FILM CULTURE
IN TRANSITION

THE RED YEARS OF *cahiers du* CINEMA (1968-1973)

VOLUME I

Ideology *and* Politics

DANIEL FAIRFAX

Amsterdam University Press

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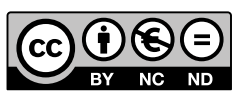

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I can't express enough gratitude to Mum and Dad for everything they have given me, as well as to my wife Michelle for her love, support and inspiration, and finally Alex, who makes every day special.

A Note on Translations

The translation history of *Cahiers* texts is a complex matter, with competing versions of the texts available and a range of strategies adopted to render the vocabulary used by the journal into the English language. For the purposes of this book, I have made reference to the original French texts when it comes to documents written by the ten *Cahiers* critics under study. Often, existing English translations have been consulted, and where this is the case, I have indicated these documents as secondary references, but the quality of these translations is particularly variable. When possible, I have utilized them in my own renderings of the *Cahiers* writings into English, but this principle has been secondary to considerations of accuracy and consistency. In the case of "Technique et idéologie," "Cinéma/idéologie/critique," and *Cinéma contre spectacle*, I have used my own translations as published in the volume *Cinema against Spectacle: Technique and Ideology Revisited*. In other cases, I have freely modified existing translations when necessary, either to more faithfully render the meaning and flavor of the original text or to eliminate terminological variations between translations. Responsibility for the translation of quoted *Cahiers* material appearing in this book therefore falls entirely on my shoulders. In the case of non-*Cahiers* texts, standard translations have been used where these exist, with occasional modifications when this is necessary. In certain cases, the original French is included inside the quoted passage within square brackets when this information is judged to be of use.

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Introduction

Abstract
In this introduction to *The Red Years of Cahiers du Cinéma*, I define the scope of the ensuing study of the French film journal in the years 1968-1973 and the legacy this period had for the later work of the film critics involved in it. Whereas even its own former writers have referred to this interlude as the "non-legendary" years of *Cahiers du cinéma*, I argue that, under the editorship of Jean-Louis Comolli and Jean Narboni, the Marxist orientation it adopted, in combining Louis Althusser's theories of ideology with a critical tradition rooted in the ideas of André Bazin, led to the journal producing an unprecedented outpouring of film theory that continues to have profound lessons for us today. Finally, I argue that an additional point of interest of this era in *Cahiers du cinéma*'s history is the model the critics developed of collective intellectual labor.

Keywords: *Cahiers du cinéma*, film criticism, apparatus theory, Marxism, Louis Althusser, André Bazin

The "Non-Legendary" Years of *Cahiers du cinéma*

At the end of Roberto Rossellini's 1950 film *Francesco, giullare di Dio*, St. Francis of Assisi gathers his band of disciples together and announces that the time has come for them to separate. Each member of the commune spins around until their heads are dizzy and they collapse to the ground. Departing in the direction they were facing at the moment they fell, the disciples set off on their different paths, tearfully leaving their comrades behind forever.

This scene comes from a filmmaker lionized by the French film journal *Cahiers du cinéma*. It may also serve as an appropriate metaphor for the group of critics who wrote for the journal in the years 1968-1973. These were the "red years" of *Cahiers du cinéma*, its *années rouges*, a time when the journal occupied a vanguard position in theory, art and politics. Editors-in-chief

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Jean-Louis Comolli and Jean Narboni were joined in this period by eight other critics who actively collaborated with the journal. Jacques Aumont, Sylvie Pierre, Serge Daney and Bernard Eisenschitz had already been involved with *Cahiers* prior to 1968, while Pascal Kané, Pascal Bonitzer, Jean-Pierre Oudart and Pierre Baudry joined soon afterwards. For a half-decade, all ten of these individuals participated fully in the life of the journal and in the process formed a tight-knit, hermetic collective. Following the anti-hierarchical ethos of the period, *Cahiers* became a truly communal undertaking—both organizationally, in the logistical administration of its day-to-day tasks, and intellectually, in its group development of a critical theory of the cinema founded on Marxism. But the editorial team also suffered from other symptomatic traits of the era's far-left political culture: the demand for totalizing commitment from its members, an approach to theory that threatened to slip into dogmatism, and a sectarian attitude to rival groupings. When it became clear by the early 1970s that this project had exhausted itself, collapsing under the weight of its political and theoretical contradictions, each critic took their own path. Some stayed with the journal in the following years but participated in it in a more dispersed, less theoretically unified manner. Others left—whether willingly or by force. The activities these critics have pursued since their time at *Cahiers* have varied widely and include academic scholarship, teaching, historical research, journalism, publishing and screenwriting. Many of them, such as Comolli, Bonitzer and Kané, have even turned to filmmaking, stepping behind the camera for works of both documentary and fiction. All have remained closely involved with cinema throughout their lives. From the standpoint of 2020, their time with *Cahiers* now appears as an intense initiation process to a lifelong preoccupation with the cinema that has now endured for more than half a century.

Founded by André Bazin and Jacques Doniol-Valcroze in 1951, *Cahiers* had by the late 1960s already become, by most accounts, the most prestigious film journal in France if not the world. Most notably, *Cahiers* counted among its alumni some of the major filmmakers of the *nouvelle vague*. François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Éric Rohmer, Jacques Rivette and Claude Chabrol all served cinematic "apprenticeships" as critics for *Cahiers* before their turn to filmmaking in the late 1950s and early 1960s shook world cinema to its core. Comolli, Narboni and their fellow critics represented the generation *after*: after the battle to overturn the old cinema had been won, after the luminaries of the new wave had left the journal, after the "golden age" of French cinephilia in the 1950s had dissipated and, perhaps most crucially, after the political certainties of post-war France had been shattered. Indeed,

the key turning point in the journal's evolution was incited by a political event. The uprising of May 1968, in which students barricaded the streets of Paris, 10 million workers went on strike, and de Gaulle's regime teetered on the brink of being overthrown, had as revolutionary an effect on *Cahiers* as it did on the nation as a whole. Having been a primarily cinephilic and politically eclectic organ in the 1950s and early 1960s, the journal had already turned markedly towards the left as the 1960s progressed. But the events of May, and the period of far-left militant activity in France they ushered in, radicalized and emboldened the critics now writing for *Cahiers*. By October 1969, the watershed editorial penned by Comolli and Narboni, "Cinéma/idéologie/critique," clearly signaled that the journal had officially adopted Marxism-Leninism as its presiding political and philosophical standpoint. The years that followed were tumultuous for *Cahiers*. As it moved towards a hardline Maoist outlook, *Cahiers* underwent major shifts in its understanding of cinema and politics, but a historical materialist approach to film theory would remain its guiding framework until 1973, when the foundering of the project for a "Front culturel révolutionnaire" led to the journal's abandonment of militant Marxism. Their exposure to political engagement left the *Cahiers* critics bruised, even traumatized, by the experience. Many of them now look back on the journal's Marxist period with a mixture of nostalgia and regret, bitterness and exhilaration. Daney even referred to this phase in the history of the journal as the "non-legendary" period of *Cahiers*, a sobriquet repeated several years later by Bonitzer.[1] Today, few of the former *Cahiers* critics remain wedded to a Marxist-Leninist outlook, but none enacted the spectacular conversion to neo-conservative politics carried out by many former far-left intellectuals and militants in the 1970s and 1980s. To varying degrees of radicalism, all the *Cahiers* critics have continued to broadly identify with the left politically. In diverse ways, they have continued to use criticism, film theory and filmmaking to interrogate and combat the status quo in both the cinema and the political sphere.

While they may not have found global fame to the degree attained by Truffaut, Godard and company, the critics contributing to *Cahiers* in the late 1960s and early 1970s have nonetheless played a crucial role in shaping our understanding of the cinema. Many of their writings have become

1 Serge Daney, *L'Exercice a été profitable, Monsieur* (Paris: P.O.L., 1993), p. 297; and Pascal Bonitzer, interviewed by Stéphane Bouquet, Emmanuel Burdeau and François Ramone, "Nos années non-légendaires: Entretien avec Pascal Bonitzer," in Emmanuel Burdeau (ed.), *Cinéma 68* (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma, 2008 [1998]), pp. 143-156.

landmark texts of film theory. "Cinéma/idéologie/critique," Comolli's six-part series "Technique et idéologie," Jean-Pierre Oudart's article "La Suture" and the collective analysis "*Young Mr. Lincoln* de John Ford"—all of which were translated into English and widely disseminated in the 1970s—have been of crucial importance for the field. All four texts are exemplars of the critical project adopted during this time: to elaborate a conceptual system for understanding the cinema that would utilize the advances in critical theory being made in Paris at the time, whether in historical materialism (with the work of Louis Althusser and his followers), psychoanalysis (Jacques Lacan) or literary theory (Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Julia Kristeva). Thanks in part to the efforts of the UK journal *Screen*, the set of ideas developed by the *Cahiers* editorial team in these texts became one of the chief foundation stones of film studies in the UK and North America, which was not truly established as a scholarly discipline until what Dudley Andrew has called "the Prague Spring of academia" in the 1970s.[2] *Cahiers* became inexorably linked with the dominant theoretical tendency of that era, which has gone by a variety of appellations. "Apparatus theory," "political modernism," "*Screen* theory" or simply "1970s theory" are now all used, relatively interchangeably, to refer to the mode of thinking about the cinema inspired by the work of *Cahiers* and its contemporaries. "1970s theory," however, suffered a backlash against it in the ensuing decades. Many of its key claims were repudiated in hostile fashion, and it was supplanted by a variety of other schools of thought, including cognitivist, neo-formalist, cultural studies-oriented or Deleuzean approaches to the cinema. Even those who remained sympathetic to the theoretical lineage of *Cahiers* and *Screen* felt constrained to acknowledge that it had entered into a period of crisis and was now to be looked back on with a mixture of "pride and embarrassment."[3]

Those clamorous debates may have since died down, but the result has been to leave the canonical *Cahiers* texts in a state of relative silence. Obligatory reading in film studies departments they may still be, but only as documents of their time, remaining in a frozen state, without much prospect, it would seem, for re-evaluation, productive re-reading or new research. Moreover, the four texts mentioned above have tended to monopolize

2 Dudley Andrew, "The 'Three Ages' of Cinema Studies and the Age to Come," *PMLA* vol. 115 no. 3 (May 2000), pp. 341-351, here p. 341.

3 This was the memorable phrase used by Rodowick in his influential overview of this theoretical tradition. D.N. Rodowick, *The Crisis of Political Modernism*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. vii.

scholarly interest in the *Cahiers* of the post-1968 period. As Nick Browne wrote in 1990, "in regard to the formation of the film studies canon, the work of *Cahiers* of this period is available primarily through the translation of just four articles, variously anthologized."[4] Despite more translations having become available since that time, Browne's judgement remains valid today. The prominent texts of this period have tended to stand in for and occlude the far vaster and more diverse, but still fundamentally unified, corpus of writings produced by *Cahiers* in the period 1968-1973. As Comolli has stated: "A lot of what appeared in this period could constitute the fragments of a single text. There is a coherence, there are explicit or implicit references, quotations. These texts cross paths again and again; in a certain manner, they are one 'text' in its essential plurality."[5] In addition to this "text," which will form the core object of study in the present book, there is the larger and more heterogeneous collection of articles, books, interviews and films produced by the *Cahiers* writers before, during and after this period. These works relate to the post-1968 *Cahiers* project in different ways. In all cases, however, they contribute to a global understanding of the individuals involved in this moment of film theory: their life, their work and their ideas.

Cahiers Under the Microscope

Existing literature on the *Cahiers* of the *années rouges* between 1968 and 1973 has, until now, largely taken two forms. Many writers have inscribed this work within the broader development of film studies, placing it between an earlier model of "classical film theory"—as epitomized by figures such as Bazin, Siegfried Kracauer, Béla Balázs, Jean Mitry, Sergei Eisenstein and Rudolf Arnheim—and the "political modernism" of *Screen* writers such as Stephen Heath, Laura Mulvey, Peter Wollen and Colin MacCabe. Broadly speaking, the work of D.N. Rodowick (*The Crisis of Political Modernism*), Sylvia Harvey (*May '68 and Film Culture*), Dudley Andrew (*The Major Film Theories* and *Concepts in Film Theory*) and Francesco Casetti (*Teorie del cinema,*

4 Nick Browne, "Introduction: The Politics of Representation: *Cahiers du Cinéma* 1969-1972," in idem. (ed.), *Cahiers du Cinéma vol. III: 1969-1972 The Politics of Representation* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 1-20, here p. 6.

5 Jean-Louis Comolli, interviewed by Daniel Fairfax, "'Yes, we were utopians; in a way, I still am…': An Interview with Jean-Louis Comolli (Part 1)," *Senses of Cinema* no. 62 (April 2012), sensesofcinema.com/2012/feature-articles/yes-we-were-utopians-in-a-way-i-still-am-an-interview-with-jean-louis-comolli-part-1/ (accessed January 1, 2021).

1945-1990) has discussed the *Cahiers* critics in these terms.[6] Alternatively, the *Cahiers* of the 1968-1973 period has been treated within the context of the journal's own history. Here, Antoine de Baecque's two-volume *Les Cahiers du cinéma: Histoire d'une revue* is the principal work of reference and offers a wealth of information about the journal drawn from the access he had to its internal archives. The overarching narrative his study presents, however, is contestable. Painting the Marxist-Leninist period of *Cahiers* in a largely negative light, de Baecque depicts the evolution of the journal as a story of fall and redemption: having abandoned its Bazinian principles for political dogmatism at the dawn of the 1970s, it gradually recovers its lost state of grace, its "openness" to the cinema, by the onset of the 1980s.[7] His account has met with objections from those involved with *Cahiers*: Bérénice Reynaud, a critic for the journal in the 1980s, has stated that "the book does not avoid a 'teleological' view of history, reading it *a posteriori* from the perspective of the more open-minded, more commercial, less political framework of the late 1980s" and that it "fails to provide a materialist reading of this quintessentially materialist phase of *Cahiers*' history."[8] Comolli himself has opined that "Antoine de Baecque's book leaves me unconvinced, as, I fear, it is guided by certain partisan considerations," and he concludes from this that "the history of this period, the history of *Cahiers*, remains to be written."[9] More recently, Emilie Bickerton's more concise, English-language study *A Short History of Cahiers du cinéma* has offered an alternative account, arguing that the "red years" represented a continuation of the modernist project initiated by *Cahiers* in the 1950s, which would lapse with the journal's turn towards the commercial mainstream in the 1980s. This position is closer to my own view, but Bickerton's volume possesses other flaws. Strewn with factual inaccuracies, as reviews of the book have noted, its brevity prevents

6 See Rodowick, *The Crisis of Political Modernism*; Sylvia Harvey, *May '68 and Film Culture* (London: BFI, 1980); Dudley Andrew, *The Major Film Theories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), pp. 236-241; Dudley Andrew, *Concepts in Film Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 120-124; and Francesco Casetti, *Teorie del cinema 1945-1995* (Milan: Bompiani, 1993), pp. 199-223.

7 Antoine de Baecque, *Les Cahiers du cinéma: histoire d'une revue vol. II: Cinéma, tours détours 1959*-1981 (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma, 1991). This standpoint is particularly evident in the conclusion of his study, pp. 345-349.

8 Bérénice Reynaud, "Introduction: *Cahiers du Cinéma* 1973-1978," in David Wilson (ed.), *Cahiers du Cinéma vol. IV: 1973-1978 History, Ideology, Cultural Struggle* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 1-44, here p. 8.

9 Jean-Louis Comolli, *Cinéma contre spectacle* (Lagrasse: Verdier, 2009), p. 18. Translated as *Cinema against Spectacle: Technique and Ideology Revisited*, trans. and ed. Daniel Fairfax (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015), p. 58.

a deeper engagement with the journal's history—a grand total of 13 pages are dedicated to *Cahiers*' politically radicalized period.[10] Finally, the BFI's four-volume project to publish key *Cahiers* texts in English translation presents its own historical overview of the journal, one bolstered by the informative introductions opening each installment of the series. In this vein, the texts by Browne (covering the years 1969-1972) and Reynaud (1973-1978) are of particular utility.

These two approaches, however, suffer from a common drawback: essentially, they both leave the *Cahiers* critics behind once their collaboration with the journal finishes. Despite the importance of Daney's journalism for *Libération* in the 1980s, Aumont's role in the development of academic film studies in France, Bonitzer's and Kané's screenwriting and directing, Eisenschitz's work as a film archivist and historian, Comolli's and Baudry's theory and practice of documentary film, Narboni's role in film publishing, or Pierre's position as editor of *Trafic*, these activities are rarely mentioned in discussions of the Marxist period at *Cahiers*. In the following two volumes, therefore, I aim to do what no scholar has attempted heretofore. Not only does the focus of my study lie squarely on the period in which *Cahiers* openly avowed a Marxist outlook, it also places this phase of the journal's historical development within an alternative context: the life and work of the ten critics involved with it during this time. *The Red Years of Cahiers du Cinéma* (*1968-1973*) will draw the links between the critics' time at *Cahiers* and their later activity. It will discern the ways in which the ideas developed at the journal shaped their subsequent output as well as the ways in which these writings and films can retrospectively shed light on the film theory developed in the post-1968 period. There are, of course, major differences, ruptures and discontinuities within the textual field demarcated by this project, but there are also significant continuities, through-lines and distinguishing features present across this array of writings, and it will be the task of this book to elucidate them.

If such a project *has* been carried out anywhere before, then it is—sketchily, episodically—in the work of the *Cahiers* critics themselves. For all of them, their time at *Cahiers*, when they were still in their twenties and early thirties, was a formative experience that was fundamental for how they

10 Emilie Bickerton, *A Short History of Cahiers du Cinéma* (London: Verso, 2009). See especially pp. 71-84. For a review of Bickerton's book providing a corrective to some of the book's infelicities, see Bill Krohn, "A Review of *A Short History of Cahiers du Cinéma*," *Kino Slang*, October 12, 2011, http://kinoslang.blogspot.com/2011/10/review-of-short-history-of-cahiers-du_12.html (accessed January 1, 2021).

understood the cinema. Prone to introspection, many of the *Cahiers* critics have reflected at length on their involvement with the journal, giving voice to their thoughts and reminiscences in interviews and other texts. The apogee of this process came in 2011 with the film *À voir absolument* (*si possible*)*: Dix années aux Cahiers du cinéma 1963-1973*. Produced for cable television and directed by Comolli and Narboni, the documentary featured interviews conducted by the two *Cahiers* editors with their former colleagues. Pierre, Aumont, Eisenschitz, Kané and Bonitzer all participated in *À voir absolument* (*si possible*), and it now stands as a precious document attesting to how this period of the journal's history is seen by its participants from the standpoint of the twenty-first century.

To a far greater degree than the secondary literature, the chief research material for the present study is primary in nature: namely, those issues of *Cahiers du cinéma* dating from the period under examination as well as the broader body of work produced by the ten critics in question, a corpus which runs to thousands of pages in total. Archival holdings in France have also been accessed: most notably those of Jacques Rivette and Henri Langlois at the Espace Chercheurs de la Cinémathèque française in Paris, and the archives of Éric Rohmer and Louis Althusser in the Institut mémoires de l'édition contemporaine in Caen. One significant archival resource, however, has remained inaccessible: that of *Cahiers* itself, presently off-limits to researchers for legal reasons. This collection would undoubtedly be of inestimable value in gaining a fuller understanding of the history of *Cahiers*, and its present unavailability is therefore deeply regrettable. Of particular value is the "Journal de travail" maintained by the editorial board in the years 1970-1974, which affords an inside look into the day-to-day operation of the journal during this period. At present, however, only a small portion of this document can be gleaned from those passages of it that are cited or reproduced in de Baecque's history. We can only hope that this material will become available for future scholars.

An alternative resource is available, however, and I have made ample use of it: namely, oral testimonies provided by the critics themselves. In the course of my research, and particularly during a year spent in France in 2013-2014, I conducted interviews with all of this book's subjects who are still alive and of sound mind. Discussions with Jean-Louis Comolli, Jean Narboni, Jacques Aumont, Pascal Bonitzer, Pascal Kané, Sylvie Pierre and Bernard Eisenschitz were all recorded and transcribed, and excerpts from this material are frequently deployed throughout the two volumes of this book. An interview with Serge Toubiana, who joined *Cahiers* in 1972 and subsequently played a major role in the journal, is similarly important, while

I also spoke with a number of *Cahiers* critics active during other periods, including Jean Douchet, Jacques Bontemps, Michel Delahaye, Alain Bergala and Serge Le Péron. Sadly, it was impossible to speak to Serge Daney, Pierre Baudry and Jean-Pierre Oudart. Daney passed away in 1992, and Baudry in 2005. Oudart's status is a mystery: the prevailing hypothesis among his former colleagues is that he was interned in a mental institution in the 1980s, and his present situation—or even whether he is alive or dead—is unknown. The testimonies that were collated from these interviews form a precious complement to the textual resources consulted for this book, fleshing them out with the personal point of view of those responsible for the texts under analysis, providing precious biographical details, and giving insight into not only the critics' retrospective account of their time with *Cahiers* but also their thoughts on the present state of the cinema and the world. Aside from Daney, Baudry and Oudart, all these critics are still actively thinking about, writing on and, in some cases, making films. More than four decades after the end of the journal's foray into Marxist-Leninist politics, giving an overview of the *Cahiers* critics' activity in the cinema is still, therefore, a work in progress. The *années rouges* are ongoing. Hence, the best future for the present book I can hope for is that it will quickly become outdated by virtue of the continued output of its subjects.

What is Althussero-Bazinism?

A presiding hypothesis about the work of the *Cahiers* critics guides this book: that their theoretical understanding of the cinema represented a combination of the structuralist Marxism of Althusser's philosophy and the "ontological realism" of Bazin's film theory. The importance of Althusser to *Cahiers* in the late 1960s and early 1970s is indisputable. In programmatic texts such as "Cinéma/idéologie/critique" and "Technique et idéologie," the influence of his ideas was explicitly asserted and their application to the study of cinema practiced. Of course, Althusser was not alone among contemporary theorists relevant to *Cahiers* during this period. Lacan, Barthes, Kristeva, Derrida, Michel Foucault, Christian Metz, Alain Badiou and Pierre Macherey were also, in various ways, decisive points of reference for the journal. The significance to *Cahiers* of other, older tendencies in Marxist aesthetic theory and practice can also be discerned: whether in the German tradition of Bertolt Brecht and Walter Benjamin, the French surrealism of Georges Bataille and Maurice Blanchot, or the montage praxis of 1920s Soviet filmmakers such as Eisenstein and Dziga Vertov. But Althusser nonetheless

remains the fundamental *maître à penser* for *Cahiers* during its militant phase, both due to his political influence, as he sought to detach Marxism from the doctrinaire stranglehold of the French Communist Party (PCF), and due to the comprehensive nature of his theory of ideology, which was able to embrace not just the cinema but art and culture more broadly, as well as philosophical questions concerning the nature of reality, subjectivity and human society. Althusser's ideas, therefore, formed an entry point—and a conceptual framework—for the *Cahiers* critics to approach those of his contemporaries in French critical theory.

That *Cahiers*, even at the height of its Marxist-Leninist period, remained fundamentally indebted to Bazin in its theoretical outlook on the cinema is, by contrast, a much more contested stance to take. Since *Screen* introduced the writings of the post-1968 *Cahiers* to English-speaking readers in 1971, it has almost become an article of faith in the historiography of cinema studies that the work of Comolli, Narboni and their colleagues represented an anti-Bazinian tendency in film theory. This relationship has often been depicted in almost Œdipal terms as the violent rejection of the journal's spiritual "father" by the younger generation at *Cahiers*. Andrew has even cast it as a Shakespearian drama, likening the Marxist shift of the journal to Brutus turning on Caesar.[11] Certainly, evidence for this outlook can be found on the pages of *Cahiers* during its politically radical period, when Bazin was frequently referred to in disparaging terms as an "idealist," and articles such as "L'écran du fantasme" by Daney and Bonitzer offered a withering critique of his film theory. But these epithets mask the deeper affinity between Bazin's film theory and the core notions underpinning the post-1968 *Cahiers*' understanding of the cinema. As Daney recognized, a "*Cahiers* axiom" governs the work of the journal from its foundation under Bazin through to its Marxist and, subsequently, post-*gauchiste* phases: "that the cinema has a fundamental relationship with the real, and that the real is not what is represented—and that's final."[12] Indeed, it is only a simplistic understanding of Bazin that would align his theory with a superficial "surface realism." Thankfully, due primarily to the scholarship of Dudley Andrew and Hervé Joubert-Laurencin, we now understand that Bazin's notion of the "ontological realism" of the cinematic image is subtler and more philosophically complex than this—and quite distinct from the question of a mimetic analogy with a model subjected to a process of filmic

11 Dudley Andrew, "Foreword," in André Bazin, *What is Cinema? vol. II*, trans. and ed. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), pp. xi-xxvi, here p. xx.

12 Daney, *L'Exercice a été profitable, Monsieur*, p. 301.

recording.[13] To a large degree, it refers instead to the nature of the filmmaking process itself. The "ontological" realism of the cinema is primarily a question of formal technique rather than the fidelity of the content—or, to use the semiological terminology that found favor during *Cahiers*' Marxist phase, it is concerned with the signifier rather than the signified. While Bazin's own belief system may well have retained a measure of metaphysical idealism, Joubert-Laurencin has forcefully argued that there is a fundamentally materialist logic to his conception of the cinema, and it is this latent quality, I maintain, that can provide for the existence of a theoretical continuity between Bazin and the later generation of *Cahiers* writers.[14]

Moreover, Bazin's writings were frequently given an intriguingly favorable mention by *Cahiers* in the years after 1968. The "Cinéma/idéologie/critique" editorial, for instance, presents them as a necessary first step on the path towards a historical materialist theory of the cinema, whose contradictions were capable of being dialectically superseded.[15] In his review of *Othon* by Straub/Huillet—a directorial duo whose materialist application of Bazin's ideas we can now recognize—Narboni declares that "almost nothing" separates "idealism, in one of its most coherent manifestations, from materialism," and his article relies in equal measure on Bazin and Derrida for its theoretical armature.[16] In "Technique et idéologie," Comolli frequently polemicized against Bazin but is invariably more positive towards his ideas than he is towards those of other film theorists, such as Mitry, Georges Sadoul, Gérard Leblanc and Jean-Patrick Lebel, even if on a political and philosophical level Comolli's thinking would seem much closer to the latter figures. To explain this contradiction, the critic had recourse to Lenin's quote, pertaining to Hegel, that "intelligent idealism is more intelligent than stupid materialism."[17] Today, indeed, Comolli recognizes that his

13 See Dudley Andrew and Hervé Joubert-Laurencin (eds.), *Opening Bazin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

14 This is the governing argument of his recent monograph. See Hervé Joubert-Laurencin, *Le Sommeil paradoxal* (Paris: Éditions de l'œil, 2014).

15 See Jean-Louis Comolli and Jean Narboni, "Cinéma/idéologie/critique," *Cahiers du cinéma* no. 216 (October 1969), pp. 11-15, here p. 15. Translated as "Cinema/Ideology/Criticism," trans. Daniel Fairfax, in Comolli, *Cinema against Spectacle*, pp. 251-259, here p. 259.

16 Jean Narboni, "La vicariance du pouvoir," *Cahiers du cinéma* no. 224 (October 1970), pp. 43-47, here p. 45. Translated as "Vicarious Power," trans. Leigh Hafrey, in Browne (ed.), *Cahiers du cinéma vol. III*, pp. 150-162, here p. 156.

17 The Lenin quote actually reads "Intelligent idealism is closer to intelligent materialism than stupid materialism" and derives from a 1915 marginal note written with respect to Hegel's *Geschichte der Philosophie*. See V.I. Lenin, *Philosophical Notebooks*, in *The Collected Works of V.I. Lenin vol. XXXVIII* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976), p. 274. For Comolli's citation of Lenin,

relationship with Bazin is "an affinity which comes from an opposition" and that "in trying to critique Bazin I ended up very close to him."[18] Narboni, for his part, has suggested that Marx's relationship with Hegel—in which the "rational kernel" of the idealist philosopher's dialectic needed to be stripped of its "mystical shell"—may be the most profitable analogy for understanding the influence Bazin exercised on him and his cohort: "It's like Hegel and Marx, that's it. We tried to stand him on his feet, but it was not to destroy him."[19] Even "L'écran du fantasme," which was dedicated to analyzing the symptomatic contradictions of Bazin's ideas on the cinema, was, in the end, an "amorous polemic," a form of homage to the journal's founder by means of critique.[20]

Following the model of Lacan's "Kant *avec* Sade," which argues for a necessary but closeted complementarity between philosophically opposed figures, we can thus posit the existence in *Cahiers*' Marxist period of a film theory that would have at its core a kind of "Althusser *avec* Bazin."[21] This "Althussero-Bazinism" represents a distinctive understanding of the relationship between cinema and the real, one which generates the theoretical originality of *Cahiers*' brand of Marxist film theory. Whereas Bazin emphasizes the "ontological realism" of the cinema, Althusser argues, in texts such as "Idéologie et appareils idéologiques d'État," that our understanding of reality is structured by ideology—indeed that the very concept of reality is an ideological construction. Many of *Cahiers*' contemporary rivals and later epigones utilized Althusser's ideas to argue that the nature of the cinematic apparatus was fundamentally grounded in the ideology of bourgeois metaphysics, since it was based on the illusion of an analogy between the cinematic image and our perception of the world. In this strand of film theory, we can place Marcelin Pleynet and Jean-Louis Baudry of *Tel Quel*, Gérard Leblanc and Jean-Paul Fargier of *Cinéthique*, and many of the writers

see Jean-Louis Comolli, "Technique et idéologie: Caméra, perspective, profondeur de champ [2]," *Cahiers du cinéma* no. 230 (July 1971), pp. 51-57, here p. 52. Translated as "Technique and Ideology: Camera, Perspective, Depth of Field," trans. Daniel Fairfax, in Comolli, *Cinema against Spectacle*, pp. 182-193, here p. 184.

18 Comolli, "Yes, we were utopians (Part 1)."

19 Interview with Jean Narboni, April 2, 2014.

20 Interview with Jean Narboni, March 18, 2014.

21 See Jacques Lacan, "Kant avec Sade," in idem., *Écrits vol. II* (Paris: Seuil, 1966), pp. 765-792. Translated as "Kant with Sade," in idem., *Écrits*, trans. and ed. Bruce Fink (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006), pp. 645-668. Here Lacan observes that "*Philosophy in the Bedroom* came eight years after the *Critique of Practical Reason*. If, after showing that the former is consistent with the latter, I can demonstrate that the former completes the latter, I shall be able to claim that it yields the truth of the *Critique*." Ibid., pp. 765-766 [p. 646].

for *Screen* in the 1970s. This position is also, erroneously, often ascribed to the post-1968 *Cahiers* critics, lumped in with the other proponents of "apparatus theory." But their theoretical outlook was substantially different, and this divergence was at the root of their vitriolic polemics with Baudry, Pleynet and the *Cinéthique* editors. For the *Cahiers* of the Comolli/Narboni era, the cinema was not a mere tool of ideological obfuscation, serving to mask the true nature of the real. Rather, it was a privileged instrument for understanding the ideologically structured nature of reality itself. Its "realism" came from the insight it could afford into what Althusser called the dominant "system of representation" and the ideological configuration of the society that underpinned this system.

This position is made clear in "Cinéma/idéologie/critique," where Comolli and Narboni argue:

> It is known that the cinema "reproduces" reality "totally naturally," because cameras and film stock are made in view of this very goal (*and within the ideology that imposes this goal*). But it is clear that this reality—susceptible to being reproduced faithfully, reflected by instruments and techniques which otherwise form a part of it—is entirely ideological. [...] It is not the world in its "concrete reality" which is "seized" by (or, rather, impregnates) a non-interventionist instrument, but rather the vague, unformulated, untheorized, unthought world of the dominant ideology.

And, later: "The cinema is burdened from the very beginning, from the very first meter of film processed, by the inevitability of reproducing things not as they are in their concrete reality, but as they are when refracted through ideology." The refraction of reality through ideology is indeed "present at all stages of film production," but it also occurs at the pre-cinematic stage, in our very perception and understanding of reality itself. The task of the cinema, therefore, is to "question the system of representation" and to do so by "question[ing] itself as cinema, in order to provoke a discrepancy or a rupture with its ideological function."[22] The films that were thus of most interest to *Cahiers* were those capable of interrogating, subverting or "deconstructing" this system, either consciously, in the case of political modernist filmmakers such as Godard, Straub/Huillet and Robert Kramer, or symptomatically, in the case of the great auteurs of the classical cinema such as Ford, Josef von Sternberg or D.W.

22 For this quote and those that precede it, see Comolli/Narboni, "Cinéma/idéologie/critique," pp. 12-13 [p. 254].

Griffith. This is the essence of "Althusser *avec* Bazin," and this program would substantively inform the theoretical and critical work carried out by the *Cahiers* writers in the years following the publication of "Cinéma/idéologie/critique."

This is not to pretend, however, that the attempted integration of two theoretical frameworks from very different, even incompatible, philosophical traditions was free of contradictions and paradoxes—quite the opposite, in fact. The encounter between Althusserian Marxism and Bazinian film theory produced a convulsive dialectic in the journal. It constituted a theoretical mirror of the notorious political vacillations undertaken by the *Cahiers* editors in the tumultuous era of the late 1960s and early 1970s, as the journal swung first towards a rapprochement with the PCF in 1969-1970, then Maoism in 1971-1972, and finally an anti-dogmatic "post-*gauchisme*" after 1973. But this dialectic also allowed *Cahiers* to avoid, for the most part, the sterility and latent cinephobia of other variants of "apparatus theory." Far from being content to denounce the "illusionistic" or "idealist" nature of the cinematic *dispositif*, the *Cahiers* writers ascribed greater importance to the task of understanding the mechanisms behind this illusion and how these processes could shed light on contemporary social reality. This outlook, I contend, gives the journal an unrivalled pertinence for today. In spite of all the changes in politics, culture and cinema since the 1960s, the "Althussero-Bazinism" developed by the *Cahiers* critics laid the groundwork for the conceptual suppleness and fertility of their diverse ways of grappling with cinema in the following decades, which together form a valuable corpus for reflecting on audiovisual media in the contemporary era.

Ideology and Politics, Aesthetics and Ontology

How, then, can we take stock of the prodigious output yielded by these ten critics in the period between the 1960s and the 2020s? What structure should a study concerning itself with this corpus take? Given the sprawling, web-like nature of this body of work, in which texts connect to each other in multiple ways, several structural approaches suggest themselves. The first would be a strictly chronological history of this generation of *Cahiers* writers: stretching from the biographical origins of each of the ten critics (all were born in the late 1930s-mid-1940s), through their time at *Cahiers*, and on to their later activity after the fault line of 1973. But there are several problems with this procedure. Firstly, it would substantially replicate the format of the historical overviews of *Cahiers* already undertaken by de Baecque

and Bickerton. Secondly, and more importantly, it would nullify one of the most important aspects of this body of work: the fact that resonances can be detected across different time periods, that the same filmmakers find their œuvres discussed from one decade to the next, that the fundamental ideas guiding the work of the *Cahiers* critics have continued throughout a historical period that straddles the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and that these critics have repeatedly interrogated their own past, returning to their earlier ideas and experiences in order to affirm, disown or critique them. Alternatively, the present book could be divided along individual lines: treating the life and work of each critic one by one. The problem here is that, in the case of many texts, written in pairs or larger groups, it is difficult to ascribe authorship to a single figure. More than this, it was the *group* that was of supreme importance during the years 1968-1973. The whole proved to be greater than the sum of its parts, as the journal strove to implement a non-hierarchical, anti-individualist theoretical practice, replacing the "I" of the critic with the "we" of collective intellectual activity. Adopting a biographical delineation would thus negate this core element in the work of the *Cahiers* team and would require abstract demarcations of authorial responsibility where, in reality, none should apply.

Instead, I have chosen to adopt a thematic structure. Each of the two volumes of this study contains two sections, which are in turn divided into several chapters. These sections cover the overarching subject areas that account for the film theory developed by the *Cahiers* critics. Part I, "Theories of Ideology," also functions as an introduction to the core theoretical ideas of the journal during its Marxist phase. Here, in order to elucidate my hypothesis that *Cahiers* represented an "Althussero-Bazinian" approach to film theory, I provide detailed discussions of three of the most well-known texts produced during this era: "Cinéma/idéologie/critique" by Comolli/Narboni, "Technique et idéologie" by Comolli, and "*Young Mr. Lincoln* de John Ford," a historically rare instance of a truly collective text. These will be complemented by "La vicariance du pouvoir," Narboni's review of *Othon*, not as prominent in the field but of no less importance for the establishment of the *Cahiers* "line" at the dawn of the 1970s. All four texts provided the fundamentals of *Cahiers*' position with respect to ideology, film analysis and the "cinematic apparatus," and all four texts intervened into the roiling debates of the era between *Cahiers* and other journals such as *Cinéthique*, *Positif*, *La Nouvelle Critique* and *Tel Quel*. Chapters focusing on each of these texts will be contextualized by two further chapters: one on the early life and film criticism of Comolli and Narboni, who were both raised in the *pied-noir* community of Algeria

and joined *Cahiers* after moving to Paris in the early 1960s, and one on the "afterlives" of apparatus theory in anglophone film studies, with the reception the major *Cahiers* texts found in English-language journals such as *Screen*, *Wide Angle* and *Jump Cut*, and the continuation of these debates within academia. While this last aspect is often the prism through which *Cahiers* under Comolli/Narboni's editorship is viewed, these debates will not be a major point of reference after this point in the present study. Instead, my focus will be trained on the broader work of the *Cahiers* critics themselves, beyond the landmark texts that have gained renown in the field.

Part II, "Engagements with Politics" looks at the relationship the *Cahiers* critics have had with the realm of the political and in particular the journal's insertion into the far-left milieu in France in the years after the May 1968 revolt. Structured for the most part in chronological order, it will also serve the purpose of providing a historical overview of *Cahiers* during this time. The journal's efforts at political engagement undoubtedly represent the most tumultuous aspect of its existence during this period as it delved into the arcane debates and pedantic shibboleths of militant left culture in France. The chapters in Part II will follow the evolution of *Cahiers* from the eclectic leftism of the mid-1960s through the journal's participation in the *événements* of May, its somewhat counter-intuitive attempt at a rapprochement with the PCF in the period 1969-1971, its precipitous conversion to Maoism and strident "anti-revisionism" in 1972-1973 (which led, under the influence of the Marxist-Leninist activist Philippe Pakradouni, to the abortive project of the "Front culturel révolutionnaire") and, finally, to its long period of "post-*gauchiste*" politics, stretching from 1973 until Daney's resignation as editor-in-chief in 1981, at which point the last remaining vestiges of the journal's Marxist period were finally liquidated. These chapters focus not only on the political activity of the *Cahiers* critics but also on their wide-ranging analyses of politically committed cinema: whether historical, with the Soviet montage tradition and Renoir's Popular Front films, or contemporary, with the formally innovative work of Godard and Kramer, and, in a negative sense, the aesthetically conservative narrative cinema of Costa-Gavras and Marin Karmitz, derided as *fictions de gauche* (left-wing fictions). While Comolli and Narboni claimed, in "Cinéma/idéologie/critique," that "every film is political," the criteria they established for judging the political nature of films rested primarily on formal properties and represented a spirited defense of avant-garde aesthetics over any attempt to reach a broader audience through conformity to commercial stylistic and narrative norms. A discussion of these issues will be rounded out with

chapters on the later work of Eisenschitz and Comolli, the two former *Cahiers* editors who most vocally continue to adhere to a broadly Marxist outlook.

In contrast to the volatility of *Cahiers*' political engagement, its taste in cinema—its vaunted *goût*—has remained remarkably stable. Even if the Marxist-Leninist years saw a rarefaction in the ranks of filmmakers *Cahiers* defended, its critics remained stubbornly loyal to a modernist aesthetic embodied by directors such as Straub/Huillet and Godard. Their cinephilic intuitions were striking in their reliability: if numerous important directors were, for a variety of reasons, neglected, the merits of others—such as Kramer, Philippe Garrel and Carmelo Bene—were detected with unerring precocity, and the cases of an undeserving filmmaker finding favor with *Cahiers* were rare. Part III, therefore, addresses "Questions of Aesthetics" and is divided into three main segments. The first two chapters look at the relationship between the *Cahiers* writers and structuralist trends in literary theory: initially the semiology of Christian Metz, Pier Paolo Pasolini and the Barthes of the early 1960s, and then the more deconstructionist approach of Derrida, Kristeva and Barthes' later work. Although they often deployed Sausurrean vocabulary, the *Cahiers* critics never unconditionally adopted a linguistic or semiological model for understanding the cinema. Instead, film was conceived of as a form of *écriture*, a mode of writing capable of undoing and subverting processes of signification and representation. Such an understanding of the cinema inevitably invokes questions specific to aspects of film form, such as montage, space, framing, and the film-still (*photogramme*). Debated at length on the pages of *Cahiers*, they will also be treated here. The second section of Part III, meanwhile, focuses on those films defended by *Cahiers* that had less immediate political implications than their counterparts discussed in Part II. These include Hollywood films such as *Morocco*, *Sylvia Scarlett* and *Intolerance*, subjected to "symptomatic" readings following the template used for *Young Mr. Lincoln*, works of European and North American modernists such as Luis Buñuel, Jerry Lewis, Garrel, Federico Fellini and Luchino Visconti, and radical cinema from regions beyond the core of Western Europe and North America, such as Eastern Europe (with filmmakers including Miklós Jancsó, Věra Chytilová, Jerzy Skolimowski), Latin America (Fernando Solanas, Glauber Rocha) and Japan (Yoshishige Yoshida, Masahiro Shinoda, Nagisa Oshima). A final section will look at the legacy of these writings for the later treatment of aesthetic questions by erstwhile *Cahiers* writers: the focus here will be on Aumont's scholarship during his time in the French university system, and Daney and Kané's preoccupation with the heritage of cinephilia in their journalistic writings and films respectively.

Part IV, "Encounters with Ontology," will turn to the contentious topic of the cinema's relationship with the real. Here the key tutelary figures are Bazin and Lacan. An initial chapter will examine the legacy of Bazin's ideas for the later generation of *Cahiers* writers in texts such as "L'écran du fantasme", as well as their ongoing dialogue with Rohmer, a director who, perhaps more than any other, was fundamentally shaped by Bazin's film theory and whose films seemed to stimulate the *Cahiers* critics as much as his political views enraged them. Subsequent chapters focus on the psychoanalysis-inspired ideas of Oudart (notable above all for relating the Lacanian notion of the "suture" to the study of cinema), Baudry (whose brief time at *Cahiers* was marked by a clutch of profound articles such as "Sur le réalisme" and "Figuratif, matériel, excrémentiel") and Bonitzer, one of the most prolific and theoretically promiscuous of the *Cahiers* critics, whose writings developed notions such as the *hors-champ* (off-screen space), anamorphosis and *décadrage* (disframing), which were then continued in his film work of the 1990s to the 2010s. A subsequent chapter will scrutinize the relationship between the *Cahiers* critics—especially Narboni, Bonitzer and Daney—and Deleuze's philosophy of the cinematic image, in which I will show the significant conceptual debt that Deleuze's *Cinéma* diptych owes to the film journal.

Part IV will end by focusing on a relatively unheralded aspect of the theoretical work carried out by the *Cahiers* critics, but one which is perhaps the most crucial for the present day. Throughout their time as critics, theorists and filmmakers, the *Cahiers* writers have dedicated themselves not only to an understanding of the cinema but also to a critical analysis of other forms of visual media. During the journal's Marxist period, this concern was most evident in the collective text on the political talk show *À armes égales*. It came into greater prominence later in the 1970s, when the journal fell under Daney's editorship and a concerted effort to understand the contemporary social functioning of the photographic, cinematic and televisual image was undertaken. This project was continued by Daney during his time at *Libération* in the 1980s and early 1990s. Under the influence of Jean Baudrillard and Paul Virilio, major political events (the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, the Gulf War) were theorized through the prism of their media coverage, the all-encompassing nature of which Daney dubbed the "visual." Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, Aumont and Comolli have also turned their eyes to the relationship between cinema and "new" media. Often these discussions are less systematic and more tentative than their film-centric counterparts, but they are no less a crucial part of the theoretical legacy of *Cahiers*.

Cahiers and the Collective Intellectual

A final word must be said on a more subterranean legacy of the post-1968 *Cahiers*, one that exists alongside its contribution to film aesthetics and which will be sporadically discussed over the course of this book: namely, its existence as a *collective* of critics. Although officially, Comolli and Narboni were the editors-in-chief between 1968 and 1972, this status was progressively dissolved, and a more organizationally horizontal group formation arose in its place. With the turn to Maoism, the editorial board officially became a collective body, with no distinctions in rank and a radically egalitarian structure. Daney gives an example of the uncompromising spirit of this ideal: "Didn't we decide, one day, at *Cahiers*, to pay ourselves according to the principles of the Da Zhai model factory—that is, 'according to merit'? I can even remember granting myself a monthly wage of 900 francs."[23] More than at any other time in its history, *Cahiers* functioned as a collaborative entity, internally consolidated, and operating in an autarkic fashion—with the members of the team willfully, if unwittingly, tending to cut themselves off from the rest of the world. This, of course, had its negative side: the history of the journal during this period is strewn with violent quarrels, shifting allegiances, rancorous departures, trials and purges such as can only be produced by so tightly enmeshed a group. Between 1968 and 1974, Michel Delahaye, Eisenschitz and Baudry were all subject to forced exclusion, while Jean-André Fieschi, Sylvie Pierre, Aumont and Pakradouni left voluntarily, but on acrimonious terms. Even today, such disputes have left open wounds on the psyches of their participants, who have retained their share of bitterness, resentment and paranoia about the events of the past. This is a trait held in common with many of those who were involved in the French far left in the years of militant activity following May '68, a time when the stakes of political engagement were particularly acute and sectarianism was rife. It was also mirrored in parallel developments in other journals *Cahiers* was close to, such as *Cinéthique* and *Tel Quel*, as well as *Screen* on the other side of the Channel.

By the same token, *Cahiers*' group dynamic had a tremendously positive, even utopian aspect to it. The journal's editorial team was not only institutionally collectivist, it also adopted a communal approach to the production of film theory itself. Numerous texts during this period are ascribed to collective entities (whether "*Cahiers du cinéma*," "La Rédaction," or *noms de guerre* such as the "Groupe Lou Sin d'intervention idéologique"). It is true that the cooperative nature of the composition of these texts varied and the

23 Daney, *L'Exercice a été profitable, Monsieur*, p. 298.

motivation for this practice can be questioned. Reynaud has argued that the "near impossibility within the tenets of Maoism of saying 'I,' of writing a text in the first person" resulted in "the convenient ploy of writing texts collectively, in order to be able to say 'we.'"[24] But this was not just a rhetorical device. In certain privileged cases, such as "*Young Mr. Lincoln* de John Ford," the retrospective consensus among the *Cahiers* writers is that the texts were produced in a truly collaborative fashion in a writing process where no single figure was dominant but all worked in harmony with each other. Such experiences represented a practical overturning of individualized notions of intellectual labor that has remarkably few parallels in the history of Western ideas, and they had a lasting effect on those involved. Comolli, for instance, discusses the journal's group dynamic in the following terms: "What tied us together was the emergence of a mode of thinking, which arose collectively, because there was collective work, even if it was not very well organized. I profoundly believe in the collectivization of ideas. It was the most important experience of my life. It definitively marked me. Posing questions communally is something which has enormously affected me, and my way of life."[25]

In *À voir absolument* (*si possible*), Aumont considers the journal to have been an "avant-garde group" in the vein of the surrealists or the situationists, and he has since expanded on this remark, noting that *Cahiers* "had the structure of an avant-garde group, and the internal functioning of an avant-garde group," while cautioning that "the avant-garde was in our imaginations. This is why we were so elitist, so little inclined to go out to the *banlieue* to evangelize the people. We didn't give a stuff about the people, because we were avant-garde." Such criticism notwithstanding, he grants that "there is something respectable in all these groups: the fact of forming a group to do something that surpasses each of the individuals. There is an unselfish quality to this that I find interesting." In the day-to-day life of the *Cahiers* critic, as Aumont describes it, "we not only saw each other at the *Cahiers* office, but we went to the cinema together, we often ate together, we paid each other visits, there were parallel endeavors taking place."[26] Aumont has also noted that the group conversations in the *Cahiers* office were a "formative" experience for him, even if he was not the most voluble of participants. Indeed, this oral tradition of film criticism—by its very nature more ephemeral and less easy to document—is perhaps just as important as the written texts produced by *Cahiers* in the theoretical edification of its critics.

24 Reynaud, "Introduction," p. 4.
25 Comolli, "Yes, we were utopians (Part 1)."
26 Interview with Jacques Aumont, March 11, 2014.

In this regard, it is important to emphasize the position of a figure whose role in the *Cahiers* of the post-1968 period can otherwise easily be overlooked. If we search for a conduit between the theoretical tradition of *Cahiers* in the Bazin era and the journal's *gauchiste* incarnation more than a decade later, then it may well be embodied by Jacques Rivette more than any other individual. While Bazin himself belonged to the center-left, many of the younger critics who took inspiration from him in the 1950s—including Truffaut, Godard and Chabrol, as well as the *macmahoniens*—adhered to a right-wing, even quasi-fascist political outlook, which flourished under Rohmer's editorship in the early 1960s. More left-wing figures did populate the review during the 1950s and early 1960s—Pierre Kast, Jean Domarchi and Bernard Dort among them—but they tended to have an anarcho-dandyish approach to politics and were less concerned with the field of theoretical questions opened up by Bazin's thinking. The exception was Rivette. One of the journal's "Young Turks," Rivette both identified squarely with the far left and integrated Bazin's major ideas into his film criticism while also being receptive towards other strands of contemporary critical theory. Between 1963 and 1965, he was editor-in-chief of *Cahiers* and served as a significant mentor to Comolli and Narboni in their first years at the journal as well as opening *Cahiers* up to the structuralist ideas that would play a prominent role in its subsequent theoretical evolution. Short but decisive texts from the early 1960s such as "Revoir Verdoux" and "De l'abjection" had a talismanic status among the younger generation of critics, who later came to doggedly defend his films, especially when, as in the case of *La Religieuse*, they fell afoul of the state's censorship regime. In 1968, Rivette effectuated a low-key but pivotal return to *Cahiers* which lasted until 1970. During this time, he accompanied his fellow critics to screenings, participated and guided group discussions in the *Cahiers* office, and occasionally penned his own texts for the journal. Rivette's presence in *Cahiers* was a spectral one, and his appearances in this study are intermittent. But in many ways—their taste in films, their theoretical proclivities, their political evolution—the younger critics during the journal's Marxist phase were decisively shaped by his influence.

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