## **PREFACE**

The existing scholarship about European cinemas focuses on the questions dictated by textual formal analysis and its ideological implications. The structures of film production, financing and distribution have little bearing on the predominant understanding of the European cinemas. European Cinemas in the Television Age is a radical attempt to develop the understanding of the production structures of European cinemas from the perspective of their relationship to national and transnational television industries and thus to create a new direction for the debate about European cinemas. In every European country television has transformed economic, technological and aesthetic terms in which the process of cinema production had been conducted. Television's growing popularity drastically reshaped cinema's audiences and forced governments to introduce policies to regulate the interaction between cinema and television in the changing and dynamic audio-visual environment. The recognition of the impact of television upon European cinemas offers a more authentic and richer picture of cinemas in Europe in which popular and commercial production not only co-exists and cross-breeds with the art house one but virtually makes the latter possible through subsidising, distributing and exhibiting.

The central objective of this book is to demonstrate the ways in which the range of changes and innovations brought about by television (a complex and multifaceted phenomenon) allows us to open the debate about cinema in new directions and possibly to redefine the existing concept of cinema from the perspective of television.

The nature of film production in Europe is national. The involvement of television with cinema also takes place on the national level. For this reason we have preserved the focus on the individual countries in the central chapters of the book. We are most grateful to a number of national experts who have contributed parts or whole chapters to this part of our project (whilst noting that any general thematic points drawn from an overview of the national cases are of course our own). A Europe-wide survey has allowed us to investigate some broad categories in which television's impact on cinema can be considered in terms of four key categories: economics, practice, technology and aesthetics. The examination of the impact of television has allowed us to address a number of key concepts in European cinema(s) in new and more realistic ways.

In spite of the efforts of such scholars as Ginette Vincendeau and Susan Hayward 'national cinema' is still mostly understood in terms of art film.

Historically, art cinema has dominated critical construction of the European film. A study of national cinema in Europe from the perspective of the impact of television takes into account genre cinema/popular cinema and not only art cinema. Complex ways of financing films which are provided by private television companies, which like Canal Plus could be a French station investing in various European countries, not only widens the range of films made but also complicates the issue of defining a film product in strictly national terms

Auteur/individual film-makers are associated with the creation of European art cinema. Critics like Vincendeau argue for the recognition of popular auteurs (she quotes Almodovar and Tavernier in this category) who are both cross-over and mainstream film-makers. TV has played an important role in financing these film-makers' films. Hence, the exploration of the concept of auteur in the context of television allows us to investigate the notion of popular auteurs and to understand authorship in the industrial, social and cultural context as opposed to being just an expression of an individual genius.

Film texts are the primary source of the current definition of cinema. By focusing on the role of TV we have been able to examine the industrial/financial complex in which these film texts are produced. As a result, the understanding of cinema expands. In particular we have been able to come to terms with a number of key questions including: How does television transform/modify the concept of national cinema? What is the impact of television on the concept of film auteur? How does television change the nature of the film text?

Throughout the work on this volume we have been inspired, puzzled and (admittedly) sometimes distracted by the accelerating changes in production, distribution and consumption of images. We are, as Graeme Harper has put it, experiencing: 'the new Cinema of Complexity' (Harper 2005: 90). This cinema of the DVD and download world has potentialities for experimentation and a do-ityourself ethos. There are possibilities for the democratisation of production via digital film-making even for an increased role for the viewer in arranging and manipulating the narrative (or otherwise) of 'films'. It is impossible to ignore such phenomena whilst thinking through the issues involved in our project. Nonetheless – even as we enter what might be a 'post-television age' – we felt it worthwhile to look back over a half century of relationship between the two audiovisual mass media. Not least we have a need to build on previous experience for a fast-changing complex present and future. For, as Screen International has editorialised, the future (of cinema) has nothing to do with technology – this is just a means of transport' (Screen International, 19 May 2006: 2). The art of cinema has proven again and again its extraordinary resilience while facing all various changes and revolutions. We should remain hopeful for 'cinema has clearly proven itself to be an invention with the future' (Screen International, 19 May 2006: 2).

> Graham Roberts and Dorota Ostrowska Summer 2006