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Sommario/riassunto	For over a century, cinephiles and film scholars have had to grapple with an ugly artifact that sits at the beginnings of film history. D. W. Griffith's profoundly racist epic, <i>The Birth of a Nation</i> , inspired controversy and protest at its 1915 release and was defended as both a true history of Reconstruction (although it was based on fiction) and a new achievement in cinematic art. Paul McEwan examines the long and shifting history of its reception, revealing how the film became not just a cinematic landmark but also an influential force in American aesthetics and intellectual life. In every decade since 1915, filmmakers, museums, academics, programmers, and film fans have had to figure

out how to deal with this troublesome object, and their choices have profoundly influenced both film culture and the notion that films can be works of art. Some critics tried to set aside the film's racism and concentrate on the form, while others tried to relegate that racism safely to the past. McEwan argues that from the earliest film retrospectives in the 1920s to the rise of remix culture in the present day, controversies about this film and its meaning have profoundly shaped our understandings of film, race, and art.
