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Hannah Andrews, *Television and British Cinema: Convergence and Divergence since 1990*, 2014, Palgrave Macmillan, reproduced with permission of Palgrave Macmillan'.

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## Introduction: The Contexts of Convergence

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Over a five-day period in November 2008, a short 'season' of five films made by Film4 films was shown by their parent broadcaster, Channel 4. A promotional advertisement for this season was programmed at various intervals for about a fortnight prior the first broadcast. The promo is structured in such a way as not only to advertise the season, but tacitly to celebrate Film4. The advertisement is a compilation of extremely short clips taken from various Film4 productions, edited together as a montage with a linking motif of certain parts of the photographic image being pencilled over in black and white using a rotoscoping technique, as though part of a moving storyboard. (See **Error! Reference source not found.**).

### **Figure Error! No text of specified style in document..1: Film4 Season Promotional Advertisement**

Completing the hand-drawn motif is a series of white arrows superimposed over the image and point in the same direction as the characters. These arrows apparently lead rather than follow the actions of characters or objects on screen. For example, a clip showing two men pushing a car across the screen left to right (from *The Motorcycle Diaries* [Walter Salles, Argentina/US/UK, 2004]) is followed by a clip of a group of youths walking across screen left to right (from *This is England* [Shane Meadows, UK, 2007]) . The edit is highlighted by the use of the white arrow, pointing both groups of characters, though from different films, in the same direction. The arrow represents the producer, guiding the film images into being. The implication is that the involvement of Film4 as a producer is formative, giving the films their 'direction'. The connecting theme of the advertisement is the creative and financial input of Channel 4 in these films, in development,

production, distribution and exhibition. This is explained in a voiceover in which a male voice states, "From the drawing board to the big screen to your living room, FilmFour has been making films, developing talent and drawing on years of experience to bring you the complete picture." In the space of thirty seconds, the advertisement relays a narrative of a film's progress from pre-production to post-exhibition. Crucially, it tells us that the final destination of these films is not a cinema screen, but the television screen. According to this advert, this is 'the complete picture'. Film4 is worthy of celebration, because it is involved not only in bringing these film images into being, but also in giving audiences multiple opportunities to see them. This book explores this 'complete picture' of the relationship between television institutions and cinema in Britain over the last two decades.

The involvement of broadcasting institutions in film culture at the level of financing and production, and, to some extent, distribution and exhibition, has been a major feature of the British film industry since Channel 4's inception in 1982. This book examines the development of this relationship, and the effect of the involvement of public service broadcasters (PSBs) in a cultural industry separate from, though parallel to, their own. Further, though, it explores some of the ways in which the primary medium of these institutions – television – has been used to distribute and exhibit cinema. It explores the meanings that derive from bringing together these parallel media, and the effect on their discursive and material specificity.

This topic seems to occupy a curious intellectual lacuna at the present time. In both the disciplines of British cinema studies and of television studies there is little existing work on the relations between (British) broadcasters and cinema. I

perceive two main reasons for the unwillingness of scholars to discuss the relationship between television and cinema in depth. The first is the multiple points of entry and intellectual approaches one might take in relation to the topic. It can be studied as a matter of materiality, medium specificity and technical convergence. Equally, the intervention of PSBs in the film industry might be viewed as a negotiated form of public subsidy and patronage, and thus approached at a cultural policy level. From an economic perspective, the relative weakness of the British film industry and scarcity of successful British productions might be viewed as a cultural 'market failure' of the kind that is ameliorated by the interventions of public institutions like Channel 4 and the BBC. The relations between television and film have institutional, industrial, aesthetic, historic, political and philosophical dimensions. The sheer number of intellectual choices involved make this a daunting prospect for research and analysis.

Related to this is the vexed question of disciplinary rivalry. Though there are significant overlaps in theoretical models, methodological tools and institutional space between film studies and television studies, the requirement for each discipline to argue the case for their medium has led to rather strained relations with their rivals. Television studies' quest for institutional legitimacy has meant defending the medium against others that are somewhat (though not much) more established in the academy. Employing discourses of medium specificity, as Noel Carroll notes, has been an important means of establishing and defending academic disciplines:

The notion of medium specificity was a powerful rhetorical lever for lifting film departments into existence. For if film was a unique medium with a

unique practice – one different from literature, theater and fine art – then surely it required its own experts, housed in their own department.<sup>i</sup>

To engage with questions of convergence, such as those explored in this book, appears seriously to undermine these claims to specificity, and to move rather uncomfortably between disciplines. This book intends to initiate a new, interdisciplinary dialogue on the relations between television and film in Britain. This is likely to have ongoing resonance as technical, industrial and aesthetic convergence between different audiovisual media develops.

Because this book explores the relationship between public service broadcasters and the films they produce, one of its central questions is how to bring the institutional into discussion of the textual. The extent to which involvement of broadcasters can be considered a determining feature in the textuality, ontology or aesthetics of any given film is an ambivalent issue, as Amanda D. Lotz argues: ‘The institutional certainly does not resolutely determine the textual, but it provides a significant factor that evaluations too often under-emphasize.’<sup>ii</sup> Though it can be argued that public service broadcasters are inclined toward producing films of a particular kind, that focus on particular themes or have particular cultural intertexts, it is nevertheless difficult to establish the specific ways in which the producing institution affects the resultant text. Even if we are to suppose that the PSB operates some kind of institutional ‘authorship’, then, because most PSB films are co-productions, we must also accept the other parties as ‘authors’, diluting the institution’s authorial claim and rendering the position untenable. How can we conceive of the role of the institution here? Vincent Porter has suggested that ‘the guiding hand of the producer may be difficult to perceive in an individual film, it is precisely in the longer term that the key role

played by the producer becomes clear.<sup>iii</sup> In order to examine the relationship between the institutions and film culture, then, this book attends to a wide *range* of texts during the course of its 1990 – 2010 primary research period.

The argument that I wish to follow, and the history I want to trace, requires me to take a long view of the relationship between film and television broadcasters. I begin in 1990, a symptomatic moment in the history of Channel 4 film production, as it marked both the retirement of the first Commissioning Editor for Fiction, David Rose, and the year in which legislation was passed inducing the Channel to sell its own advertising air time (from 1993). Beginning the principal research here allowed me to elide the early years of Channel 4's relations with film (which have been well documented elsewhere) without ignoring them completely. The main period of research ends in 2010, not merely for the sake of numerical symmetry, but also because the change in British government that year signalled a new approach to public culture, exemplified in the closure of the UK Film Council. So, although my analysis focuses on the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup>, it does so with the recognition of the longer history of convergence in British film and television. What I hope to uncover in this book is a relationship with a long history and one that is ongoing.

The book combines two sets of methodologies which I view as complementary, and which offer both a macro- and micro-analysis of the history I tell. In terms of the latter, to register some of the subtleties and complexities of the ways in which the relationship between film culture and public service broadcasters might work, I employ detailed textual analysis of certain clusters of texts and paratexts. The analysis that began this introduction thus not only introduced the topic and themes of this book, but also one of its central

methodological processes. The application of textual analytical techniques to paratextual material allows this book to discuss the nuances of the relationships between PSBs and cinema. This is necessary because, as the book will argue, the character of the relationship between the institution and film does not reside in texts alone, but in the discursive framing, presentation and mediation of those texts. This is enhanced by contextual research, in terms of the political, social and cultural context from which the texts are made. At certain points, the history I explore is best told by looking at a large number of texts at once. In order to do this, I have at points employed quantitative research methods. Quantitative analysis has been performed on databases specifically created for the purpose of amalgamating large amounts of data. These have allowed me to create a picture of the relationship between PSBs and film culture over extended moments in this history. If the 'guiding hand' of the producing institution might be seen over the long term, then this kind of quantitative analysis offers a means of analysing its effects. Combining the detail of textual analysis and the breadth of quantitative data analysis allows me to create a fuller picture of the way in which the relationship between PSBs and film culture works.

This book implicitly asks the complex and historically contingent question, 'What is a (British) film?' and explores the role of the PSBs in producing answers to this question. It analyses the effect of context – particularly institutional context – on a medium's ontological status. The ontologies of media are most readily conceived of as a function of their materiality, of the combined power of specific properties and their application. I break with this tradition, in that I consider extra- and para-textual features of media as equally crucial to textual status. Specifically, the book examines the construction of distinctions between television

and film, both in terms of the *discourses* applied to texts and the ways in which texts are *presented* through various platforms. This is particularly significant given the effects of (digital) convergence, in which material distinctions between different media are eroded. The book works with the premise, then, that media ontologies are contextually contingent, in other words, they are *discursive*, as much as they are material or phenomenological. 'Convergence' and 'remediation' are thus central intellectual paradigms for this book.

Finally, the book is interested in the issue of textual evaluation, and the hierarchy of media forms. The book explores the prestige associated with cinema as a factor in the intervention of the PSB in film culture. Engaging in film production, exhibition and distribution, and investing considerable energy in the distinction of film from television, PSBs play a role in reproduce a kind of hierarchy in which television is culturally and aesthetically inferior to film. I examine how institutions of broadcasting have contributed to the discursive ontology of British film, and how it has been separated and distinguished from television despite the growing material and aesthetic convergence of the two forms. In other words, I consider the production of rhetorics of *divergence* that have met and continue to meet media convergence in Britain.

As outlined above, I hesitate at the point of defining texts even as uncomplicatedly 'produced' by particular institutions. Instead, I conceive of the presence of the institution in the discursive life of the text as part of an exercise parallel to, but not coterminous with 'branding'. In this book, the institution is examined in terms of how its reputation, status and cultural position affect the way in which it presents its cinematic texts to the audience through various media. The manner in which texts are presented *by the institution* is key, and, in a circular



motion, the institutional reputation (or 'brand') of the PSB is also invoked in the critical and discursive uptake of the texts. The book argues that institution's projected reputation ('brand image') is a central part of the discursive formulation of these PSB film texts.

Ultimately, this invocation of the institutional reputation of the PSBs in the understanding of film texts matters because it affects the way in which they are evaluated aesthetically. Texts are conceived of as aesthetic objects of a particular kind because of the way in which they are presented: they are understood as cinematic (or otherwise) because of this presentation. This evaluation feeds back into the institutional reputation – Channel 4, for example, has gained considerable industrial prestige for its ongoing support of film culture. However, institutional reputation also feeds into the critical evaluation of the text. In other words, texts are discussed in different modes if they are conceived of as a television drama/play or a film. What is at stake, then, is not only the particular textuality of the PSB films, but also the modalities of discourse which surround them. The book thus attempts to unpick the complex interweaving of these features with one another, and to show how they work upon the text and its inter- and para-texts. Before I begin, though, I will set out in more detail the key ideas that underpin this exploration of television institutions' role in British cinema since 1990.

### **Unknown Cinemas and Lost Continents: Locating Television in British Cinema Studies**

Britain offers itself as a strong case study in the relationship between television and cinema, since the cultural forms have been so intimately intertwined for much of their histories. As John Caughie has argued, the histories of broadcasting and of cinema in Britain have clear parallels: each beginning in earnest in the 1920s,

each dominated by one overawing presence in the shapes of John Grierson and Reith, each taking significant influence from pre-existing democratic and aesthetic cultures.<sup>iv</sup> In Chapter One, I explore in more detail the historical entwining of the two forms and their institutions. Given the depth of the historical connection between television and cinema in Britain, it would be reasonable to expect a surfeit of scholarly work on this topic. This is, however, far from the case: the convergence between cinema and television occupies a curious intellectual lacuna in British cinema studies. I want to suggest that the unwillingness for cinema scholars to talk about television is related to the vexed question of disciplinary rivalry discussed above. Cinema scholars' unease with television can be interpreted as a kind of intellectual snobbery. In the case of British cinema, to lambaste 'television movies' as unambitious and aesthetically inferior has become something of a critical truism, as we shall see shortly.<sup>v</sup> Television's place in British cinema history is not sufficiently acknowledged. Why has this been the case?

Describing how the 'legitimization of film as a valued form of cultural expression' involved a series of 'classification struggles', John Hill notes that the history of film studies in Britain began with an effort to exclude or suppress British cinema.<sup>vi</sup> Hill argues that the initial impetus for the championing of American popular cinema, particularly in the *Cahiers du cinema*-inspired *Movie* journal, was political; a matter of 'destabilising the taken-for-granted assumptions and cultural hierarchies characteristic of contemporary British culture'.<sup>vii</sup> British cinema was too bound up in the 'atrophied, class-bound character of English culture' for the tastes of early film studies scholars.<sup>viii</sup> The emergence of British cinema studies was predicated on the need to define and legitimize the study of what was initially deemed an inferior cultural form. British cinema studies is thus peppered with

references to its own non-existence, or the insufficiency of the field. Hill also points out, however, a strong tendency to 'discover' new areas for investigation in British cinema – exemplified by Alan Lovell's 1972 essay 'The Unknown Cinema of Britain' and Julian Petley's 'The Lost Continent.'<sup>ix</sup> This has resulted in one of the most significant 'classification struggles' in British cinema studies, the legitimization of certain kinds of British films as worthy of study:

Although the cultural discourses surrounding British cinema have changed dramatically, the rhetoric of the 'unknown cinema' or 'lost continent' continues to be invoked as popular genre cinema remains marginalized in critical writing.<sup>x</sup>

The idea of uncovering or discovering 'unknown' cinemas, 'lost continents', and the 'classification' of British film has been a foundational habit among British film scholars. When the primary rhetoric of a scholarly field has been to point to its own non-existence, it is understandable that the field has little room to discuss an interloper, let alone a cultural rival. Television's absence from British cinema studies can be considered another of its 'lost continents'. How has this gap in scholarly knowledge been accounted for in the histories of British cinema?

The short answer to this question - it isn't. James Leggott's statement that 'substantial work remains to be done on the symbioses between British cinema and other forms of media,' is typical, as is Robert Murphy's introduction to *British Cinema of the 90s*, which curtly announces that 'the relationship of television to the film industry is too big a topic to deal with here.'<sup>xi</sup> In place of a thorough investigation of television's place in British cinema there tends to be a terse acknowledgement of the relationship, often posed as an irresolvable problem. Where television *does* appear in British cinema studies texts, focus tends to be on

the *institutions* of television, which are mentioned as financiers of British films, such as Sarah Street's *British National Cinema*, which contains a single paragraph on television institutions, in her chapter 'The Fiscal Politics of Film'.<sup>xii</sup> The title of this chapter summarizes a general trend in writing about television's contribution to film culture: that it is an economic and political matter rather than a relationship with serious aesthetic, ontological or cultural consequences. Television institutions are often discussed in conjunction with Lottery funding for film, which suggests that broadcasters should be seen rather uncomplicatedly as merely another public source for production funds.

Of course, as with every trend, there are notable exceptions. John Hill and Martin McCloone's 1996 collection, *Big Picture, Small Screen*, is the most thorough book length investigation, containing essays from established media scholars and, importantly, industry players such as Michael Grade and Mark Shivas. However, the book's age now renders most of the important insights contained therein historical rather than current. The most persistent commentary on the historical convergence between British television and film has been made by John Caughie. His description of British film and TV's interrelationship as conforming to certain 'logics of convergence' are the most useful summaries of the contours of that relationship. Another important exception is John Hill, whose work on the relationship between texts and context has included consideration of the role of television in the British film industry, in film aesthetics and in the social and cultural impact of television broadcasters on British cinema, particularly in the 1980s after the intervention of Channel 4. While the formal industrial convergence between film and television in Britain may indeed have been an innovative feature of Channel 4's drama policy, the relationship between television and film

aesthetics and cultures stretches much further back. One collection that acknowledges the embedment of television in film culture of the 1970s is Paul Newland's edited collection *Don't Look Now*, which includes a section devoted to television. Although there are exceptions to the disavowal of television in scholarly British cinema history, television still remains something of an afterthought. Sectioning television off into separate parts of these books reflects the level of ghettoization of television which can be felt elsewhere in screen studies: at conferences with dedicated 'television' panels, in special editions of film journals dedicated to television as a one-off, or in the organization of university departments.

The suppression of television from British cinema history might be explained by the history of the field itself. If British cinema (especially genre-cinema) has formed a 'lost continent', and if, as John Hill has argued, there has been a historical resistance in Britain to taking British cinema seriously, then it is a sensible means of disciplinary defence not to share analytical energy between two media, even where they are closely related. British cinema scholars have especially to be wary about television as an interloper in their discipline, because arguments about the uncinematicness of British cinema are so well-rehearsed – note the opinions of Satyajit Ray and Francois Truffaut about the incompatibility of the British temperament with cinema. In relation to television-funded cinema, John Hill has argued

What is often noticeable about the conventional criticisms of British 'television films' (literariness and lack of visual intelligence, on the one hand, or subordination to a realist aesthetic, on the other) is that these are

simply the same criticisms which have always been directed at a certain type of British filmmaking.<sup>xiii</sup>

If British cinema has had a reputation for being 'uncinematic', then it is logical to attempt to disavow the position of a parallel cultural form widely believed to be aesthetically inferior. The best explanation I can make for the cordoning off of television from British cinema history is that of the hierarchy, and the sense of comfort it can offer.

Though, clearly, there remain extant hierarchies *within* cinema culture, the reputation of the medium as a whole has been enhanced such a degree that its status as art object has been more or less confirmed. There has by no means been a complete acceptance of film studies as a discipline – one is still subject to quizzical looks when announcing one's field to those outside of (and sometimes, more troublingly, within) academia. Nevertheless, film and the study of film have acquired a respectability that I do not think is yet equalled in attitudes to television. The suppression of television in the field of British cinema studies in fact mirrors a wider attitude to television in culture at large. Cinema and the cinematic are now acceptable, respectable and, even, valuable aesthetic categories (see below); the same cannot be said for television and the 'televisual'. This is evidenced in the frequent use of television/televisual as a simile for films with domestic setting, or rather drab, cheap-looking aesthetics; that a film 'looks like television' is often the ultimate insult in the arsenal of the high-brow film critic: note the scathing reviews of high frame-rate films like *The Hobbit* (Peter Jackson, 2012), predicated in part on the complaint that the high density and definition of the image makes it appear more like video/television than 'film'. Assumptions about televisual aesthetics

retain a powerful hold, even while television culture itself has changed immeasurably over the last decade, particularly television drama's 'quality' turn.

## **'Quality' in Broadcasting: Public Service Brands and 'Cinematic' Television**

In the term 'quality', two key concerns of this book overlap: the first is the demands placed on public service broadcasters and the terms by which their programmes/content are judged; the second is a kind of television drama that has been discussed in the academy as possessing 'cinematic' aesthetics, style and value(s). Before I discuss the uptake of 'the cinematic' as a discursive formula for evaluating television aesthetics, I want briefly to consider some of the ways in which 'quality' has informed the debates about public service broadcasting.

In Britain, there is an abiding sense and a longstanding tradition of discourse that assumes that, as Carole Tongue puts it, 'public service broadcasting is the 'key to quality in broadcasting,'<sup>xiv</sup> a bastion against the propensity of commercial broadcasters to under-invest in and underestimate the tastes of their audiences. This definition of 'quality' refers not to programme production standards, or to consumer appreciation, but to a more nebulous set of assumptions about the value of television programming based around the tastes and preferences of a powerful elite. Discourses around public service broadcasting have tended to assume that 'good' and 'popular' television are opposites, as in Christina Murrone and Nick Irvine's question of whether, under increasing financial pressure, 'will television channels make good programmes or popular programmes?'<sup>xv</sup>. The idea that PSBs are the only guarantors of quality has come under increasing scrutiny since the 1980s and the arrival of expanded competition in the broadcasting market in the shape of satellite and cable (later

digital) broadcasting. The traditional consensus around quality in television began to dissipate, as John Corner, Sylvia Harvey and Karen Lury summarize:

Initially inflected in the direction of a defence of established public and cultural values, [quality] was quickly serviceable as a term to describe the improvement of a product which, it was argued, would follow the introduction of a new, more competitive, television system.<sup>xvi</sup>

Quality in television thus started to be treated by policy makers in rather the same way as quality in other commodities and services – as a matter which is largely guaranteed by the choice offered by a competitive, deregulated market. However pervasive the rhetoric of choice, there is a significant difference between the broadcasting industry and other manufacturers:

Quality indicators ... may be relatively straightforward in manufacturing industries and even some services such as transport, but in others such as education and broadcasting, designing a 'strategy for quality' raises problematic and thorny public policy issues.<sup>xvii</sup>

Quality in television is a relative, subjective and flexible discourse, difficult to define, let alone to measure in ways that might apply to material goods. As Corner, Lury and Harvey put it, 'quality' is a key term because of its 'accommodating ambiguities'.<sup>xviii</sup> These ambiguities have seeped into various governmental interventions in the television market since the 1980s, which have had the primary aim of deregulation, but have always accepted the necessity of maintaining some public funding in the ecology to drive standards and 'quality' upwards.

What do legislators mean by 'quality'? Corner, Harvey and Lury outline four broad definitions that can be traced in the re-regulation debates of 1989 – 1990.



These are: quality framed in 'a literary aesthetic'; quality related to television's informational role and associated independent, significant news provision; a 'craft' definition emanating from the producers and concerned with production values; and quality defined by audiences, by what was popular or watched by lucrative demographics.<sup>xix</sup> Geoff Mulgan argues that the 'crudest' of the market definitions of quality 'is that which identifies it with the preferences of the viewers', an argument against the redefinition of the term along lines of 'consumer sovereignty', a favoured expression of the Peacock report, published in 1986.<sup>xx</sup> Peacock's report suggests certain specific types of programming which are 'suitable for public patronage', which are summarized in the key words 'knowledge, culture, criticism and experiment.'<sup>xxi</sup> Since Peacock, the pursuit of 'quality' in television defined by traditional categories of public service was subsumed by the expansion of competition and commercial possibility. Rather than an overall objective of broadcasting as a whole, 'quality' television seemed to become a minority pursuit associated with PSBs.

Quality tends only to be defined in abstract in the Acts of Parliament that underpin Broadcasting regulation. In the 1990 Broadcasting Act, PSBs were required to produce programmes of specified types (news, current affairs, regional programming) that were 'of high quality'. Along with 'suitable' and 'sufficient', which tend to be attached to scale or proportion of programming, 'quality' acts as an ambiguous adjective throughout the Act, a matter for interpretation rather than a prescription. The ITV companies were required to pass a 'quality threshold' in order for them to be awarded regional franchises, and there was provision in the act for bids of 'exceptionally high quality' to be considered where the highest cash bid was not deemed acceptable, or if two identical bids were made.<sup>xxii</sup> Paul Kerr

rightly notes, however, that the idea of a quality threshold is a contradiction in terms, since a threshold is a minimum, the lowest point at which something is possible, and 'quality' is about 'maximums' -the highest attainable level.<sup>xxiii</sup> The 2003 Communications Act, which created the new public communications regulator Ofcom, used the term 'quality' much more sparingly than previous legislation; its definition of the public service remit for television replaced the demand 'of high quality' with 'high general standards'.<sup>xxiv</sup> Ofcom's 2003 – 2004 investigation into public service broadcasting culminated in three reports, the last of which was titled *Competition for Quality*. For Sylvia Harvey, this was a clear indication that idea public service broadcasting is the best means to guarantee quality in broadcasting had ceased to be a central assumption for policy makers, because justifications for public intervention like spectrum scarcity and the 'public good' thesis of broadcasting do not readily apply to digital broadcasting. Harvey argues that the multi-channel universe makes it more, not less, difficult for broadcasters to produce high-quality programming, as increased competition means fragmenting audiences and rising costs.<sup>xxv</sup> It is perhaps for this reason that Ofcom includes in its reports specified characteristics for PSB programmes, the first of which, rather predictably, is 'high quality, being well-funded and well produced.'<sup>xxvi</sup> Whereas public service broadcasting is no longer expected to guarantee quality, quality is still demanded as a core feature of PSB programmes. The association of 'quality' with PSBs remains intact.

Another consequence of the period of de- and re-regulation in the 1980s was a shift in conception of the viewer of television in Britain, from a 'citizen' to a 'consumer' model. Public service broadcasters, particularly those funded through advertising, were obliged to take up commercialistic practices in order to bolster

threatened funds. During the early 1990s, Channel 4 began to market itself more explicitly towards certain lucrative demographics such as the 16 -34 year group, or the ABC1 group of consumers, which were (as per their remit) light users of ITV, but were also conveniently and not accidentally, sought after by advertisers. To target these audiences, the channel publicized its ability to produce innovative, high-quality niche programming. It also began to engage more explicitly in marketing practices associated with profit-making enterprises. For Catherine Johnson, one of the key practices involved in marketing was the consolidation of public service broadcasters as brands. Of course, given the immateriality and abstract-ness of broadcasting as a public 'good', as we have seen above, it seems an unlikely candidate for branding. Nevertheless, branding emerged both in the United States and Britain as an important means of organizing the expanding economy of broadcasting, and for broadcasters to compete with one another. Georgina Born, in her analysis of the corporate identity of Channel 4 in the late 1990s/early 2000s, noted that this was not only acknowledged within the institution, but became an integral part of their corporate strategy:

In a multichannel universe, given the need to stand out from the crowd and to negotiate carriage with powerful platform owners, maintaining a strong and distinctive brand is considered vital.<sup>xxvii</sup>

In a media situation in which broadcasters' output is now 'content' rather than 'programmes', the identity of broadcasters *qua* broadcasters is no longer as important as their identity as a specific and knowable brand. This is not, however, to suggest that branding only emerges as a 'response to the shift away from television as a public service towards conceptualizing television as a consumer product in a commercial marketplace', indeed, Johnson argues that the practices

associated with branding can be compatible with public service itself.<sup>xxviii</sup> Johnson found that as early as 1988, the BBC was positioning itself as a corporate brand, though, importantly, one which carried brand values of 'quality and service to the public' which were, of course, a core constituent of their remit. As Johnson argues, 'the value of its brand is asserted insofar as the BBC is able to maintain its position as the leader in achieving and determining the criteria for both these values.'<sup>xxix</sup> 'Quality', then, becomes not only a legislated requirement for the PSB, it also becomes a tool by which it may 'sell' itself to the public.

'Branding', as the dissemination and exploitation of the institutional image, becomes a shorthand for the values of programmes produced. Of course, this is how brands operate, as objects of communicative exchange or, as Celia Lury argues, using new media parlance, as 'interfaces':

As an interface, the brand is a frame that organises the two-way exchange of information between the inner and outer environments of the market in time, informing how consumers relate to producers and how producers relate to consumers.<sup>xxx</sup>

Brands attempt to control the judgement of the consuming public on two levels: they convey not only the value and quality of the product being sold, but also, increasingly, of the producer/ seller. The creation of a PSB brand associated with 'quality' and 'service to the public' also conveys these values upon the products produced, commissioned or distributed by the PSB. For the purposes of this book, the processes of 'branding' (even where this term connotes a not always appropriate relationship to a commercial marketplace) are central to the ways in which PSB filmmaking operations and/or film exhibition confer value upon their film products, and also use those film products as a means by which to extend and

bolster the 'quality' of their brand. The engagement of PSBs in the film industry, in a medium of greater cultural repute and prestige, is a means by which their brand extends 'beyond' television.

Creating a 'quality' television brand, particularly in recent years, has hinged on the exploitation of certain kinds of highly stylized programme output as much as it has on traditional markers of 'quality' in Britain, like consistently high production standards, service to the public or any of the thresholds imposed by government. There has been a consequent surge in engagement with textual form and aesthetics among television studies scholars, which, according to Jason Jacobs can be attributed to such changes in (particularly American drama) programming:

The continued sense that the television text is mostly inferior to the film text and cannot withstand concentrated critical pressure because it lacks 'symbolic density', rich mise-en-scene, and the promotion of identification as a means of securing audience proximity, has to be revised in the light of contemporary television.<sup>xxxi</sup>

Technological and economical innovations in television production have allowed television drama producers to pay ever-greater attention to visual style. According to John Thornton Caldwell's seminal exploration of the American television industry, *Televisuality: Style, Crisis and Authority in American Television*, industrial interest in distinctive television style began in the 1990s, as competition for audiences made bold aesthetics into commercial advantage, a practice he called 'televisuality'. Caldwell argues that 'the cinematic' (along with the 'videographic') is one of the 'stylistic worlds' exploited by televisuality. 'Cinematic values,' he argues, 'brought to television spectacle, high-production values and feature style

cinematography.<sup>'xxxii</sup> The production of such visually dense programming, coincided with the emergence in the late 1990s of narratively rich 'Quality' television (drama), particularly that associated with the original programming of the Home Box Office cable network (itself a premium brand). The combination of enriched style and complex narrative led to a discursive tendency to describe such programming as 'cinematic'.

In 2004, Robin Nelson noted that a general consensus in popular and academic television criticism that 'American 'quality' television today has different qualities which align it with cinema and differentiate its products from the dominant conventions of the TV medium'.<sup>'xxxiii</sup> How does this consensus manifest itself in critical writing? Put broadly, it is a desire to compare (usually favourably) recent television drama aesthetics with those of film, at varying degrees of explicitness. Jane Feuer, for example, describes *Six Feet Under* (HBO, 2001 - 2005) as 'reek[ing] of a European art cinema heritage'.<sup>'xxxiv</sup> Janet McCabe and Kim Akass's introduction to their collection of essays on 'Quality TV' describes how innovations in both production and reception technologies have 'contributed to television now becoming a medium that rivals film for entertainment'.<sup>'xxxv</sup> One does not have to look far in scholarly writing on 'quality' television drama to find the term 'cinematic' lurking amongst other positive adjectives.

It seems to be taken for granted that there is such an adjective as 'cinematic', and that this has an unequivocal meaning, which, as Martin McLoone has noted involves problematic essentialist assumptions about what cinema (and television) are and do. For McLoone the often-argued contrast between cinema and television is a false one, 'since it opposes the extremes rather than the characteristics of the two media – television at its least 'adventurous'

(aesthetically) and cinema in its big picture 'event' mode.<sup>xxxvi</sup> The term 'cinematic' when applied to television, tends to refer to a particular range of stylistic choices: 'arty' off-kilter framing, the use of wide angle establishing shots, glossy cinematography, the presence of high-profile stars. 'Cinematic' is a meaningless adjective, because in reality the stylistic choices available to cinema and (particularly single-camera) television in framing, lighting, mise-en-scene and so on are more or less identical. The more pertinent practical distinctions between the forms are in budget and schedule, and these differences inhere within the industries as well as across them. There is a huge difference in the range of options available to the producer of a high-budget prime-time drama series, and the producer of a daytime children's television programme, and those making aesthetic judgements would do well to take these differences into account. As Jason Jacobs has forcefully argued, 'it is not appropriate to apply criteria of authenticity, creativity and innovation in the same way to *Who wants to be a Millionaire?* and *ER*.'<sup>xxxvii</sup>

In television scholarship, there is too often an uncomplicated acceptance that 'cinematic' and 'quality' are mutually affirming discourses. Robin Nelson argues that '[e]ach medium has its own visual qualities in consequence and, historically, film has been taken to be a superior medium in terms of visual quality.'<sup>xxxviii</sup> The combination of the terms 'cinematic' with 'quality television' posits a hierarchy of value in audiovisual artforms, with television able to co-opt some of cinema's 'natural' quality through emulation. As Deborah L. Jaramillo argues, "Cinematic' removes the television text and its style from the medium we are studying and transplants it elsewhere'.<sup>xxxix</sup> This seems to confirm an idea which reappears throughout the quality debate, that television on its own and by

its own terms cannot truly produce or maintain 'quality', and that television programmes must affirm their quality by comparison with an already-established high cultural product. Charlotte Brunsdon argues that, in Britain, television traditionally drew its legitimation from 'already validated' art forms: 'Television (by implication, not itself good) becomes worthy when it brings to a wider audience already legitimated high- and middle-brow culture.'<sup>xi</sup> Like Brunsdon, I would want to question the implication that television is not itself 'good', and that it requires legitimation through other cultural forms. Film is not one of the 'already validated' forms that Brunsdon specifies, though the alignment of television with cinema carries parallel cultural connotations: television is, apparently, better quality the more it looks and feels like film. This is, as Brunsdon notes elsewhere, due to a series of cultural connotations that have historically 'typed' television and film:

the dominant characterisation of television in both everyday and scholarly literature is as a medium of distraction while cinema is one of concentration. To cinema is granted the possibility of aesthetic seriousness, while television—in blatant disregard of the history of much British television (and film) – is thought of as trivial.<sup>xii</sup>

When one medium is allowed to be 'serious' and the other trivialized (and as Brunsdon and others have noted, 'feminized'), it is understandable (though less forgivable) that scholars and critics would seek the cultural validation that comparison with the older medium can grant television.

There has been a shift in thinking about television aesthetics: away from previous phenomenological or medium specific considerations of television form and its 'messy textuality'<sup>xiii</sup> and towards an engagement which, I argue, is akin to and, crucially, influenced by scholarly film criticism. Lurking beneath this shift is a



tacit acceptance of a hierarchy of media that values the 'cinematic' over the 'televisual'. As Brett Mills has argued:

that the 'cinematic' might be seen as a positive term when applied to (some) television can only be seen as a reassertion of a hierarchy that sees television as film's poor relation. This means that television style only seems to become of interest when it is seen to draw on the conventions of another medium which, in broad terms, has far more cultural legitimacy.<sup>xliii</sup>

Mills refers here to a range of recent television scholarship that works to elevate certain kinds of television and defend them as art. Michael Z. Newman and Elana Levine describe this as 'legitimizing television', and set about denaturalizing this process, noting, like Mills, its dependence upon the very cultural hierarchies which were previously used to denigrate television. They focus particularly on the post-digital identity of television, where the medium has become almost unrecognisable in terms of its traditional technological and cultural form, in that fragmentation, viewer autonomy and individual pleasure have replaced flow, collective viewing and communities of audiences as the contemporary television paradigms. Newman and Levine argue that the process of cordoning off sections of television for the special attention (such as American 'quality' or 'cinematic' television) that I have described above reinforces extant hierarchies:

If television scholars contribute to the legitimation of the medium in the convergence era, and if these processes of legitimation perpetuate hierarchies of taste, value and cultural and social worth, then we are – wittingly or not – complicit in the very discursive formation we intend to critique.<sup>xliv</sup>

Bringing some of the methodological and aesthetic tensions to the surface of the disciplines may prompt us to think afresh about the specificities of our mediums of study. This is particularly important in a period in which these very specificities are under rhetorical threat from powerful discourses of media sublimation and convergence in the digital age. While it is true that the technological capabilities of digital media render film and television as constitutionally closer together, the ongoing rhetoric of 'cinematic' and 'televisual' creates distinctions (in the Bourdieuan sense) between the media and places them in a hierarchical relationship with each other which is eminently traditional. Against the transformative effect of digital convergence on television as a medium, there has been an equal and opposite reaction, one which is discursive, and seeks to retain extant media hierarchies. I call this reaction '*rhetorical divergence*', and, in this book, I explore some of the ways in which PSBs have been involved in producing and maintaining these medial distinctions and the discursive ontologies of cinema and television.

### **Convergence: A New Media Discourse?**

The ongoing issue of definition, redefinition and discursive construction of media forms, through terms like 'televisual' and 'cinematic', has had much influence on film and television studies as disciplines. However, the introduction and dissemination of digital technologies has unseated old assumptions about the ways in which media work, as Anna Everett notes:

We have only recently reached an attenuated consensus on the differing natures of cinematic and televisual texts as unique objects of study. With this battle barely in a state of field-expanding detente, the digital revolution has introduced new visual and aural media codes that draw extensively

from the medium specificities of film, video and radio while introducing new characteristics and imperatives that are properties of digital technologies alone.<sup>xlv</sup>

Convergence as a concept and a phenomenon gained much intellectual currency as the 20<sup>th</sup> century drew to a close, as digital technologies threatened to change the way in which media worked in relation to users and to other media. However, both as a feature of the relationships between media and as a way of conceptualizing and discussing them, convergence pre-dates digital technologies and can, in fact, apply to analogue ones. Peter Kramer, for example, has explored in detail the domestic use of cinema (and, to a certain extent, the public use of television) and provides a historical narrative of the convergence between television and film.<sup>xlvi</sup> He describes the development of various film exhibition technologies designed for domestic consumption; for example, the Edison kinetoscope is discussed as an early prototype for home cinema.<sup>xlvii</sup> His (rather provocative) contention, therefore, is that convergence between film and television is an 'intensification of past structures of the film industry and film culture rather than a radical break with them.'<sup>xlviii</sup> Crucial here is the suggestion that it is industrial structure and strategic choices by commercial enterprises that has shaped the history of the relations between film and television, rather than any fundamental ontological difference between the two media. This kind of argument reveals what is truly at stake in the debate around convergence: the specificity of the two media as techno-cultural forms. Martin McLoone too has suggested that a kind of symbiosis between the two industries occurred in America not only via the conglomeration of media companies, but also via the studios' selling of catalogues of films to television, and in producing made-for-TV

movies. Like Kramer, he concludes that the relationships between television and cinema as institutions and as media, though often confused, are separate: 'the crucial point is that the economic and strategic imperatives of the *institutions* will dictate how the respective *media* will be used and developed.'<sup>xlix</sup> Both McLoone and Kramer's interventions seem to lend weight to the thesis that, historically, distinctions between television and film have been discursively and industrially constructed, with considerable input from institutions, as well as a product of technological differences.

In *Convergence Culture*, Henry Jenkins offers a way of discussing convergence which is inclusive, taking into account the multifarious manifestations of the discourse. He is thus careful (and wise) to present his definition of convergence in the opening pages of the book:

By convergence, I mean the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behaviour of media audiences...<sup>1</sup>

These three aspects of media, the latter in particular, are recurrent concerns in Jenkins's work. As a self-confessed 'Aca-Fan' (academic and fan), he is particularly interested in the uses media users make of the participatory experiences afforded them by new media technologies. The user-based approach to new media, while not my primary focus in this book, has important consequences for the way in which media operate. Analysing the ways in which users relate to new media technologies shifts attention from the technology itself to its cultural and social meaning. As Jenkins argues: '[m]edia convergence is more than simply a technological shift. Convergence alters the relationship between existing technologies, industries, markets, genres and audiences.

Convergence refers to a process, but not an endpoint.<sup>li</sup>For this book, the idea of convergence as altering the relationship between technologies, industries (and institutions) and audiences is crucial. Conceiving of convergence as a process rather than a theory or a particular moment in media history allows me to make certain arguments about the national, historical and institutional specificity of convergence in Britain. The strength of Jenkins' approach to new media convergence is that it occupies a position pragmatically between two key paradigms of digital media, which Jenkins calls the 'digital revolution paradigm' and the 'convergence paradigm'. The following statement summarizes how this works:

If the digital revolution paradigm assumes that old and new media would displace old media, the emerging convergence paradigm assumes that old and new media will interact in ever more complex ways. The digital revolution paradigm claimed that new media was going to change everything. After the dot-com crash, the tendency was to imagine that new media had changed nothing. As with so many things about the current media environment, the truth lay somewhere in between.<sup>lii</sup>

Like Jenkins, my own approach is to be open to both paradigms, and to recognize both continuity and change in media after the spread of digital technology. I will, however, apply these ideas to a different cultural and political environment to that which is discussed by Jenkins, and many texts which discuss new media, which have tended to be based around the media ecology of the United States. With a different regulatory regime, attitude towards and institutions of media, the situation in the United Kingdom has been different.

The 'digital revolution' paradigm has been enormously influential both in new media studies and in the uptake of discourses of the digital in film and television studies. A seminal text in discussions of digital media, Nicholas Negroponte's *Being Digital* is also perhaps the epitome of the 'digital revolution' paradigm. Negroponte is responsible for popularizing one of the most widespread (and, for scholars of 'traditional' media, most alarming) ideas of new media: 'bits are bits'. Negroponte is keen to emphasize the enormous change in constitution of media, from having a physical presence whether on paper, celluloid or through electromagnetic waves, to having only an abstract existence as a series of zeroes and ones. This means that individual media necessarily lose aspects of their ontological specificity. Film, television, literature and radio are no longer separate entities, but merely different arrangements of 'bits' which have the same constitution. Channelling Marshall McLuhan's famous assertion about the meaning of media in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Negroponte provocatively suggests that 'the medium is not the message in a digital world. It is an embodiment of it. A message might have several embodiments automatically derivable from the same data.'<sup>liii</sup> This is, essentially, a description of digital convergence. David Bell summarizes this point thus: 'convergence refers to bits of media becoming indistinguishable – whether those bits are bits of content, bits of the industry or whatever.'<sup>liiv</sup> The result of this constitutional change in media, according to Negroponte, is that the identities of individual media are subordinate to their digital make up. In relation to traditional media forms, he advocates a complete change in attitude to the issue of medium specificity:

The key to the future of television is to stop thinking about television as television. TV benefits from thinking of it in terms of bits. Motion pictures, too, are just a special case of data broadcast. Bits are bits.<sup>lv</sup>

Stripped of their traditional distinctions, in a digital era, according to this view, there is no such thing as the ontological specificity of individual media. Film 'content' and television 'content' are exactly the same thing. Traditional technological distinctions between them break down. Stephen Keane argues that, 'this is very much the business of convergence, to make such formal distinctions unnecessary.'<sup>lvi</sup> One of the key aims of this book is to analyse how traditional media institutions in Britain have gone about the apparently 'unnecessary' task of making evident such distinctions. In other words, while convergence technologies may negate the specificities of individual media, much is still invested in media separation. Digital (and analogue) convergence is, I will argue throughout this book, often met with powerful discursive and presentational acts of *divergence*.

The loss of distinction, the 'bits are bits' thesis, has led to considerable anxiety about the future of individual media, with a number of film and television scholars decrying the 'death' or end of their subject-medium.<sup>lvii</sup> Henry Jenkins, however, offers us some counsel here, by separately conceptualizing 'media' and 'delivery technologies':

History teaches us that old media never die – and they don't even necessarily fade away. What dies are simply the tools we use to access media content - the 8-track, the Beta tape. These are what media scholars call *delivery technologies*... Delivery technologies become obsolete and get replaced; media, on the other hand, evolve.<sup>lviii</sup>

It is therefore possible to still conceive of a text mediated through a computer as a 'film' or as 'television': the 'content' retains some element of its original medium's status, though the platform or 'delivery technology' has changed. Jenkins describes historian Lisa Gietelman's two-tier approach to media, in which a medium is both a 'technology that enables communication' and a 'set of associated 'protocols'...that have grown up around that technology'.<sup>lix</sup> For traditional media scholars, this might provide some protection against the 'death' of their subject. An example of how the idea of media as a set of discourses ('protocols') has been used in theorizing changes to media in the wake of digital technology is D.N. Rodowick's thoughts on cinema:

Cinema presents an important lesson in philosophy to modern aesthetics, for it is useless to want to define the specificity of any medium according to criteria of ontological self-identification or substantial self-similarity.

Heterogeneous and variable both in its matters of expression and in the plurality of codes that organize them, the set of all films is itself an uncertain territory that is in a state of continual change.<sup>lx</sup>

Conceiving of a medium as discursively produced, as the aggregate of a series of heterogeneous codes which are contingent upon various factors (era, culture, technology, for example) gives individual media identities more flexibility, and a better chance of survival in a digital world. Furthermore, and crucially for this book, it prompts questions about how media relate to one another: as systems, as codes, as technologies and as cultural forms.

Another important point about conceiving of media in terms of the technologies *and* protocols is that this model allows for a fuller investigation of how *remediation* works. By 'remediation', I generally mean the presentation of the



content of one medium through the platform, or 'delivery technology' of another. It is clearly a useful term for discussions of the presentation of film texts on television, or through the online content players of television broadcasters. The term 'remediation' is, however, also widely used to mean the use of elements of one medium within another, newer medium, as Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin's seminal *Remediation* discusses:

We have adopted the word to express the way in which one medium is seen by our culture as reforming or improving upon another. This belief in reform is particularly strong for those who are today repurposing earlier media into digital forms.<sup>lxi</sup>

Though Bolter and Grusin argue for the historical significance of remediation as a cultural process prior to digital technologies, they nevertheless recognize that digitalization has accelerated and widened the process. For Bolter and Grusin remediation is a combination of processes of 'immediacy' - the disavowal or invisibility of the act of representation - and 'hypermediacy', or the acknowledgement and, indeed, exaggeration of the act of mediation. Digital remediation, therefore, works by rendering its own operations invisible, whilst at the same time emphasizing the contours and content of the original medium. In digital remediation, 'the digital medium wants to erase itself, so that the viewer stands in the same relationship to the content as she would if she were confronting the original medium.'<sup>lxii</sup> Remediation, then, is as much a matter of the encounter between audience and text as it is the ontology of media.

This in turn has important consequences for the social, cultural and political role of media in a digital age. Digital convergence presents a challenge to the status quo of the organization and institutionalization of media, especially in

nations like Britain in which broadcast media have traditionally been organized along public service lines. Media convergence thus not only threatens the specificity of media, it also affects their traditional social and cultural roles. Public service broadcasting has tended to be defended on the grounds that, as Trine Syvertsen puts it, 'broadcasting is special', that it is a particular form of democratic public good.<sup>lxiii</sup> Media convergence and the spread of digital technologies make these kinds of defences harder to make. In this context, the processes of divergence, of discursively separating media from each other make strategic sense: maintaining the cultural status and identity of 'old media' helps broadcasting and filmmaking institutions retain a distinct sense of purpose and continuity with traditional practice. In nations like Britain, where the television ecology is built around notions of public service that emerged in relation to the specialness of broadcasting as a medium, such rhetorical divergence between media may, in the final analysis, be linked to a survival strategy that is underpinned by arguments about the inherent value of 'old media', arguments increasingly threatened in a period of greater media convergence.

### **Film Through Television: Convergence and Divergence**

This introduction has used writings from a variety of sources to discuss three structuring ideas for this book: discourses of the specificity of film and television as media; convergence and remediation; and 'quality' and the hierarchy of film and television. This book is designed so that the conceptual models which are set up in this introduction are explored in detail in relation to the case studies discussed within the chapters at varying levels of explicitness. A key aim of this book with regards ideas like convergence and remediation is to situate them in a historical, national and institutional context. I am interested in ways in which these terms

might be applied to pre-digital media. Discourses of 'quality' and their meaning in relation to the hierarchy of film and television are referred to throughout the book.

This book is structured in two parts. Part One explores the contexts in which the relationship between film and television has developed in Britain, whether cultural, industrial or institutional, in the pre-digital period. Part Two uses this contextual background as a starting point for its investigation into the changes wrought by the coming of digital technologies. The book uses its concepts reflexively, which means that ideas which have commonly been applied to digital media are used in the service of discussions about analogue, or pre-digital media. This means that, although the book is organized to be more or less chronological, at no time do I wish to imply that I view the history it tells as broadly teleological. Indeed, I emphasize consistently the *continuities* with traditional practice amongst the various changes.

Since Channel 4 began its policy of supporting cinema in 1982, the relationship between film and television developed into a symbiosis, with PSBs providing the only sustained support for the film industry. The convergence between the two media, however, has been viewed with suspicion from both sides. Nick James summarized this phenomenon thus:

Time was when the UK film and television industries could afford a mutual disdain: film people knew their enterprises had a prestige and a shelf life denied to television works, and television people were proud that they had an instant access to the heart of the nation denied to film-makers. ... This see-saw snobbery between film and television was, of course, built on the fulcrum of mutual dependency: in the reliable old 20<sup>th</sup> century, the bulk of British filmmaking was dependent on the television companies and they in

turn were equally keen on the ratings a good movie would guarantee before the proliferation of movie platforms made them less special.<sup>lxiv</sup>

The 'see-saw snobbery' kept the converging media at a distance from each other, even if only at a rhetorical level. Convergence at industrial, aesthetic or technological levels has been met with anxiety, which in turn becomes resistance: convergence begets discourses of rhetorical *divergence*. The first part of the book will explore various ways in which the convergence/divergence dichotomy affected and was affected by the film operations of the PSBs in the 1990s.

Chapter One explores the pre-history of the relationship between PSBs and film, beginning with a summary of the complex history of this relationship, including both the use of film as material and medium for making television drama, and a brief discussion of the film industry's response to television. This summary is intended to provide context for the ongoing arguments of this book, not to be exhaustive; indeed, much more historical work needs to be done to discover in more detail character of the relationship between film and television in Britain. The chapter moves on to chart the career history of a key figure in the convergence between cinema and television in the UK, Channel 4's first Commissioning Editor for Fiction, David Rose. Rose moved from working in theatre, to the BBC, becoming head of regional television drama, to a feature film producer with Channel 4, a trajectory that suggests a strong connection between these media pre-existing the period conventionally understood as one of 'convergence' between film and television in the UK. The chapter concludes with a detailed textual analysis of two television 'plays' Rose produced that were shot on film, and, twenty years later, would be re-broadcast by Channel 4 as 'films' during a season called *Film 4 Today* (analysed in more detail in Chapter Two).

The chapter explores how this mutation occurred, and how the semantic shift from 'play' to 'film' manifests cultural and institutional changes in attitude to film on television. It also demonstrates the material and discursive foundations on which the relationship between film culture and television were built.

Continuing the examination of how the shift between play and film occurred, Chapter Two considers the role of television as an exhibition platform for feature film in the early 1990s, with reference to three very different case studies. The first explores the presentational devices used by Channel 4 for the *Films 4 Today Season*. It considers how television's presentational arsenal – including interstitials, advertisements, and listings magazines – were used in service of re-branding these texts. The second case study looks at Derek Jarman's *Blue* (UK, 1993), arguing that television broadcast of art cinema compensated for the lack of a theatrical distribution. Theatrical distribution alters the encounter between public and film, and brings the film into new contexts of promotion, circulation and evaluation. The enhanced public profile of a film that can be achieved by distribution became useful to broadcasters engaging in commercial strategies to sell audiences to advertisers, as Channel 4 did in the 1990s. In the case of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (Mike Newell, UK, 1994), the film's immense popularity and worldwide success rendered its premiere on Channel 4 a television event, a phenomenon explored in the third case study of this chapter. The chapter considers the question of what 'film' is when remediated through television broadcast, in a period when films on television reached their peak popularity.

As the end of analogue broadcast television approached, Channel 4 deliberately moved from being a broadcaster to a multi-media company in a strategy of self-preservation designed to make the corporation competitive in the

digital broadcasting age. As part of this expansion, the film operation separated from the main company in 1998, and was renamed FilmFour. This subsidiary operated as a mini-studio, and had a production, sales and distribution unit. BBC Films, similarly separated from its parent company, dedicated itself to a programme of medium-budget American co-production. Chapter Three explores this moment in history with reference to the relationship between the PSBs and the rest of the film industry at this time. The chapter examines some of the public and industrial discourses of the 1998 – 2002 mini-boom, looking particularly at FilmFour Ltd, which was one of the UK's pre-eminent independent film companies and a victim of inflated expectations at this time. Of particular interest in this chapter is the various ways in which the British film industry, at this time, employed a powerful anti-television rhetoric in order to distinguish the two media. Although the economic and institutional convergence between television and film was an accepted norm by the end of the 1990s, distinctions between 'film' and 'television' were made in order to bolster the image of British film. Rather than the glorified television drama put through cinematic distribution of the 1980s and 1990s, British film, it was argued, must become bigger and better. Distinguishing television from film was part of a wider strategy, fuelled by public funding from the UK Film Council and other agencies, to grow cinema as one of the UK's pre-eminent 'creative industries'.

Part Two continues the investigation of the growing convergence/divergence dichotomy in British cinema and television, but with reference to the changes wrought by the coming of digital technologies of production, distribution and exhibition. Reflecting on the state of cinema at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Anne Friedberg wrote:

One thing is clear: we can note it in the symptomatic discourse, inflected with the atomic terms of 'media fusion' or 'convergence' or the pluralist inclusiveness of 'multimedia' – the differences between the media of movies, television and computers are rapidly diminishing. <sup>lxv</sup>

This statement speaks to an orthodoxy around digital media that was, at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, becoming pervasive and widespread. A key rhetoric of new media is that the specificities of individual media dissolve in the face of digital convergence. The second part of the book challenges and complicates this orthodoxy, considering how elements which have so far been under-explored, such as institutional identity, presentation and branding may be crucial in maintaining some degree of media separation between film and other new media content. Just as analogue film and television retained, to some extent, their individual identities and ontologies in Britain in an era in which their industrial, personnel and aesthetic contexts were profoundly blurred, so too is it possible still to distinguish between film, television and other media remediated digitally. This part of the book explores some of the ways in which PSBs are involved both in the convergence and the distinction of media forms.

Chapter Four looks at the use of digital technology in film production supported by the filmmaking departments of the PSBs. Digital technology seemed to herald new possibilities for filmmaking and, from the perspective of the PSBs, new avenues of subsidy and patronage. When FilmFour separated from Channel 4 to become an autonomous 'studio', a specific department - the FilmFour Lab - was set up to produce low-budget experimental films. Fitting in with Channel 4's cultural remit and institutional reputation for innovation and risk, this department was a natural place for digital cinema to be supported. Early digital cinema made

for this department evidences the difficulty with experimenting in the context of public subsidy, particularly where the medium itself is not yet established aesthetically or culturally. As digital tools for filmmaking gathered both technical capability and greater cultural repute, all-digital filmmaking schemes grew in prominence. The remainder of the chapter looks at such schemes supported by Film4 (Warp X), and the BBC (Digital Departures, iFeatures and Microwave). The chapter examines how digital technology has been used to reduce risk on projects involving untested talent, and considers the ambivalent use of the institutional images (brands) in promoting these films, and, conversely, the use of these films within the brand consolidation of BBC Films and Film4.

The maintenance of institutional identity is crucial for any media company in the era of digital convergence. This is particularly true of traditional (public service) broadcasters working within digital satellite and cable broadcasting. The FilmFour channel is an example of this: as a television broadcaster in which television-as-text is absent, its identity is created by a combination of promotion and presentation and by the kind of content it contains – the films it shows. Chapter Five explores both of these elements through a thorough exploration of the establishment and maintenance of the 'brand' values of the FilmFour Channel. First, the opening night programming of FilmFour, simulcast on Channel 4 and essentially an elaborate marketing exercise, is analysed; second, I use quantitative data about the first ten years of the FilmFour channel to discuss changes in content, carriage and character.

Digital cable and satellite television was the first historical step in the change of television from analogue to digital, but, arguably, retained integral elements of television's traditional textuality and cultural form. A more profound



integration of television with digital media is the appearance towards the end of the 2000s of television online. James Bennett argues that when television programmes appear on digital media players, like the BBC iPlayer,

removed from the structure of television's scheduled flow, the program as content on these services calls our attention to its embedding in a new, digital media context: instead of flow, here we have an interface, hyperlinks, and a database structure experienced via broadband rather than broadcasting.<sup>lxvi</sup>

If television's remediation of film, as explored in the first part of the book, creates an ontological uncertainty about the status of film texts, then the reduction of all audiovisual texts to 'content' must multiply this process. Chapter Six explores the relationship between the BBC and its online film content. It specifically looks at the positioning and presentation of film texts as embedded in the iPlayer. The BBC doubly remediates its film content – once on television, once through the iPlayer. The chapter thus considers the ways in which the database functions of the iPlayer might affect the receptive encounter between user and text. This is crucial, because judgements about their content's textuality – and its quality – may be passed from PSB institution to user through presentation and content labelling.

In line with the book's general view of convergence between film and television as culturally, nationally and, particularly, institutionally inflected and specific, this Part Two uncovers ways in which digitalization is managed through the institutional platforms of PSBs, and the effect this might have on the ways in which film texts are received by the public. In an era of digital convergence, in which specific media appear radically shifted from their traditional relations with each other and with viewers/users, PSBs may use their platforms and institutional

identities to maintain traditional media boundaries. This part of the book explores how and why this is done.

This book explores the various roles PSBs have played in British cinema culture over the last two decades. Working with a long view of the history of this relationship, I seek to complicate some of the assumptions about British cinema's reliance upon and rivalry with television. The key aims of this book, then, are to bring the scholarship that already exists around British cinema's relationship with television in general, and public service broadcasters in particular, up to date. This, clearly, requires the discussion of the development of digital culture in Britain, which has had a profound impact upon the ways in which television and film as cultural forms work. This book thus seeks to synthesize two different (and historically distinct) conceptions of 'convergence': one which describes the coming together and mutual dependence of two cultural industries, and one which refers to the erosion of material distinctions between previously distinct media. This synthesis has prompted the central investigation of this book: to determine how and why PSBs invest rhetorical energy (as well as financial contributions) into film *as a medium distinct from television*.

I offer, then, a new perspective on the issue of convergence, emphasizing the institutional and discursive as means of understanding changes that are conventionally thought of as material and ontological. By examining the work of (British) PSBs in particular, I offer a model of 'convergence' in which questions of medium specificity are grounded within a nationally and culturally specific context. This is important, because one of the central intellectual aims of this book is to propose that there is an integral relationship between context and media ontology. This book is simultaneously an update to a discussion that has lain dormant for a

number of years and a challenge to some dominant conceptualizations of medium specificity and convergence, particularly with regards digitalization. Most importantly, though, it is intended as the beginning of a discussion about the ways in which presentational and discursive modes and the institutional contexts in which texts are produced/received affect the understanding and evaluation of film texts.

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