FOREWORD

To encompass the infinity of contemporary cinema is an impossible task. To ignore its prehistory is the height of naivety. I have thus combined the best rather than the worst of both worlds by singling out a dominant and guiding feature in the development of the cinema over the last thirty years. This I have called, after Pasolini, the 'Cinema of Poetry'. This book takes its inspiration from his famous essay on the topic in the same way, I hope to show, that the key films to which he referred in 1965 are at the heart of the transformation which has taken place in the art of cinema. His guiding idea has taken off in ways he never imagined, and this study attempts to uncover some of those many paths and directions. In doing so, it sadly leaves out scores of films of this epoch which I have seen and enjoyed, usually again and again. Most of those mentioned have also been seen again and again, but have probably been enjoyed even more.

My enthusiasm for the cinema has at times been carried along quite shamelessly by that of others, and the following are among those whose fervour and critical eye for the moving image have helped to make this book possible, though they are in no way responsible for the outcome. I would like to give special thanks, therefore, to Diane Bell, Mark Cousins, Christophe Dupin, Spiros Gangas, Jennifer Goepart, Cristina Novelli, Asbietta Ostrowska and Bernard Rudden, and also to Jim Hamilton and all the staff of Edinburgh Filmhouse for making their cinema the most congenial I know in which to watch and talk about movies.

John Orr
May 1997