist" concerns, Brown examines how *La Marseillaise* attempts to transcend these "pitfalls," by way of a close textual analysis of performance in the film, notably of Pierre Renoir's incarnation of Louis XVI. Brown's extremely nuanced discussion of performance is another demonstration of the fruitful linking of historical context with detailed textual analysis.

Such linkage of text and context is also evident in both Keith Reader's analysis of *Toni* (1935) and Christopher Faulkner's reading of *La Règle du jeu*. These two films incidentally show the scale of Renoir's quasi-ethnographic project, from workers in the Midi to aristocrats in the Sologne, and highlight his successful

deployment of genre in reaching this objective (melodrama for *Toni*, the comedy of manners for *La Règle du jeu*). Reader explores how Toni's story of love and jealousy among poor farm and quarry workers, and in particular the drama of "failed masculinity" relating to its eponymous character, is distinguished by Renoir's ability to recount "a melodramatic story in a decidedly nonmelodramatic way." Faulkner's chapter on *La Règle du jeu*, part of a wider, ongoing, project, takes a very different approach. Wondering what sort of knowledge the audience might have had when they came to the film and, in reverse, what sort of knowledge the film produced for those audiences, Faulkner selects motifs, objects, characters, and themes from the film and subjects them to an exacting cultural analysis. His motifs range from the frivolous (the card game of *belote*) to the minutely detailed (railway timetables in the middle of the night) to more momentous cultural matters such as workers' exploitation, modern technology, food, and art. He concludes that "Renoir's respect for the ordinary and the everyday makes him the filmic chronicler of the *mentalités* of his time."

One sensitive aspect of Renoir's representation of these *mentalités* is the question of anti-Semitism. This is touched on by Faulkner, and it surfaces in Julian Jackson's chapter on Renoir's war. In her chapter, however, Maureen Turim offers a thorough exploration of the topic, based in large part on an analysis of *La Grande Illusion*. Turim discusses how in both this film and *La Règle du jeu*, Renoir's complex, but well-meaning, textual practice remains ambivalent. This ambivalence she reads as belonging in part to the films' historical dimension (the legacy of the Dreyfus affair, the ideological struggles of the 1930s) and in part to Renoir's biography, as she assesses Renoir's "effort to make amends on behalf of the Renoir family," in particular the virulent anti-Semitism of his father.

International Renoir

There is no doubt, then, that Renoir's films are deeply steeped in the culture, arts, and politics of France – the country of his forebears, in which he grew up and launched his career as one of the nation's most emblematic filmmakers. Yet, the surprising prominence in the book of Renoir's Indian film, *The River*, suggests that the director is perceived today as much as a global figure as a national one. As Ian Christie points out in his discussion of scholars' and critics' enduring relationship with Renoir's work, his films now circulate on DVD and online within a global cinephilic and academic community, to the extent that he is consistently perceived as one of the greats of world, and not just French, cinema. During his own lifetime, however, Renoir already saw himself as an internationalist, watching new films from around the world, traveling to the Soviet Union in the 1930s, living and working in Hollywood during World War II and, eventually, taking US citizenship. He thus insured a running dialogue between the Old World and the

New that lasted up to his death. As Vincendeau points out, by the time Renoir made *French Cancan* in the mid-1950s, his perception of his homeland was already permanently tinged by the gaze of an anthropologist looking at his subject with both the intimate affection and knowledge of a native, and the distanced perspective of a foreign tourist.

With this in mind, we have therefore made a deliberate decision to shed new light on Renoir's spirit of internationalism by including work on his relations with Hollywood cinema, as well as his time in the Indian subcontinent. In his chapter on the personal and political dimensions of the director's experience of World War II, Julian Jackson maps out Renoir's surprisingly complex and ambivalent ideological evolution immediately before, during, and after the war. This he conducts through an attentive and revealing examination of – among other documents – Renoir's correspondence. Jackson makes the point that against the familiar “master narrative” that traces a shift from the politically engaged left-wing filmmaker of the 1930s to the more conservative artist of the 1950s, Renoir's international trajectory was rather one of false starts, compromised decisions, and shifts, together with the forging of new alliances. In this spirit of multifaceted cosmopolitanism and adaptation, Elizabeth Vitanza likewise argues for a reassessment of the films that Renoir made during his American career. Like Jean-Loup Bourget who shows in his analysis of *The Woman on the Beach* that Renoir's conception of the conventions of Hollywood genre cinema was particularly acute, she suggests – against prevailing opinion – that the feature-length English-language films Renoir made in Hollywood constitute both a formative and a positive chapter in the director's overall career. Looking at archival evidence, Vitanza convincingly puts forward a more nuanced and micro-historical approach that conveys a sense of interconnected “sites of struggle,” similar to those that marked Renoir's earlier time in France.

To investigate Renoir's American period further, several writers look at his six American films in some detail. Jackson embeds analyses of Renoir's “war effort” films *This Land is Mine* (1943) and *A Salute to France* (1944) in his wider historical analysis, while Vitanza examines the production context of, in particular, *The Southerner* (1945) and *The Diary of a Chambermaid* (1946). In addition, as mentioned, Bourget devotes a chapter to *The Woman on the Beach*, exploring in particular the dreamlike qualities of this noir drama, a film which, Bourget claims, is “one of Renoir's neglected masterpieces.” Similarly, Edward Gallafent challenges the sense of disappointment elicited, for some critics, by Renoir's American films, with a close textual analysis of *The Southerner*. Gallafent focuses on Renoir's use of gestures, especially of touching with the hands, and connects this element with the director's French career as “extending an element of his work present in his earlier films.” Finally, Lucy Mazdon deals with another, unexpected dimension of Renoir's Franco-American dialogue in her discussion of the remakes of Renoir's French films: *La Chienne* (1931), remade as *Scarlet Street* (Fritz Lang, 1945), *La Bête humaine*, remade as *Human Desire* (Fritz Lang, 1954), and *Boudu sauvé des eaux* (1931), remade