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**DAVID
THORBURN:**

We make a transition now to the final segment of our course in which we-- and this transition always induces a kind of guilt in me, a kind of deep ambivalence and disappointment, and awareness of the simplifications and reductions that are embedded in all syllabi and in all curricula. And it's a good opportunity for me to remind you that even the primary emphasis of our course, which is on certain forms of American film, is itself highly selective and simplified and reductive as you-- as I told you. They were-- in the Hollywood system, they were making 500 films a year. Think of the small number we've actually seen, right? It's the tiniest sampling of what's actually available.

And what I've tried to do is give you a kind of taste of what that phenomenon of the Hollywood film was like without trying to pretend at all that I was coming anything close-- not just couldn't be exhaustive-- we couldn't even be extensive or mildly serious about trying to do justice to the complexity of that body of material. And that's even truer of course in this moment-- in these final moments of the course, where I try to do sort of a brief acknowledgment of the fact that there are profound and powerful traditions of cinema outside the United States-- in fact some more profound or at least as profound and some more powerful ones many people would say than the achievement of American cinema-- than the achievements of American cinema.

And perhaps the strongest example of that-- the most dramatic example of that-- is French film. It has a kind of parallel history. At virtually every stage of the history of French film-- of American film, you can find a kind of counterpart story in French film as if-- it's almost as if-- and in fact, there have been historians who have tried to argue about the priority. Who invented film? Were the French more advanced than the Americans? Who first developed forms of serial movies? Who first developed forms of the chase-- of the comic chase film in the early silent era? And so forth.

And I think these arguments are not very helpful about priority. But it is very important to remind you that the history of other national cinemas, and most especially the histories-- the history of French cinema has the same complexity, nuance, detail that American film has. We

can speak-- and just let me very quickly remind you. I've asked you to read a chapter from David Cook's history of narrative film that deals with the complex achievements of French film in both the silent and in the sound era. And I hope you read those chapters and reread those chapters closely, and think about them.

Just as a reminder, however, we-- there are arguments, just as Edison and-- the earliest films that were made in the United States are associated with the Edison company. So the same kind of thing is true for the Lumiere films that were developed in the 1890s in France. And of course, just as they were pioneering directors who explored and the nature of cinema, the possibilities of this new medium in the United States, an identical activity was taking place in France. And some of you of course know about the essential contribution of the early pioneering director, Melies, who talks extensively about him in the chapter I asked you to read-- the man who in fact invented the science fiction movie, in the film *A Trip to the Moon*, and did so many other early experiments with for-- with combining the reality of film with certain forms of surrealist imagination.

The tradition of discourse about film in France probably is deeper and has a longer life than in any other society. And many people would say that along with Eisenstein, the great Russian director, it's the French who elaborated the first systematic forms of film theory. And there were in the silent era and in the '20s, in France, a series of developments that encouraged a systematic kind of theoretical approach to film. I won't mention names here or particular or particular theorists-- simply acknowledging the fact that the French tradition of discussion about film, and in the equation of film, is at least as rich as that of any other society. I say this because making John Renoir stand for this whole rich tradition is unfair, even to so remarkable and influential director as Jean Renoir. But having made that basic apology, let me now make my transition to Renoir himself.

Some of you will recognize Renoir's name I hope. He's the second son of the great impressionist painter, Auguste Renoir. And in fact you can-- he was himself a subject of his father's paintings. There's the young Renoir with blonde reddish hair as he appears in one of his father's paintings in the period 1895 to 1899, when young Jean appeared in a series of paintings. In some of the paintings his gender is very ambiguous. He looks-- not just that he has long hair, but he even seems dressed in a kind of girly way. And he's sometimes mistaken for a girl when people look at the images. But isn't it interesting that this great film artist is himself in a series of-- is already in a series of immortal works of art created by his father?

Jean Renoir grew up in an atmosphere of avant garde-- almost avant garde frenzy-- many of the most distinguished artists and performers of the day were regulars in his household because his father by the-- he was born late in his-- very late in his father's life. And his father was already a very famous painter by the time Jean was born. When he grew to adulthood, he-- around the time of the First World War-- he served first in the cavalry in 1913 very briefly, and was actually injured-- he was kicked by an animal, I think a horse or a mule kicked him, and he was laid up. Then he re-enlisted in the infantry where he was wounded and he said finally-- so this is very rare in the first World War-- he ended up serving also in the Air Force. And he was briefly a pilot in the French Air Force. So he served in all three branches of the French--

First World War. And the film you're going to see tonight, the great masterpiece, such-- the great influential, deeply influential film, *Grand Illusion*, is a war film of a certain Renoirish sort as you'll see this evening. He also served briefly as a prisoner of war during the First World War. And that experience of course, in some degree, in some central way, informs the story and the experience of *Grand Illusion*, which is also a story about-- a film about prisoners of war during wartime.

You can get some sense of-- do we have some pictures of his father's paintings? Let me just get-- these are just of course among some of Renoir, Pierre's most famous paintings. And I thought that it would be-- you would be interested to see them to get some sense of-- to remind you of the importance of his father's art, and of the asking you-- and also as a way of encouraging you to imagine what the impact might have been on the young boy to have grown up in an environment like this. I don't know, that does look like Jean. Maybe there's another picture of Jean. He had kind of a jowly face. And that may be among the oldest images of him that he-- him at the oldest age that his father painted him at.

He worked on his first-- after he emerged from the First World War, he had conflicting ambitions. But he moved into film fairly soon. He wrote a script in 1924. He began to make his own movies around the same time. I have a very brief list of some of his films. Would you put those up? I want to talk very quickly about a couple of his films, and then turn to certain other important matters.

But the most important thing to say about Renoir's-- Jean Renoir's career-- is that like some important American directors, his career spans both the silent and the sound era. And he

made some significant experimental silent films of which the most well known in terms of experiment is the film *The Little Match Girl*, based on a Hans Christian Andersen story. And it uses certain kinds of surreal imagery that's very surprising, especially in a silent film. And it-- and I mention that he made a silent version of a novel by Zola, *Nana*, as a way of simply also reminding you from a very early stage, Renoir understood that the movies were a form that could sustain the most ambitious kind of artistic act-- aims. And it's a measure of his sense of that, that he would adapt, even during the silent era, a film by one of France-- by a classic French author.

But his mostly-- but his really significant work begins in the sound era, and in what's often called his French period. And the films I've listed between 31 and 39-- not a complete list of his films, this is a very selected list-- but it's a list of his most-- of some of his most significant-- all of his most-- among his most significant films for sure. No really important title is missing, although there are many other interesting films that he made. And it's the period between 31 and 39 when he left France, after *Rules of the Game*, while-- when the Second World War was imminent, came to the United States.

And the films of the '40s that I've listed there were made in Hollywood. And he was very welcomed in Hollywood. And there are people who-- film scholars who are great fans of these three films, these three titles, that he made in the United States.

Then he left the United States. The film, *The River*, which many Renoir buffs love as much as his primary films, although I find it a much slower and less powerful film, although visually incredibly beautiful. It's set in India. And the river is the Ganges. And it's a very, very remarkable meditation on the power of place in society. But his central achievement are the films of his French period running through the 1930s. And I want to say a word about some of these.

Well, one of them, *La Chienne*, stars the same character who stars in *Boudu Saved From Drowning*-- and you're going to see a clip from that film in a moment-- Michel Simon. And *La Chienne* announced a kind of complexity and ambitiousness in Renoir's work that-- would deeply significant. It had a kind of moral or political claim. It was a film set in the slums. And it was about an aborted, or an abortive or tragic love affair, between a working man played by a proletarian, played by Michel Simon, and a prostitute who is unkind to him at the end, and throws him over at the end. And the film's interest in the life of the low-- in the lives and circumstances of the lower social orders was especially significant. And Michel Simon's

immensely powerful physical performance was also memorable. And you'll see a version of that in a moment.

In the following year, he made what many people call his first great masterpiece, a film called *Boudu Saved From Drowning*. It's a-- the French title is [FRENCH], saved from the waters, [FRENCH], the waters, plural. And the French title is a little better as I'll try to say in a moment. He made-- I mention the *Madame Bovary* partly again to show you something about his ambition. He's trying to say in effect, look, the film is an equivalent art form to the great novels of our past. In 1935, he made a film that many identify as a forerunner of Italian neorealism, the movement we'll be studying next week. And I talk a bit about *Toni* in next week's lecture. It's a film, very experimental in certain ways, it uses a lot of non-professional actors. And again, it's about the circumstances of the working class in some ways. It's about French Quarry workers who were treated with a kind of clarity and attentiveness that previous films had not-- had rarely granted to members of the-- not only the lower social orders, but here, immigrants-- not even natives.

His two masterpieces come in '37 and '39. Again, remember I've left out a number of titles there-- this is a selected list-- the film you'll see tonight, *Grand Illusion*, and what many people think of as his greatest film, a deep, complex, satire on contemporary French life in the-- just before the war, called *Rules of the Game*. The primary label that's attached to Jean Renoir's work is that of poetic realism. And it's a way of trying to distinguish a form of movie making that emerges, of which Renoir is the most dramatic and powerful exemplar. But there were many other examples in French cinema.

And it's worth talking a little bit about a key forerunner to the tradition of poetic realism, a director named Jean Vigo, who died tragically young, as you can see from his dates, who made the three films-- three titles I've listed there. And these films had an immense influence on later filmmakers. *Zero for Conduct* is a film set in a-- it has surreal elements. And its plot is hard to follow. But essentially, it tells the story of children going back to school. It's a-- and following them once they get into a kind of boarding school, and rebel against their house masters. And there's a sort of comic element in the film. And there's also an element that might be called an impulse toward lyric retardation, by which I mean, the retarding is the retarding of the plot. I don't mean mental retardate-- right? There's a kind of lyric impulse to celebrate what's going on right in front of you at the expense of the plot, as if the story almost stops moving at a certain point, while the camera and the-- well the camera itself sort of

indulges in witnessing a spectacle so intrinsically interesting in itself that it seems to lose interest in the ongoing story.

So there's this tension in Vigo's films from the very beginning. And what some scholars have seen a tension between denotation and connotation, between the denotation being the simple realism, the ongoing story. Right? And the connotation being the poetic or lyrical impulse of the film to sort of celebrate life in its complexity and its nuance, without any interference from the demand that you follow a story. And this tension is a fundamental element, not only in poetic realism, but as you'll see, in the Italian form of this, called neorealism that emerges out of it. And it's somewhat of a grittier and more historically politically engaged kind of drama-- kind of film, even though it's a direct outgrowth of the kind of thing we're saying about poetic realism. And in both forms, in both kinds of film, there is this retarding impulse, this lyric impulse, in which the story's desire to get on with itself is sometimes in conflict with the camera's desire to look at what it sees, to revel in what it wants to look at.

And so Jean Vigo, partly indeed because of his tragic life-- short life-- and partly because he was the son of an anarchist, of a political anarchist, of a serious anarchist, who wrote about theories of anarchism as a political movement-- and he himself was very hostile to authority, Jean Vigo. And his films animate a kind of anarchic, anti-establishmentarianism, that is very distinctive. He's almost always on the side of the weak and the powerless.

Let me say a few words about what we might call the key features of neorealism. One of the most fundamental elements of neorealism is what could be called a *mise en scene* style, that is to say, it's committed to long takes. The poetic realism is interested in the external world, and in the relation between characters and the outer world. And although it will use abrupt cuts of various kinds, it won't do so at the expense of your experience of the outer world. It wants the audience to take in what it sees, and to make judgments about it. It doesn't try to-- in the way that certain other kinds of styles might do-- to manipulate your response in quite the-- in so dramatic a way.

And what follows from this *mise en scene* style is what some scholars have called in camera editing. because what's going on is because the camera, the tape, because the camera is going-- well the style is committed to long takes, what will happen is the camera will alter its focal length-- its depth of field-- or it will simply move and change its-- the object of its gaze while it is in operation. So that it's-- instead of a series of cuts that are made in the editing room, it's the camera man working the camera who's making certain decisions that in another

kind of film would be made by a film editor after the fact. And this creates an effect of not exactly improvisation, but an effect of-- an effect that creates the impression that there's a kind of-- sometimes at its most powerful or compelling moments, as if the camera is actually almost a living witness to what it's seeing. And it's responding in very nuanced, and sometimes very abrupt ways, to what it sees and hears.

So there are sometimes moments in both poetic realist films, and in Italian neorealist films, in which a noise will occur, and you'll suddenly see the camera turn to find out what the noise is, as if the camera is humanized in this kind of scene. And what follows from that is the camera is all-- not always, but usually set at eye level. It does not give a lot of fantastic distorting angles of vision because it's not interested in that kind of surreal or expressionist representation. So *mise en scene* style in camera editing.

A second fundamental feature would be filming on location, right? No more in studio. There's a kind of gross fundamental realism to these kinds of films because they use natural lighting. They insist or try to insist on themselves as actually photographing a world you recognize as real, not a world that has been artificially constructed in a studio-- in a studio space.

What follows also from the location filming, is a commitment to what might be called true light and sound, right? It's very rare in these kinds of films to have external sound. The sound, even the music that comes up in many of these, in most of these films-- this is a wonderful habit of Renoir himself. Sometimes you actually think the music is not a part of the drama. But then you discover it is. Almost all the music in Renoir's films is part of the dramatic texture. It's not imposed from the outside. It's not a soundtrack that doesn't grow out of the action. So if you hear music in a Renoir film-- I'll show you an example of it in a moment from *Boudu*-- it turns out that the music is being played by characters in the film. And you actually end up seeing them with their instruments.

So true light and sound. And what that also means is sometimes sound is obscured. Sometimes sound is overlapped with other noises. Sometimes dialogue is hard to hear because there are noises in the real world.

I noted that this was an aspect of a number of American directors in the post studio era, and especially in a film like *McCabe* where Altman does this kind of thing. And I think that it's very probable, even though I don't know this for certain, that Altman himself went to school on these films and knew the experiments with sound or the treatment of sound that was

characteristic of Renoir's films, and other forms of Italian-- of both French and Italian forms of realism-- what was called realism.

And then two other features-- one already implied in what I was saying-- a camera that's very fluid in motion. Not in gigantic motion, but very subtle kinds of motions. And if you watch Renoir's camera, you'll see that it's almost constantly making these minute adjustments to what it's looking at or to what it wants to see.

And then finally, something I've already said, there's a great emphasis on what could be called depth of field. That is to say, you're aware of the dimensionality of the images you're looking at. So there's a background, a middle ground and a foreground. And very often, you'll see the camera change its focal length, and what will-- if the foreground was in focus, you'll actually experience the camera shifting its focus, bringing in the background that had been out of focus before. And the effect of this while it-- because it takes place within your experience of viewing it-- doesn't take place hidden behind edits-- is to make you part of the process in some sense. Again, to make you feel that the camera's behavior is a part of your experience of the film, that you're experiencing the film through a medium that has a kind of immense sensitivity to what it's looking at, an immense respect for what it's looking at.

Well, so, key features, let me just summarize them again-- a *mise en scene* style, which means in camera editing, especially filming on location. Commitment to true light and sound. A fluid moving camera. Commitment to depth of field. What we might call, again, creating this tension between a kind of lyrical impulse, a kind of celebratory or a poetic impulse as some people have said, and an impulsive simply to deal with the world, to capture the world, to describe, or to dramatize the world fully. Well, I think I can show you or dramatize these principles more fully for you, if I give you some examples.

But as a way of introducing this, I want to talk very quickly about one formulation immensely influential formulation about Renoir that I think you'll find helpful and interesting. And these are lines that have been written about Renoir by the great critic, Andre Bazin, who was a great champion of Renoir's work-- also a great champion of Italian neorealism, and one of the great theorists of the cinema. And we can capture-- I think when-- I think that Bazin captured something of Renoir's importance in these passages from his book titled, *John Renoir*, published in 1971.

"No one has grasped the true nature of the screen better than Renoir," so wrote Bazin. No one

has more successfully rid it of the equivocal-- of equivocal analogies with painting and the theater. Plastically the screen is most often made to conform to the limits of the canvas. And dramatically, it's modeled on the stage. You see what he-- Bazin is saying, is he's reminding us that when a new technology emerges, old habits are so deeply embedded that it's very hard to free oneself from them, even though there's nothing inherent in the new technology that requires you to see the world in the ways that the older systems did. And then there's a period of transition that's involved, a period of experiment and discovery.

What Bazin is saying here is that Renoir is one of the great pioneering discoverers, right? Because with these two traditional references in mind, directors have conceived their images as boxed within a rectangle. As do the painter and the stage director. And in fact this still happens today with lazy or foolish directors.

Renoir on the other hand understands that the screen is not a simple rectangle, but rather the surface of the viewfinder of his camera. It is the opposite of a frame, right? There's stuff that goes on outside the frame. If it's look-- this is a brilliant piece of writing I think. Technically, this conception of the screen assumes what I, Bazin, shall call lateral depth of field. Lateral depth of field-- that is to-- but it's an oxymoron. Again-- contradiction, but how could there be a lateral? But what he means is that you become aware of things going on on the margins of the visual field, even outside of what you can actually see.

Since what we are shown is only significant in terms of what is hidden from us, and since the value of what we see is therefore continually threatened, the mise en scene, right, what is put in the scene, right, the mise en scene cannot limit itself to what is presented on the screen. The rest of the scene, while effectively hidden, should not cease to exist. The action is not bounded by the screen, but merely passes through it. And a person who enters the camera's field of vision is coming from other areas of the action, and not from some limbo or some from imaginary backstage.

You get this? Think how exciting this is. What a fundamental insight it is into the way a film can become compelling, and why it is that so many films might seem factitious to us despite the gross reality of the cinematic image.

Likewise, the camera should be able to spin suddenly. Renoir is full of moments in which the camera will make a wide swa-- sometimes 360 degree circle, sometimes 180 degree turns, in order to remind us of what has not been in the frame, of what is on the margins of the frame.

So the camera should be able to spin suddenly without picking up any holes or dead spots in the action.

Well I want to give you two examples of this, which are, among other things, instances of what I call-- put my outline back up-- instances of what I call visual style as moral vision. And I'll hopefully be explaining that term as we look at it. So the first clip I want to show you is from the film you're going to see tonight. And it's a way of alerting you to qualities not just in this scene, but elsewhere in the film that I hope you'll become much more attentive to, because we're taking the time to single them out now. So here is a scene from-- are we ready? From *Grand Illusion*, from relatively early in the film.

Now, as I've told you, the film is about prisoner-- French prisoners of war. So here's a scene. These are prisoners. But it's the First World War. They're allowed to receive packages from their-- in the mail, and what people-- that relatives and friends send them is food very often. All right. Can you make it a little louder, not that it really matters?

Now, watch the camera's behavior. Can you freeze it one second? Look at the window there. Why is that significant? What do you notice in the window already? Movement, right? Do you see how-- and the way the scene began, we know where that character has come from? Even though these two characters are in confrontation and talking to each other, we're aware of activity in the window behind them. We're aware of other people in the room. It actually may seem as if it's very easy to create this effect. But of course it's profoundly difficult. And Renoir is the pioneer in creating these kinds of effects. How fluid the camera is, how-- that's what I want you to watch for. Your awareness of the fact of action that's going on partly outside the frame. All right, continue.

And the man at the head table is the wealthiest of the prisoners. And he gets the best food. So he shares it with his comrades.

It's a tremendously good meal for prisoners. This is the least violent war movie ever made.

Are you beginning to notice how each of the characters is individuated in this scene? I don't have time to talk about this. Watch it tonight. Maybe I'll say a bit about it tonight when I introduce the film. Look, each one of them we can almost-- we can tell what social class they

belong to from their dress, from their mode of speech.

You see how quietly, but complexly, the camera examines the space?

And that's Jean Gabin, one of the central characters, and one of the great French actors.

All right, we have to stop this because-- I'm sorry I have to cut this short. It's a brilliant scene. Watch for it tonight. Comes fairly early in the film. Watch how each of the characters is individuated as this scene goes on. How crowded the scene is in one sense. How you're aware of activities, and even conversations, that are taking place outside the frame of the camera itself. And when the camera shifts over to one set of characters, you're aware of other conversations that are ongoing. In other words, the sense of reality that this style creates is profound and compelling it seems to me-- powerful.

But I want to show you another and even more dramatic clip, partly because it comes from a film you've not seen, and because it captures certain other qualities in Renoir's work. And this is the famous ending of *Boudu Saved From Drowning*. Let me set the scene for you while Kristen's getting it up.

In this scene-- this comes at the very end of the film. The film is a satire. And Boudu is a bum, a [FRENCH], of whom there were tens of-- there were thousands, if not tens of thousands living in Paris during the era when the film was made. A kind of tramp, like the character that the Chaplin figure plays in the American films. Although Michel Simon is a much more massive figure than Chaplin.

And in the very beginning of the film, he plays this-- he seems to try-- he jumps into the river to try to commit suicide because he's lost his beloved dog. He's a figure of despair. And a middle class bookseller, named Lestingois, spying him through his spy glasses, looking out of his book-- out of the windows of his bookshop, sees this bum. And at first he goes, oh, what a perfect bum, he thinks to himself. What a perfect embodiment of what a tramp is. And then he becomes upset when he sees the guy jump into the river, and he runs out, he dives into the river to save him. And it turns into a kind of comic scene of saving. People gather on the bridge and look down and so forth. He pulls him out, brings him into his home. His wife is very resentful of it. But eventually, she adapts. And he moves into the middle class bookseller's home. And of course he wreaks havoc there because he stands for nature itself. He can't be

civilized or tamed, right? He's Boudu soul, saved from the waters, right? So he's saved from the waters at the end. But as you'll see, at the end-- at the beginning. But as you'll see at the end of the film, he's back to the waters.

So here-- so what happens essentially is among other things in the course of the story, this figure of nature, turns out that he can't quite be civilized. One of the things he does is he manages to have a love affair or to seduce-- I shouldn't call it a love affair-- both Lestingois's mistress, a young maid who works in his house, and his wife. And a kind of semi scandal occurs in which far-- in which the tramp character, played by Michel Simon, wins the lottery and becomes very rich. So he then-- a marriage of convenience is arranged. And he's going to marry the maid that had been the bookseller's mistress. And this sort of straightens everything out because there had been a kind of scandal brewing. And in the final scene of the film is the wedding party, in which Boudu, his new bride, the bookseller, and his wife are in a boat together celebrating the wedding.

[MUSIC ONSCREEN]

And of course, these images would have invoked Renoir, Pierre's paintings very powerfully as well.

[MUSIC ONSCREEN]

Many of Jean Renoir's treatment-- films set in nature are said to have been influenced in some ways by his father's paintings. There's Michel Simon and his new bride. You see how there's music, but it's coming from source inside the story.

[MUSIC ONSCREEN]

That's the bookseller in the back, with the white hat. Everything looks wonderful.

[MUSIC ONSCREEN]

One thing I think, one reason I wanted you to see this is look how leisurely this is. I mean, where is it going? We're at the end of the movie yet, now, and yet look how the film sort of, almost as if it doesn't, even at this stage, doesn't want to end-- doesn't want to move forward.

[SILENCE]

All right, he reaches for the flower.

[SPLASHING]

[SCREAMING AND CRYING]

Now remember, he's just been married. What's happening to him? Where's he going?

[SCREAMING ON FILM]

Often when I show this to my classes, because I'm always worried about time, I get impatient here. But in fact, it's a bad reaction, because the film wants us to savor what it's doing. Right? Can you feel the sort of lyrical tendency just to sort of look at the world in its beauty? As if the impulse to tell a story and the impulse to photograph the world are in some degree in conflict, because the world keeps resisting the categories you put it in. The camera keeps discovering new things to look at.

So here Boudu comes ashore. Think of how anarchic this vision of life is, because he's just deserted his new bride, and his new wedding, and all that. Right? Doesn't seem to matter. He gets up on shore. He's still wearing his wedding clothes. And this becomes then a highly symbolic moment.

[MUSIC ONSCREEN]

He sees a scarecrow. Now he's going to shed his middle class identity by changing clothes with it.

[MUSIC ONSCREEN]

I suppose one fundamental aspect of the satire is-- what the film is saying is look, nature is always more untamed and difficult than middle class romantics imagine. It's not a tamable thing. Oh here he comes, eating is bread, newly free again. Right? Identifies with the goat, shares his food with the goat.

[SILENCE]

[SINGING ONSCREEN]

[GOAT BLEATING]

[SINGING AND MUMBLING ONSCREEN]

Pay attention to the camera.

[MUSIC ONSCREEN]

OK, shut it off. At one point in Bazin's book on Renoir, he talks about this sequence. And I want to remind you that he talks about this sequence in an era before it was possible to easily replay the movies, right? It was an era long before video tape, long before television actually. And when you wanted to watch a movie again, you have to get projectors and show them. So very often when Bazin was writing about his film, he was working from memory. And he makes some technical mistakes. But he gets the essence of the scene right. Listen to this.

He says, "Renoir the moralist is also the most realistic of filmmakers, sacrificing reality as little as possible to the thrust of his message. The last scenes from *Boudu* could serve as an epigraph to all of Renoir's French work. *Boudu*, newlywed, throws himself into the water"-- not exactly, it's an accident. It's important that it's an accident. It's not like he was planning his escape, right? Because he's nature. He doesn't think. He stands for the natural, right? But by accident, the boat overturns, and *Boudu* makes his escape because it's possible to do so. It's not as if it's premeditated. That's important.

"Dramatic or psychological logic would demand that such an act have a precise meaning. Is it despair or suicide? No it's not at all. In fact, it's just an accident." *Boudu* is-- without maybe even fully realizing it is trying to flee the chains of a bourgeois marriage. "Renoir like his character, forgets the act in favor of the fact, and the true object of the scene ceases gradually to be what *Boudu* intends." Right?

What is *Boudu* up to? Why is he doing this? I don't even think Bazin's right to even raise the question because what we think he is doing is just enjoying himself, right? Then it occurs to him, when he gets on land, that he's free of his marriage. "Renoir, like his character, forgets the act in favor of the fact. And the true object of the scene ceases to be *Boudu*'s intentions, and becomes the spectacle of his pleasure. And by extension, the enjoyment that Renoir derives, or we as viewers derive, from the antics of his hero. The water is no longer water, but

more specifically the water of the Marne-- a tributary of the Seine-- in August.

Michele Simon floats on. It turns over, sprays like a seal. And as he plays, we begin to perceive the depth, quality, and even the tepid warmth of the water. When he comes up on the bank, an extraordinary slow--" He calls it a 360 degree pan. Remember that final move the camera? But it's probably 180 degrees. He's remembering it imperfectly. "--shows us the countryside he sees before him." The world he sees before him. "But this effect by nature descriptive, which could indicate space and liberty regained, is of unequal poetry because what moves us is not the fact that this countryside is once more again Boudu's domain," although that is one effect of it. Boudu is free. And the camera shows the beauty and freedom of the world in that 180 degree pan.

"but that the banks of the Marne and all their richness of detail are intrinsically beautiful. And you're aware of that, aren't you? At the end of the pan, the camera picks up a bit of grass, where in close up one can see the dust that the heat and the wind have lifted from the path. One can almost feel it between one's fingers. If I were deprived of the pleasure of seeing Boudu again for the rest of my days," I remember the first time I read those lines, and I realized what it meant to be a movie critic or a literary critic. Think of what's implied by that. "If I were deprived of the pleasure of seeing Boudu again for the rest of my life" as if this would be a deprivation too horrible to contemplate. Right? It made me realize my own vocation in a way.

"If I were deprived of the pleasure of seeing Boudu again for the rest of my days, I would never forget that grass, that dust, and their relationship to the liberty of a tramp." The point of this exercise is to remind you of the immense power, the potency, of even a single camera move. Think what that 180 degree pan suggests, as Bazin brilliantly argues for us.

So the conclusion then is that the visual style of a film, over a certain films anyway, can express a moral vision. And by moral vision, I don't mean moralistic-- what's didactically right and wrong-- but a vision of having to do with the values and assumptions you make about the nature of the world. There's a moral vision implicit in the tentativeness, the hesitancy, the retarding impulse to dwell and linger on things, in Renoir's camera, and in the basic habits of poetic realism that you will see brilliantly embodied in the film you're going to watch tonight, *Grand Illusion*.