

The Museum of Modern Art

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A new and expanded edition of D. W. Griffith: American Film Master by Iris Barry is being issued May 11 by The Museum of Modern Art to coincide with the current retrospective of his films at the Museum. Film enthusiasts and scholars have come to regard this long out of print book as the chief source of information about a key figure in the development of the American film. The new edition adds to the colorful observation of the original a wealth of illuminating factual data from Griffith's personal and business papers.

Miss Barry's authoritative study is supplemented by an addendum that more than doubles the size of the original work. This new section, which was prepared by Eileen Bowser of the Museum Film Library staff, provides detailed annotation for all of Griffith's films and includes new information on his career from documents that have only recently become available for scholarly use. In addition to commenting on how each of the films came to be made and what it contributed to the medium, Mrs. Bowser presents new and enlightening facts about the complicated business dealings that having once put Griffith at the top of the movie industry may ultimately have forced him from it.

David Wark Griffith, who was born in 1875 in La Grange, Kentucky, began his film directing career in 1908. By 1916 he had done more than any one man to develop the unique language of the screen, to free it from stage conventions, to give flexibility to the camera and to develop imaginative and purposeful cutting of the film itself. His achievements were numerous: with his cameraman, G. W. Bitzer, he developed the meaningful use of long shots to open up the field of vision to great vistas, close shots to investigate the most fleeting human emotions, and cross-cutting to heighten tension through parallel scenes, to mention only a few. Among his most well-known pictures are THE BIRTH OF A NATION (1915), INTOLERANCE (1916), BROKEN BLOSSOMS (1919), WAY DOWN EAST (1920), and ORPHANS OF THE STORM (1922).

D. W. Griffith: American Film Master, which first appeared in 1940 in conjunction with a pioneering retrospective exhibition of Griffith's films at the Museum,
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also includes "A Note on the Photography of Griffith Films" by Beaumont Newhall, Director of the George Eastman House in Rochester, and a foreword by Richard Griffith, Curator of the Museum Film Library since Miss Barry's retirement in 1951.

As the Film Library's first Curator (1935-1951), Iris Barry had uncovered and re-examined the films Griffith made at the very beginning of his career, and it was she who first saw that in the four years following 1908 he had actually established all the principles on which the art of the motion picture as we now know it is based. The book that she produced was an intensely personal one based on exhaustive conversations with Griffith and imaginative research into his Kentucky origins.

Miss Barry felt that, with the exception of Frank Lloyd Wright, Griffith was the most eminent American figure in the arts since Whitman. She writes in part "...the men who make films today know who it was that taught them the basis of their craft. The American public, which for 45 years has so keenly enjoyed and supported the motion picture, has been somewhat reluctant to allow it the status of an art. Now, gradually, they too are recognizing that in Griffith they have one of the greatest and most original artists of our time."

The 88-page book, profusely illustrated with 108 photographs, will be available at the Museum for \$6.95 hardbound and \$3.95 paperbound, plus an additional 25 cents for mail orders. The hardbound edition will be distributed nationally by Doubleday and Company, Inc.

The current Griffith film series at the Museum includes 43 films ranging from 1907 to 1931 and is the most comprehensive retrospective ever held of his accomplishments. It will run through July 31. Seven of the films have not had a public showing since their original releases, and 17 additional films, which have become available since the Museum's 1940 series, are included. A selection of stills from the films will be on view in the Museum's Auditorium Gallery through May 31.

Review copies and additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, and Linda Goldsmith, Assistant, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, N. Y. 10019. Circle 5-8900.