

Massachusetts College of Art  
Masters of Film  
Teacher: Robert Gerst  
Juan Fernando Burgos



Every Wednesday I grab my things at home and come to this big classroom that looks more like a small and old movie theatre, I sit into the second row since the first is too close to the professor and the others are too far and I cannot understand what he says. I carefully wait for a bunch of words that come out from the teacher's mouth and the time I will have to match them with the projection in order to better comprehend how things are delivered in the movies this teacher had chosen for us. Today is most like every Wednesday, I had found since I began this class a new feeling for the word "Hollywood", a more respectful one, I just came out from the theater with a sense of dizziness, that feeling everyone has after spending two hours between shadows and looking into a big screen with black and white lights jumping up to one's eyes.



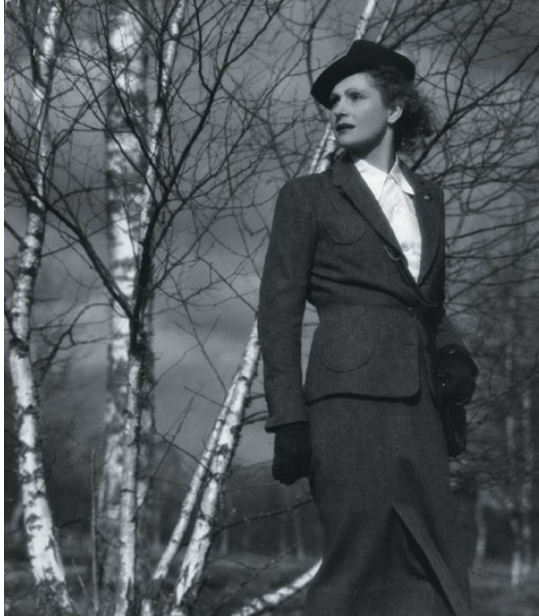
This time is more than that, this time is also a dizziness of mind, a sense that something is wrong, that something was not delivered properly or showed things upside down. First of all the audio was neither in my native Spanish nor in English, which is the language I am trying to learn, it was in French, I could recognize some words because they come from Latin but they challenge my language skills since the subtitles were unreadable at some points.

This movie makes me think of Guillaume Apollinaire's first descriptions of Surrealism or Breton's words "beauty will be convulsive or not at all." By this moment readers will be asking themselves if this movie probably is one of Buñuel's, because of my comparison with Surrealism, it is not, this maybe is my very personal point of view or maybe my lack of research leads me to this conjecture but I rather clarify my thoughts and your curiosity or I probably will lose you as a reader.

The movie I am referring to is Jean Renoir's "La Règle du jeu"/The Rules of the Game, movie released in 1939 and unaccepted for that times audience as immoral and crude. Its original negative was destroyed during World War II and restored in 1956 by Renoir.

It looks to me that this movie has many components and is considered a masterpiece for its complexity and interesting plot. All of these components deserve a particular and individual study.

Aristocracy (The Ancient Greek term aristocracy meant a system of government with "rule by the best". This is the first definition given in most dictionaries. The word is derived from two words, "aristos" meaning the "best" and "kratein" "to rule"; Wikipedia.com) maybe this resemblance is not a coincidence, it seems too convenient or too precise to be done without a purpose. The rule of the game, which is the correct translation of the original French title, and the definition of the word Aristocracy are as close as chaos is to confusion. A place without rules, the only real rule is to keep up appearances, just like elite people do, a complete exiguous sense of what is wrong and right, an indistinct attitude regarding others. Living the moment is how I would like to call it. Hypocrisy by the rule and people telling lies to one another, even to them selves is what you see in The Rule of the Game, but is not that simple, an intricate plot of relationships and feelings is told with passion and details by showing the less possible and hiding most of the obvious. I doubt about the innocence of those that lead very intelligently André Jurieu (Roland Toutain) to his sudden death. I am not sure if it wasn't a conspiracy against the weakest one, the one that doesn't belong to that lineage, to that kind. Octave (Renoir) said it to Christine (Nora Gregor), "Christine, I most talk to you about André, try to understand him, He's like modern heroes, when they're in the air, they are great, but when they're in the ground they are helpless. They are like children, they can cross the Atlantic but they can't cross a street."



After André's death they come to Marceau (Julien Carette) and ask one by one about Jurieu's faith and they all looked not surprised and informed about what just happened. But that is just an assumption and I think it will be difficult to demonstrate the contrary.

A group of people acting weird all around, like an Avant-Garde movie, an experiment with a little bit of this and a little bit of that. They are by their own rule in that house and they don't care they just care about what they have been told to do, celebrate.

Most of the house was a mess but one place represents the chaos off all, that hallway in which everyone is a piece of a chess game, but one without the strategy, in that hallway, every person becomes surreal, or part of a surreal life in which everyone live like a child and plays with his or her undeveloped mind, a subconscious chess game that everyone play without knowing. Even though many characters in this movie are secondary characters, they play an important part in it, because they are the pawns, distracting the opponent, preventing him from perceiving the truly important strategy.

The metaphor ends when opponent's movements defeat the king (André Jurieu). One thing that is unclear is who is that opponent or who made those movements. The General (Pierre Magnier) plays the Knight, appearing from time to time but instilling respect, Lisette (Paulette Dubost) is the Rook, always preparing the moves with the Queen, Christine de La Chesnaye (Nora Gregor), always defending and protecting her and moving all over the chessboard.

Chess game is described as an abstract game and I can see a bit of abstraction in the movie, maybe a big bit. The attributes of the characters may seem simple and is in that simplicity where resides the beauty of *The Rules of the Game*. The viewer can infer from many clues her own conclusions, but nothing is explained clearly and nothing has just one interpretation, everything is open to a wide translation or at least I see it that way. The movie goes by in its 80% around the Chateau (the castle), but is in the hunting scene in which the grandiosity of these people is set, and I said grandiosity in a sarcastic way since it makes me realize that there's not happiness in what these people feel, they are trying to hide their sin behind the mask of innocence, an innocence that does not exist. Is at this moment when the masquerade comes into play, Renoir uses the metaphor again, the characters use costumes to hide the reality, but this reality is beyond that, regardless of the costumes they can not hide what is obvious, the decadence of their souls, decadence that makes us remember the society in which we live, a society without an apparent rule, a game and the rule of the game.

Like I was saying in the first beginning of this essay, the movie *The Rule of the Game*, made me looked deep into this thing we call culture and society and wonder of how can we avoid the pain of losing our minds playing this game of life.

*The Rules of the Game*, was a movie out of time, out of context for the time it was produced. I could say this movie was futuristic and thought for a non-realistic audience or maybe tried to describe what was coming, the chaos that follows War, the uncertainty of not knowing what was going to happen. It was misunderstood then and can be misunderstood now by thinking of it as a superficial movie. *The Rules of the Game* is a movie that allows you to see it many times as you want and always find something new, or always have a different interpretation of what happened.

Jean Renoir was as many of great personalities of his time, a man who could anticipate the events and told them in a masterpiece called "La Règle du jeu". He was not thinking in produce a movie, but in create a story that transcend the barriers of time, a movie that always will be current with the purpose of communicating and showing our decadent society. We as 2006 viewers are as blind as 1939 viewers but we have more resources to appreciate this movie since our society is already a product of decadence and immorality.