

## Document Citation

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To say that Renoir is the most intelligent of film makers comes down to saying that he is French to the tip of his toes. And if *Paris Does Strange Things* is the French film *par excellence*, it is because it is the most intelligent film in the world. Art and at the same time the theory of art. Beauty and at the same time the secret of beauty. Cinema and at the same time the analysis of cinema.

Our beautiful Eléna is only a provincial muse.\* But she is a muse in search of the absolute. In filming *Venus* among men, Renoir for an hour and a half superimposes the point of view of Olympus on that of the mortals. Before our eyes the metamorphosis of the gods ceases to be a cheap slogan and becomes a spectacle of searing comedy. In fact, by the most beautiful of paradoxes, the immortals in *Paris* aspire to die. To be sure of living, one must be sure of loving. And to be sure of loving, one must be sure of dying. This is what Eléna discovers in the arms of men. This is the strange and hard moral of this modern fable disguised as comic opera.

Thirty years of on-the-set improvisation have made Renoir the preeminent technician in the world. He does in one shot what others do in ten. And the others take shots to say things which Renoir can dispense with entirely. There has never been a more free film than *Paris*. But ultimately, liberty is necessity. And neither has there ever been a more logical film.

*Paris* is Renoir's most Mozartian film. Not so much in its exterior appearance, like *The Rules of the Game*, but in its philosophy. The man who finishes *French CanCan* and prepares for *Paris* is, morally, a little like the man who completes the Concerto for Clarinet and launches into *The Magic Flute*. In substance, the same irony and the same distaste. In form, the same brilliant audacity of simplicity. To the question, What is cinema? *Paris* replies: More than cinema.

JEAN-LUC GODARD

\* The reference is to Balzac's novel *La Muse du département*.