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The Films of D. W. Griffith serves as an introduction to, and a cultural argument for, the work of the first widely acknowledged master filmmaker. Situating D. W. Griffith within film history and American studies, Scott Simmon addresses Griffith's competing reputations as a genius of cinematic form and a retrograde purveyor of reactionary and racist tales. His study includes an extended discussion of Griffith's controversial drama of the Civil War and Reconstruction, *The Birth of a Nation*, and of his grandiose historical epic, *Intolerance*. However, Simmon identifies the enduring works among the approximately 450 shorter films that Griffith directed for the Biograph Company between 1908 and 1913, years of rapid change in the film industry. Griffith's Biograph films about contemporary city life and his early domestic melodramas or "woman's films" also are given major focus. In this cultural reading, Griffith's films are located at a crisis point between two centuries, drawing power from the popular attitudes of nineteenth-century America as they create patterns for the twentieth century's most distinctive art form.

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For Annette, naturally

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