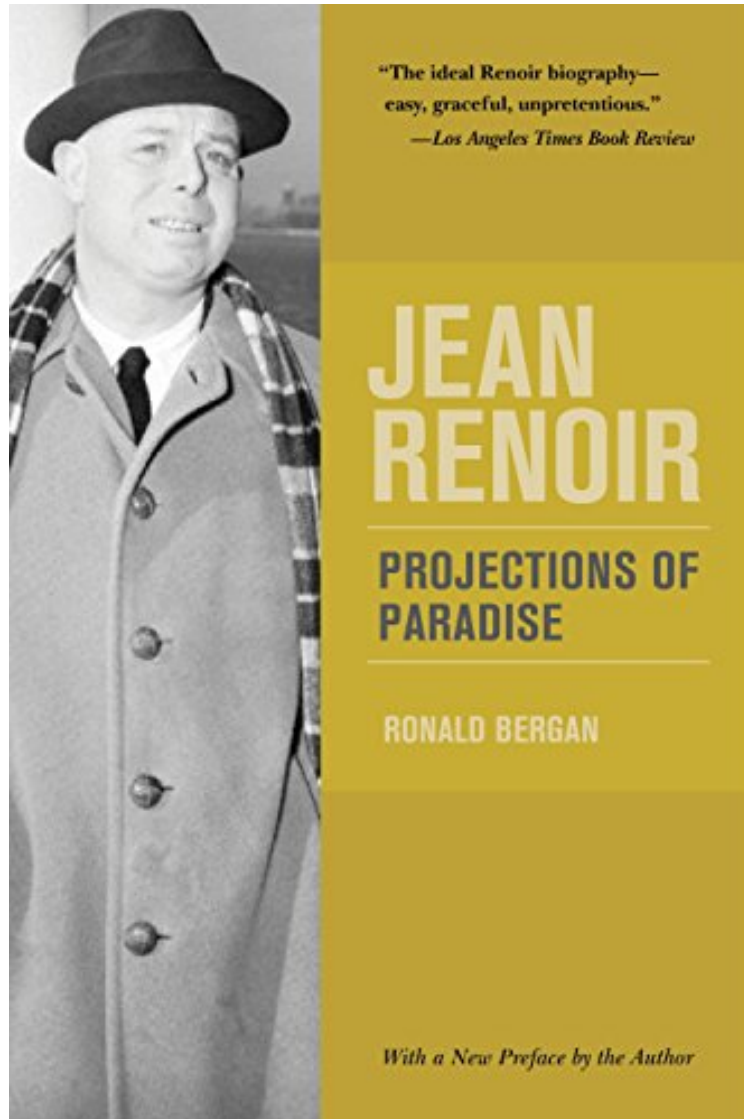


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Jean Renoir: Projections of Paradise

Ronald Bergan

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Ronald Bergan : Jean Renoir: Projections of Paradise before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Jean Renoir: Projections of Paradise:

Now back in print, the definitive biography of a seminal figure in film history, whom Orson Welles called “the greatest of all directors.” Jean Renoir’s career almost spans the history years of cinema—from the early silent movies, to the naturalism of the talkies, committed cinema, film noir, Hollywood studio productions, the Technicolor-period comedies and fast television techniques. His film *The Grand Illusion* remains one of the greatest movies about

the effects of war. Decades after its release, Renoir's *The Rules of the Game* (1939) is the only film to have been included on every top ten list in the Sight & Sound's respected decennial poll since 1952, cementing Renoir's influence. André Bazin and François Truffaut praised Renoir as the patron saint of the French New Wave. *Jean Renoir: Projections of Paradise* gives detailed accounts of Renoir's working methods and captivating appraisals of his films, and his long and fascinating life from his blissful childhood as the son of the great Impressionist painter August Renoir. This is a must-read for students of film and all fans of entertaining, timeless movies.

So many pyramids of acclaim have been built around Jean Renoir, director of *Grand Illusion*, *The Rules of the Game*, and *The River*, that the man and his films often seem removed and sterile. But Renoir was a real entertainer as well as a major filmmaker; poignancy and comedy were of equal importance to him. Throwing off the shackles of austerity, Ronald Bergen has written an intimate biography of the filmmaker. He recounts the details of Renoir's event-filled life in an easy, fluid style that makes this book easy to devour and hard to put down. From *Publishers Weekly* Jean Renoir (1894-1979), a ceramicist turned filmmaker, married Catherine Hessling--the vivacious model who had cared for his ailing father, Impressionist painter Pierre-Auguste Renoir--and made her the star of his films. In this impressive critical biography, written with the cooperation of the director's son Alain, Catherine is portrayed as an unloving, vengeful, sexually cold mate who hated being a mother. This revealing portrait traces Renoir's support of the French Communist Party, his escape from Nazi-occupied France in 1940 with Dido Freire, who became his second wife, his trying years in Hollywood, where he was treated as a novice or a spoiled brat, and his return to France and his cultural roots. Bergen, coauthor of *Faber Companion to Foreign Films*, deftly illuminates Renoir's fluent, compassionate, poetic naturalism. Photos. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. From *Library Journal* This U.S. edition of a British work of the same title (Bloomsbury, 1992) is published to coincide with the centenary of the French film director's birth. Unfortunately, Bergen's journalistic style is tedious, giving little sense of the *joie de vivre* of the director of *La Bête Humaine* (1938) and *The Rules of the Game* (1939). A few black-and-white photographs tossed into the middle provide a brief respite, and a useful filmography, bibliography, and detailed index are included. But the footnotes, which are lumped together by chapter at the end, are useless for scholarly research. Though this could be useful as a supplementary guide to Renoir's films, libraries should first consider Andre Bazin's much-praised 1973 biography *Jean Renoir* (LJ 4/1/73; Da Capo, 1992, reprint) or Celia Bertin's passable *Jean Renoir* (LJ 8/91). P. Steven Thomas, Sangamon State Univ., Springfield, Ill. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc.