ANDRÉ BAZIN

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Revised Edition

Dudley Andrew

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For Stephanie

Animator, critic . . . companion still and always

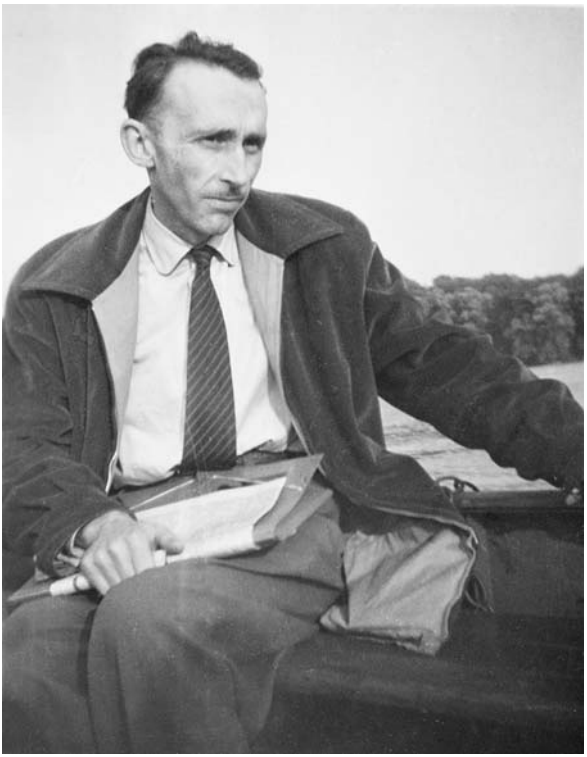

figure de proue et passeur

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PREFACE TO THE REVISED EDITION

THE SECOND LIFE OF ANDRÉ BAZIN

"The Second Life of *André Bazin*" refers first of all to the book you are holding, because this biography, originally written in 1978 and unexpectedly given a renewed appearance in 2013, takes account of additional photographs and facts, while it addresses a different readership in a different climate. Right at the outset let me acknowledge the enthusiasm and vision of Shannon McLachlan at Oxford University Press who, even during the arduous production of *Opening Bazin*, was so eager to follow through with this revised edition. I relied on Brendan O'Neill, also of Oxford, not just for his ability to keep things on track but also for his swift and prudent advice, not to mention his enviable sangfroid. How gratifying to work with them on something so important to me. How important it was became clear when I saw the many precious photographs that Florent Bazin generously supplied, which brings me, and all of us, closer to his father.

For the most part my 1978 text stands here as it was written then. Why blanket the enthusiasm of youthful prose with mounds

of primary and secondary sources that have since turned up? The endnotes frequently allude to obvious historical and bibliographical developments since then. So this edition lets me (and you, if you like) look not just at Bazin from a point well into the twenty-first century, but also at Bazin when he was discovered and debated in America during the flush of academic film study in the seventies. Bazin consumed me then, from the moment in 1968 when I was knocked over by his words till the publication of this biography exactly a decade afterward. Those were the very years during which the journal he founded, *Cahiers du Cinéma*, taken over by Marxist, even Maoist, editors, thoroughly disowned him. Many of the reviews that greeted my account of his life demanded to know if Bazin was right about the cinema, or was he wrong? The question could be posed that baldly in those days, and the verdict could often go against him, because his belief in "the congenital realism" of photography stood in the way of the massive reformulation of film theory under semiotic, psychoanalytic, and ideological lines.

Certainly I was caught up in the fervor of film studies, generally supportive of the ideas and methodologies coming out of France; yet I promoted Bazin. This dual allegiance, befuddling at the time, no longer seems so difficult to maintain. For the rather crude question of the correctness of Bazin's position has been displaced by the more historically sensitive question about his aptness. Our era would more likely ask how good an index he makes for France in the forties and fifties, or for cinema culture. How appropriate and, indeed, necessary—not how correct—were his ideas then, and how fertile are they for us now? What would he say were he in our midst?

Written just as Foucault's impact was beginning to register in the United States, this book belongs to what was then a troubled genre, the biography of an exceptional man, and my attitude toward it now is far more cautious than it was in 1978. Still, in rereading this text I

find that, far from making Bazin an autonomous agent, I took him to be a point of exchange for cultural values and attitudes (philosophical, cinematic, theological, political). Like every human, Bazin can reveal in his life story the chevrons and the scars taken in daily battles with opposition and inertia. We relinquish a splendid resource if we insist on dissolving individuals into institutions, discourse, and social practices. Bazin's private struggles (for example, to rectify aesthetics with cultural history, or to justify his affection for Hollywood and his disinterest in America, or to align his Catholic and his socialist impulses) trace deep fault lines within that public terrain. Even when his illness removed him physically from this terrain, he reproduced its seismic tensions in his reading and viewing, in the topics he chose to write about, and in the style that served his ideas. It is this visibility of tensions within the man that I would now stress in presenting Bazin or any human being.

And so I am doubly grateful that Jean-Charles Tacchella enlarged this biography with his appendix on the troubled years at *L'Ecran Français*. It was there, if anywhere, that Bazin was entwined with the institutions he spoke to and through. The fact that Tacchella himself was bound up in these events, debates, and shifting configurations of power, ratifies the utility not just of biography but of autobiography, even after Foucault.[1] Certainly Bazin was nearly always an advocate of one view over another, but he kept alive within himself, conscientiously and visibly, the attitudes of those with whom he knew it was his lot to build post-war French culture.[2] As both critic and human being he possessed the extraordinary aptitude to be able to insinuate himself into the consciousness of foreign bodies, if I may use the term, and to imagine life from other centers of perception.

I would like to emulate Bazin in this, if only to better grasp the stakes of the debates over cinema that I was involved in during the

seventies. Though dead, Bazin was a living part of those debates. And he seems even more alive today. The chance to bring him back into our midst encourages the following reflections on his identity and evolution, as well as on the aptness of my original text.

How little we know of André Bazin; how little we know of any fellow human, Bazin would have been the first to say. What do we know? Researching his life almost forty years ago, I interviewed his mother and his widow, Janine, in my miserable French. I spoke with the closest intellectual companion of his university days and with a former girlfriend from his "surrealist period" as he waited out the Occupation. I looked up those who knew him after the war at his workplace (*Travail et Culture*), Joseph Rovan and Benigno Cacerès. I met his colleagues at *Esprit*: the poet Edmond Humeau; the theater critic Pierre-Aimé Touchard; and his great predecessor as film critic, Roger Leenhardt. And then there were his ciné-club collaborators: Jean-Pierre Chartier, Jacques Doniol-Valcroze, and Jean-Charles Tacchella. Most memorable were the famous filmmakers this project brought me into contact with: Eric Rohmer, Alain Resnais, Chris Marker, and, of course, François Truffaut, the man who provided these contacts for me and who gave me several afternoons of his precious time, amid the archives he had so devotedly catalogued. Truffaut put me in touch briefly with Orson Welles and Jean Renoir. It was a thrilling undertaking for a starry-eyed young film scholar.

I went to France wanting to get close to a writer whose ideas had so shaped my view of film and life. I went in search of photos, locating very few. I suppose I wanted this biography to be itself a snapshot, something to be framed and laid on his tomb, as they sometimes do in France. But, despite the dozen new actual photographs that his son Florent has since turned up and which I'm so

pleased to insert in this revised edition, I'm left wanting more. That's how it is with photographs, as Roland Barthes (drawing on Bazin) pointed out so poignantly: they show their subject "here and then." But I want to make Bazin "here and now."

In fact, Bazin inadvertently provided the framework that I can use to present him. It arrived in a haphazard discovery I made in 2003 (one I am not ashamed to recount).[3] Inside his personal copy of Sartre's *L'Imaginaire*, which had been in my possession for thirty years, I found a folded sheet of typed reading notes that sketch a comparison of the three technological media that concerned Bazin: photography, cinema, television. The photograph, he wrote, is a "document" from the past that can address us today. Television, its opposite, exists alongside us right now in our "living" room. In contrast to the present tense of TV and the remote pastness of the photo document, Bazin asserts that the cinema preserves the ongoingness of a phenomenon but at a temporal remove. In cinema, something (someone) from the past is shown as existing now on the screen. This uncanny time shift marks cinema's distinctiveness as I believe Bazin understood it. Why not turn this idea around on Bazin, so as to better comprehend him?

We can escape the necrolatry of photographs by animating Bazin and his thought as in a film, putting him and his time on screen before us now. He knew how to do just this, by treating whatever he cared about in terms of its evolution. Bazin tracked the evolution of Chaplin, Welles, and Renoir through their films and projects, and he then projected the influence they exerted. We can do the same, by following Bazin from his arrival on the cultural scene in 1943 to his death in 1958, and then following out the evolution of his ideas as these have found their way into later films and into the expanding discourse about cinema. Bazin never questioned "evolution." He imbibed its theory in

his scientific studies at the École Normale Supérieure of St. Cloud (geology, geography, botany, zoology). His writings are full of metaphors about the adaptation of biological species and about changes on the earth over millennia. Like André Malraux, he believed that culture, too, changes in cycles, from the primitive to the classical to the decadent. Malraux was inescapable in the forties and Bazin was an ardent disciple. When young, he was also devoted to the Jesuit paleontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, whose theory of evolution was literally cosmological. Bazin would write an "Evolution of the Western," an "Evolution of French Cinema," and the famous "Evolution of the Language of Cinema." Following his example, and eager to sense his "ongoingness as in a film," why not trace the "Evolution of the Thought of André Bazin," and, not stopping in November 1958, watch that thought develop in new directions and cycles right up to today?

His first and most illustrious champion, Eric Rohmer, wrote in his eulogy that Bazin's wide-ranging ideas retain their consistency because they grow out of the "Ontology of the Photographic Image," just as cinema grows from the DNA of photography. Thirty-five years later, Rohmer suggested that Bazin's presumably Sartrean view that cinema's existence precedes its essence actually owes more to Heidegger's distinction between the Ontological and the Ontic.[4] Nothing in itself, the cinema is nevertheless tied to Being, evolving with—and within—the history of events and of representations. Pre-programmed by photography to attach itself to what it encounters, cinema adapts to circumstances, gradually becoming itself, often by submitting to the presumably "noncinematic" task of adapting novels, plays, and paintings. Paradoxically, adaptation seems to work in reverse, as cinema finds itself altered by what it tries to bring into its own domain.[5] So much has it evolved through the specific opportunities or missions it has been offered, that we must echo Bazin's famous remark concerning its technology: "Cinema has not

yet been invented." *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?* really should be renamed *Que sera-t-il le cinéma?* To shift to a metaphor Bazin beautifully deployed at the end of his supremely influential essay on adaptation,[6] films float on a river of history, which is constrained by the topography and geology that it simultaneously modifies. So cinema and theories about it move across and cut into an ever-changing cultural terrain, becoming what they are in the process. Rohmer implies that although the shape of cinema's development was not decided in advance, its elemental power (its psychological force and the cultural work it accomplishes) lies in the chrono-photographic axiom. In the same way, Bazin's positions, including those he took in relation to radio, television, and animation, evolve with the medium but remain faithful to his fundamental orientation.

Just as one can date geological strata by looking at a riverbank, so one can mark a change in the phase of an evolving life. Bazin surely felt his own life and career change in 1949. I would even date it precisely to July of that year when he felt the pride and responsibility of having become a father to Florent just before his dreamchild, the Festival du Film Maudit, opened in Biarritz. As the president of Objectif 49, which organized this festival, Bazin was assisted by his new ward—that other child—the delinquent François Truffaut. Biarritz gave Truffaut a second chance; here, he first met Rohmer, Jacques Rivette, Charles Bitsch, and Jean Douchet. The week spent at round-the-clock screenings and, for most of them, in the dingy dormitory, bonded this group. So, too, did their distaste for the radical chic in this tourist city. I now think that Bazin conspired to inject these vigorous microbes into Objectif 49 to shake it up. Because the Cold War had made *L'Ecran Français* inhospitable, because Gallimard had let *La Revue du Cinéma* fold, Bazin recognized that

post-war film culture needed to evolve into something new. It needed a new center, something that *Cahiers du Cinéma* would soon provide for these young fanatics and for Bazin, who was entering the second phase of his career. I like to think of him celebrating that next phase with the publication of his short book *Orson Welles* just at midcentury, January 1950, but he could not have been in a very joyous mood. Diagnosed with tuberculosis, he was sent off for months of rest-cure; meanwhile, the Cold War was about to ignite into something very hot in Korea, turning the political climate stormy in Paris. Antoine de Baecque suggests that Bazin effectively trained and then sent out his young disciples to rough up his various opponents.[7] Although he later turned around to spar with them himself as they went in directions he took to be frivolous or shortsighted, Bazin never underestimated the collective youthful genius that clustered at Biarritz and then came to work for him at *Cahiers*. And he was in need of reinforcement and firepower after 1950, because the solidarity of the immediate post-war phase had dissipated, and antagonists pressed on all sides: Stalinism on the political front, Filmologie on the critical front, and Lettrism on the artistic front.

By 1949 an all-too-familiar politics reasserted itself in France and Italy, where young idealists had recently held elevated hopes for a new cinema and a new society. Hollywood openly dominated the European market, now in tandem with the Marshall Plan, which promised prosperity in exchange for France's allegiance to liberal capitalism and against the Soviet Union. Bazin was not the only one caught in a double-bind: he had no interest in upholding American hegemony or values, but he was not going to demonize the greatest source of cinematic creativity in the world. He might have been socialist but he would still stand up not just for Welles (which was easy, Welles being a leftist ostracized from Hollywood), but also for directors like John Ford and William Wyler, and—God forbid—he would even praise the Western.

So he needed to support, and be supported by, the young cinephiles who were starting to write floridly about Hollywood under Rohmer's direction in *La Gazette du Cinéma*. Godard's first submission was regarding the work of Joseph Mankiewicz and Elia Kazan. But his second piece concerned the Soviet cinema and was titled "Pour un cinéma politique." Uncharacteristically cautious, and looking for approbation, he brought this article to the sanitarium where Bazin was cooped up. Frustrating in many ways, in fact the sanitarium had protected Bazin from the fallout that his own essay on the Soviet cinema had caused, especially among his former friends in the Parti Communiste Français. He found in Godard an ally on the Soviet topic, and, more important, a defender of American films about which he, Bazin, was often deeply ambivalent. In this, Godard was joined by the Hitchcocko-Hawksiens, as Bazin affectionately called them, especially Truffaut, Chabrol, and Rohmer, who all would write wonderful books on Hitchcock.

Later on, Bazin felt compelled to try to corral these rambunctious stallions he had let loose into film criticism. He came to realize that their taste for Hollywood was primarily a taste for the style of certain filmmakers . . . in short, the auteur policy. Now Bazin unquestionably helped jump-start auteurism and his reputation rode a long way on the directors he championed. Indeed he did not want to douse the fiery enthusiasm of the younger critics, because he believed that the energy that cinephilia gives to one's eyes and language was crucial. Still, while he celebrated the creativity of the director whenever he found it, more fascinating to him was "the genius of the system." Only an interdisciplinary approach could begin to fathom why even modest directors made such satisfying films during the classical period, as well as why that period appeared to be on its way out. His protégés might exercise an elitist politique des auteurs, but he shamed them with their obligation to keep in

mind technology, economics, sociology, and, yes, actual politics, alongside the usual approaches borrowed from literary studies and art history. This is why a case could be made for Bazin as a social, even socialist, critic, at least in comparison with the future New Wave directors who may have emulated his ingenious stylistic discoveries but seldom pressed as he did beyond the personality that these were said to embody.

Except for Godard. Of the New Wave directors, he was generally taken to be the most distant from Bazin, yet time and again his collected writings are an index to their congruence. His famous adage "morality is a tracking shot" was first conceived in a review of Alain Resnais's short films where he says that Bazin and Resnais had come by different means to an equivalent moral conception of the secret of the tracking shot. Later, while preparing *A bout de souffle*, Godard claims that because Bazin's "Ontology" proves the camera to be equally attached to nature and to chance, it follows that fantasy and fiction must be authenticated through straight photography. Two weeks later he found the example he had been waiting for to validate this point: Jean Rouch's *Moi, un noir*, a film simultaneously realistic and fantastic, full of imagination and truth because it was shot without effects and without a fully developed script. Godard notes that this is just the way Bazin had demonstrated the greatness of *Kon-Tiki*. Godard and Bazin may have sparred over many issues, such as the difference between *montage* and *découpage*, but they shared a belief that documentary was central to modern cinema, whereas this mode left Truffaut indifferent. Could this be why, even beyond their alliance against the new Soviet cinema, Bazin and Godard have always been taken as more political?

Compared to Bazin's battle with the Communist critics at the height of Stalinism, his skirmish with Filmologie seems trifling; however, in the crowded cultural field of the post-war years, any alternative way to "think cinema" could pose a threat.[8] As an explicitly

academic movement, Filmologie had the capacity to attract or to denigrate budding intellectuals like Rohmer and, to a lesser extent, Godard. After all, it had financial backing and the prestige of its university setting. Even today, film enthusiasts, not to mention filmmakers, often do not share a conception of the art form with scholars. In France this question has caused massive problems for decades,[9] beginning in 1945 when Gilbert Cohen-Séat arrived on the scene with an idea and with ambition, expressed in a remarkably self-confident book, *Essai sur les principes d'une philosophie du cinéma*.[10] In a legendary maneuver, and without an academic degree, he managed to lobby the Sorbonne to serve as an umbrella for his fledgling research group and the journal they had inaugurated in 1948, *La Revue Internationale de Filmologie*. From the moment of its official license, late in 1950, till the very end of the decade, the institute benefited from significant support, visibly affecting the stratosphere of French education in the process. The ancient amphitheater of the Collège de France was equipped for projection, for example. Laboratories were established for psycho-perceptual and cognitive experiments. In addition to research, regular courses and lectures were offered, and a couple of full-blown conferences took place.

Actually, the lectures and conferences had begun even before the institute's investiture. In the late forties such luminaries as Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Henri Lefebvre, and Jean Hyppolite had appeared before the group. Cohen-Séat's inspired strategy was to set cinema up as a magnet to attract high-profile intellectuals from a spectrum of disciplines, principally the human sciences. He laid before them a vision of how their methods could be renewed by—or could develop in contact with—a vibrant phenomenon like cinema. Filmologie grew, as did Cohen-Séat's international profile, and it must have appeared as a kind of rival to the editorial staff at *Cahiers du Cinéma*. In just its fifth issue, September 1951, and less

than a year after Filmologie's accession to the Sorbonne (i.e., as both groups struggled to gain footholds in Paris), an article appeared in *Cahiers* sarcastically titled "Introduction à une Filmologie de la Filmologie," under the name of Florent Kirsch. Only his closest friends understood this to be André Bazin's occasional pseudonym (an amalgam of his wife's maiden name and the name they had given their son). Florent Kirsch gets credit for about a dozen of Bazin's 2,600 articles. In this case the ruse seems to have freed his normally genteel pen so he could slash away at his target.[11]

Bazin cattily reports on Cohen-Séat's astounding success in convincing the crusty professors and crustier deans of the Sorbonne to take up mere movies as an investment in the future of research and teaching. Professors of dead languages, "Kirsch" declares with the sarcasm of the confirmed cinephile, have been watching in disbelief as their children and their concierges line up week after week for spectacles that they themselves scarcely comprehend. It finally occurred to someone that time had come to train their formidable analytic and philological skills on this new and living language called cinema, to put it through the rigors of full analysis (physiology, psychology, sociology). Bazin may have been especially jealous of Cohen-Séat's welcome at the Sorbonne, as his own first "institutional" affiliation with cinema had been with the Sorbonne's Maison de Culture where he founded a ciné-club during the Occupation. Though its rapport with the Sorbonne was nominal, not even extracurricular, Bazin must have been proud to have kindled the flame of cinephilia for a generation of academics, lighting up a dark room for them, projecting images that could sustain the imagination, and doing so on the edge of France's renowned university.

And so when Cohen-Séat was able to waltz straight up to the administration of the Sorbonne and come away with its full support for a program that would finally raise cinema into an object of genuine

study, Bazin's resentment seeped onto the page. As the leader of a band of young "cinémaniacs," each of whom claimed to watch more than five hundred films a year, Bazin was especially irked at Filmologie's calculated disinterest in its object of study. Their eighty-eight-page double issue of Autumn 1959, for instance, mentions no titles whatsoever. To understand a phenomenon, evidently they felt that one must stand back from it, like a medical professor before a cadaver. "Did Pavlov need to be a dog-lover?" Bazin asked, to draw the line with finality.[12] At *Cahiers* they were, if nothing else, film lovers, cinephiles.[13] And Bazin was their leader, even if he could have gone over to the academic side, given his education and his evident training in disciplines like geology, entomology, botany, philosophy, rhetoric, and theology. But it was no contest; films won out over Filmologie.

The third threat to the kind of film culture Bazin proposed came from the Lettrists led by Isidore Isou. This Romanian emerged onto the Parisian art scene just after World War II with a radical manifesto aimed at undermining both meaning and representation in painting. Like the Dadaists before him, he was ready to destroy art, literally scratching violent marks on paintings, and inserting shrill sounds to disrupt the very idea of the poetry he produced. Isou turned to cinematic Lettrism in 1951, the year of *Cahiers*' founding.[14] Four Lettrist films were made within a two-year span, one of which received a special prize at Cannes, thanks to Jean Cocteau. Just as Bazin had dismantled the pretentions of Filmologie in *Cahiers* #5, so Eric Rohmer did the same to Lettrism three issues later. Like the other arts, Rohmer argues, cinema needs an "avant-garde" to press the medium to its limits and to engage the imaginations of its most assiduous spectators; but unlike during the twenties, he argued, the post-war avant-garde should exploit cinema's documentary dimension, showing what is left of Europe and of cinema. Isou called instead for a "chiseling cinema," taken from his ideas about painting and poetry. Instead of creating

new representations, he believed in scratching imagery right off the celluloid, digging deliberately into the emulsion. Like his sound poems, Isou's films bypass meaning as they violently put the materials of the medium through their paces. Rohmer congratulates him on this drive to reach the essential, but he questions whether cinema has essentials after all. Like Bazin, Rohmer follows Alexandre Astruc's 1948 "The Birth of a New Avant-garde: La Caméra-stylo," where the camera is taken not for a chisel but for a pen capable of expressing the most abstract thought and poetic feeling. If Isou sees the filmmaker as a sculptor, at *Cahiers* the filmmaker was expected to be an author, exploring the inner and outer world through *ciné-écriture*.

If the first phase of Bazin's career had established the primacy of photography for film theory and of neorealism for modern cinema, I would say that promoting ciné-écriture, taken in its broadest possible senses, was the mission of the second phase. At the end of his life, he could measure tremendous gains in ciné-écriture in the short documentary (works by Marker, Resnais, Georges Franju, and Agnès Varda) and he could sense major changes under way in fiction films (Louis Malle and Chabrol had just shocked Paris, while Truffaut and Resnais were getting their epoch-changing first features off the ground).

Has any critic ever had such impact? Toward the end of his life, Bazin could look at Robert Bresson, Luis Buñuel, Roberto Rossellini, Welles, and Renoir, knowing that they prepared their new work with at least some of his ideas in mind, and knowing that they cared to create something that would challenge his highly tuned sensibility. Hugh Gray, Bazin's English translator and a friend of Hitchcock (they had been classmates in high school), used to point to a secret rapport between Bazin (the open, generous critic) and Hitchcock (the sly, misanthropic master of suspense). And then there was

the New Wave, which Bazin could sense gestating right there in the offices of *Cahiers du Cinéma*. He encouraged Rohmer, Truffaut, Rivette, Godard, and Chabrol to dream of the future they had already started to create. He wrote glowing reviews to support Nicole Vedrès and Varda in their work. Like Truffaut, Varda dedicated one of her films to Bazin.

Bazin's influence over the sixties was massive, as new waves and new voices transformed cinema in Japan, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, the USSR, Italy, Latin America, the UK, and Quebec . . . with countless filmmakers inspired by *Cahiers du Cinéma*. Sometimes influence came through direct personal contact as when a very young Alain Tanner found his way to *Cahiers* in the fifties via the Cinémathèque. Tanner would soon renew Swiss cinema. Then there were those remote from France who got hold of the magazine and devoured its interviews, reviews, and polemics. Non-francophones learned to eavesdrop. Bazin's writings were widely translated.[15] That was my case as a teenager, as I got a sense of *Cahiers* through references in *Sight and Sound* or remarks by Andrew Sarris. In 1966 Sarris brought out an English edition of *Cahiers*, which included not just translations of current articles, but also some of the classic pieces from the fifties, including, to launch the entire venture, Bazin's "On the Politique des auteurs."

Bazin loved to probe the system that brought films into being and sustained them in the cultural imaginary, for as a daily critic he took in every sort of film imaginable, mainly mediocre features. Rather than try to filter from these a few gems, he aimed to understand the entire process by which they got made, then attained their shape and value, whatever that might be. This meant genre study in the broad sense. What psychological knot does each genre tie or unravel? How have later variants grown out of earlier examples in the genre or drawn on adjacent types? What pre-cinematic avatars connect these

films to long-standing cultural concerns? To him, cinema was a vast ecological system, endlessly interesting in its interdependencies and fluctuations. Treating films as participants in such a complex system led Bazin to write on topics like censorship and technology, as well as to speculate on the mythological dimension of certain stars. His genius lay in identifying the revealing textual attributes of whatever films he saw, following out the questions to which films appear to stand as answers, letting stylistic details call up his extraordinary range of knowledge. No one before him, and maybe no one after, has so intuitively traveled with a film into the capillary networks that give it life.

This is why the eclipse of his thought, which started even before 1968 and lasted throughout the structuralist period, was never total: not even at *Cahiers* in France nor at *Screen* in the Anglophone world where he was excoriated. Just look at the trenchant structuralist readings of *Young Mr. Lincoln*, *Morocco*, and *A Touch of Evil* that were carried out in these journals. They brazenly defy Bazin's presumed humanism with the dogmatic materialism and psychoanalysis of the seventies. Stridently political they may be; nevertheless, each of these imposing exegeses depends on the close analysis of stylistic features, exactly in the manner that Bazin had modeled. They really are not so different from his manner of doing criticism. In a touching homage written in 1983, Serge Daney, who had led the militant *Cahiers* of the seventies, came to recognize the magazine's unbroken debt to its founder, despite its editorial twists and turns.

> Bad filmmakers have no ideas and good filmmakers have too many, while the greatest have but one. Set firm, it lets them hold the road as they pass through an ever-changing and always interesting landscape. The cost of this is well known: a certain solitude. And what about critics? It would be the same for them,

> [but all are unworthy]. All except one. Between 1943 and 1958 André Bazin was that one. . . . In the postwar French world, Bazin was at once inheritor and precursor, *figure de proue et passeur*.[16]

With that final turn of phrase, impossible to translate (Bazin as the figurehead on the prow of a ship, while also being the smuggler stowed away in the ship's hold), Daney recognized the continuity of an idea of cinema that will not go away, not even with the coming of the digital image. Thus, Bazin's return owes much to Daney's reassessment in 1983; it came as well thanks to Gilles Deleuze's two *Cinéma* volumes, also from the mid-eighties, which effectively squelched semiotics in favor of a philosophy of the image that looked to films as manifesting a form of thought. One could say that Bazin had anticipated many of Deleuze's notions. And not just Deleuze; in places Bazin writes as if in dialogue with Jacques Derrida, Jean-Luc Nancy, Jacques Rancière, or Marie-José Mondzain, the last three having written books on cinema. The prestigious place that film has assumed in French intellectual life is another of Bazin's legacies. While he did not pioneer this place, he, more than anyone else, widened and made habitable the intellectual terrain that we now occupy. We are living his second life.

Bazin knew a lot more about evolution than I ever will. Still, I am tempted to describe his identity as a phenomenon that evolved in stages, rather than something given once and for all, as with the capsule portraits one finds in surveys of theory. Bazin followed Bergson, where identity is in flux, held momentarily in acts of memory, like the figures Picasso designs and then suddenly transforms only to transform again in Clouzot's great film. We are left without a final painting in *Le mystère Picasso*, and yet vivid forms inhabit the screen throughout, and it is this "throughout" that made Bazin call it "un

film bergsonnien." In the same way, Bazin exists intermittently and in flux in his textual traces—his complete published writings, his manuscripts, the few photos that have been collected. These amount to moments that allow us to glimpse different phases—phases of difference—pertaining to the phenomenon named André Bazin.

Bazin must have understood his career as having phases when in the last year of his life he prepared the four volumes of *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?* The first volume opens with he "Ontology of the Photographic Image," which anchors an idea of cinema based on realism—from Erich von Stroheim through Renoir to Rossellini—while the second volume begins with "For an Impure Cinema: In Defense of Adaptations,"[17] anchoring the cinema of modernity (Cocteau, Bresson, Resnais). We might say that the early Bazin cared about the signifier, while the later one cared more about the signified. I want to bring these two Bazins into a single frame, like some Picasso painting that gives you a portrait, both face on and in profile. Outside of France Bazin is known mainly as the theorist of realism, but he titled volume I of his collected works not "Ontologie du cinéma" but "Ontologie et langage." What cinema *is* depends on the psychological power of photographic realism, but cinema's actual *value* is historically constituted, since the fact that "the cinema is also a language" means that it evolves within an arena of cultural discourses.

What was in Bazin's mind when he concluded the "Ontology" essay with that striking one-sentence paragraph: "On the other hand, the cinema is also a language"? Actually, this sentence does not appear in the original "Ontology" essay of 1945. He added it in 1958 as a surprise that switches lenses, distancing the object of study, raw photography, to make it visible in another dimension, the dimension of social meaning. This dimension comes into full view in volume II of *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?* Here he looks not inward at cinema's cellular makeup but outward toward its place relative to the

arts around it. Should it position itself in open territory not occupied by the arts before it, or should it conspire with them in a tangled cultural field, sometimes producing hybrids? Like any living form, cinema must adapt to conditions around it, sacrificing its putative self-identity (its ontology) as it matures into the shape it takes on in history. Along the way it acquires affiliations and vocations just as people do, just as Bazin himself did.

His lengthy essays on adaptation I call "the Ontogeny Essays," for they anchor his film criticism in the same way that his great 1945 "Ontology Essay" was the cornerstone of his realist theory. Philip Rosen and I have both lit upon a crucial passage Bazin penned in 1953 in which he hoped to bring together these two directions (or phases) of his thought: "To attain a high level of aesthetic fidelity, it is essential that the cinematographic form of expression make progress comparable to that in the field of optics. . . . The transition from a theatrical work to the screen demands, on the aesthetic level, a scientific knowledge, so to speak, of fidelity comparable to that of a camera operator in his photographic rendering."[18]

This abiding concern with "fidelity" may suggest a smooth evolution from his forties phase (realism and nature) to his fifties phase (adaptation and culture). But evolution is seldom either smooth or singular. Just look at the new films that arrived in the fifties to greet Bazin's second phase and upset the evolution of the language of cinema. Because he always looked for "differences" (in amateur films, science films, films on art, animation, etc.), he was struck, even more than most, when *Rashomon* showed up unannounced at Venice in 1951. Pursuing its allure, he claimed to have seen more than two dozen Japanese films in the following three years.[19] The result was decisive for him and his protégés at *Cahiers*. Japanese films shocked them all into the realization that cinema was greater than, and different from, what they had assumed. Moreover, the identity

of Japanese cinema passed through conflicting phases, both before 1951 and then up into the sixties. Important to Bazin, this great national cinema may serve as an analogy as we try to locate him.

Famously, *Rashomon* puts truth, illusion, and identity up for grabs, as it proceeds in distinct and contradictory phases. Actually Bazin disputed those who found this film to be a radical break with standard practice. To him, it was a "facile assimilation of certain elements of Occidental aesthetics comprising an amalgam with the Japanese tradition." This description is in line with his contention that "mixed cinema" is the norm. Still, he found himself overwhelmed by what everyone took to be a "purer" Japanese style, "the tender lyricism, the musical poetry of Mizoguchi," which operates according to principles quite different from Western literature and cinema. As he kept his eyes open to world cinema, did he recognize that there may not be a universal evolution of the language of cinema? Did he understand Japanese cinema as perhaps constituting a different system altogether, with its own evolution? What he could not have known is that, while Mizoguchi was thought to be at the cutting edge of international cinema when viewed from Venice or Paris, in Tokyo he was taken to be retrograde. Japanese cinema was out of phase with the European art film to which it nevertheless contributed.[20] The same must be said of Bazin who plays different roles at different times and in different places.

Bazin's second life, taken as his posthumous reception, is usually understood as belonging to an evolution of trends in France, where his ideas thrived during phenomenology, disappeared during structuralism, and then reappeared in the nineties during a period some call "post-ontology." Outside France, the situation is less clear, as he washed up on certain shores when sporadically translated. His ideas arrived in asynchronous waves that produced complex aftereffects

when these waves mingled in a large sea of international cinema culture. Although Bazin's international reception was by definition delayed, it need not be heard as a mere echo of the French reception. Whenever his texts arrived in Brazil, the USSR, Japan, or China, Bazin affected the specific cinema situations that were alive there and then. And those distinct situations allow different facets of his work—and of the man—to stand out.

I have lived my life alongside Bazin's second life in the Anglophone world. Except for his beautiful review of *La Strada*, which was translated in the Catholic journal *Crosscurrents*, I've not read, or heard of, a single English word by or about Bazin that was published in English until after his death. Then within a year Richard Roud drew on the first two volumes of *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?*, as well as on the testimonies in *Cahiers*' necrological issue, to develop a comprehensive article in *Sight and Sound*. Andrew Sarris cited Bazin in reviewing *Viridiana* and used him in a famous debate with Pauline Kael about the Auteur Theory in 1963. Fighting back, Kael shows Bazin tremendous respect, having read him more carefully. I followed this public debate and finally read Bazin when Sarris printed a translation of "Sur la politique des auteurs" in the first issue of *Cahiers du Cinéma in English*. Throughout 1966, I discussed each of the eleven issues of *Cahiers du Cinéma in English* at my university's ciné-club. Even if he wrote against overvaluing the auteur, Bazin claimed the filmmaker to be "at last the equivalent of the novelist." This is what many of us students of literature wanted to hear.

I was writing a thesis on film aesthetics that year, and I had read Rudolf Arnheim, V. I. Pudovkin, Sergei Eisenstein, and Siegfried Kracauer. I worked my way through Jean Mitry's *Esthetique et psychologie du cinéma*, because his French was easy to understand. Mitry frequently argued with Bazin, but Bazin's positions were too subtle and his style too literary for me at the time. Then the University of

California Press brought out Hugh Gray's translation of *What Is Cinema?* and immediately I found in the prose and in the ideas the complexity I had been waiting for, as well as a philosophical resonance in accord with my own background and tastes. Throughout the sixties I devoured works of existentialism, a philosophical school particularly attractive to undergraduates. It was also a philosophy that suited a decade in which authority had been undermined, from the Watts riots that I witnessed in Los Angeles to the strike at Columbia University in the spring of 1968 in which I participated. There were assassinations, demonstrations against the Vietnam War, British rock 'n' roll, and la nouvelle vague.

Having attended an elite Jesuit high school, I was studying at the University of Notre Dame, where I rebelled against traditional philosophy by writing papers on Heidegger, Sartre, and Camus. If religion still had a role to play, I identified with the forces pressuring Vatican II to complete a revolution in the Church that seemed under way. One philosopher in particular combined existentialism and committed Catholicism: Gabriel Marcel. He lectured at my university on "the mystery of Being" and "the aesthetics of ambiguity." I could sense his Heideggerian notion of "homo viator" in films like Bergman's *The Magician* and Fellini's *La Strada*. When I first came to Paris, in the fall of 1973, I arrived the day Gabriel Marcel died and I attended his memorial service at Saint-Sulpice, just to be able to sign my name on the registry. Only recently did I learn that Marcel and Bazin conducted a dialogue about cinematographic art, which was broadcast on radio in 1948. This doesn't surprise me, as Marcel, a philosopher-playwright, like Sartre, who eagerly engaged the cinema, was also close to Bazin's friend Amédée Ayfre.

But let me return to 1968, the year in which Bazin, a decade after his death, was reborn in America. Yet this was the very year in Paris when the Cinémathèque was under siege and *Cahiers du Cinéma*

was turned upside-down, Bazin ground under by the marching feet of a collective editorship that repudiated him. Here we encounter again the problem of two cultures out of phase. Just as in 1960 Mizoguchi served two roles, as good object for the French New Wave and a bad object for the Japanese New Wave, so in 1968 Bazin was suddenly bad object in Parisian film culture but a newly discovered good object in New York. In fact 1968 is the high point of public interest in art cinema in America, with nearly 10 percent of all movie theaters in New York exhibiting foreign films. The New Wave had spread to Japan, Latin America, and Eastern Europe. I remember seeing a dozen Czech films during that year in New York, the last ones made before the tanks entered Prague. Miloš Forman and Ivan Passer came to the United States as exiles and were shooting films there by 1970, for Hollywood was weak and producers were gambling on the youth culture. At last there seemed to be a New Wave in American cinema.

Raised in Los Angeles, near UCLA, I followed the reputation of an ambitious student, Francis Ford Coppola, who won an Oscar for his short thesis film, "Skaterdater." He went to Paris and worked on scripts, including the script for *Paris brûle-t-il?* [*Is Paris Burning?*, 1966], which Truffaut turned down before it was given to René Clément. I could tell that Coppola's 1967 feature, *You're a Big Boy Now*, aimed for the verve and freshness of *400 Blows*. Into the seventies, he was the hope of American cinephiles, along with Arthur Penn because of *Bonnie and Clyde*, and John Cassavetes. At last we had our own auteurs, some coming from film schools. Terrence Malick and Martin Scorsese, thanks to Roger Corman, were able to set up camp, if not find a home, in the ruins of the studio system. And so Hollywood seemed congenial to film art between 1968 and 1974, the very years that Bazin's work took hold in an academic film culture that grew faster in the United States than in France because it was still