

# — THE — GRIFFITH PROJECT

VOLUME 7  
FILMS PRODUCED BY  
1913

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Pablo Chueco Usón

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Publishing





THE GRIFFITH PROJECT

VOLUME 7

FILMS PRODUCED IN 1913

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KEMP R. NIVER,  
WHO HELPED IN MAKING IT ACCESSIBLE

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## CONTENTS

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<i>Foreword</i>	<i>vi</i>	488. Brute Force	110
<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	<i>ix</i>	489. Two Men of the Desert	117
<i>Note on Layout</i>	<i>xii</i>	490. The Reformers, or the Lost Art of Minding One's Business	121
458. Love in an Apartment Hotel	1	491. [ <i>Judith of Bethulia</i> (Outtakes)]	129
459. Broken Ways	4	492. Judith of Bethulia	131
460. A Girl's Stratagem	7	493. The Adopted Brother	143
461. Near to Earth	9	494. Classmates	148
462. A Welcome Intruder	12	495. Strongheart	153
463. The Sheriff's Baby	14	496. Lord Chumley	156
464. The Hero of Little Italy	16	497. Men and Women	160
465. The Perfidy of Mary	18	498. Man's Enemy	163
466. A Misunderstood Boy	21	499. Liberty Belles	167
467. The Left-Handed Man	26	500. A Fair Rebel	170
468. The Little Tease	28	501. The Wife	174
469. The Lady and the Mouse	31		
470. If We Only Knew	35	<i>Bibliography</i>	179
471. The Wanderer	38	<i>Descriptions of Scenes</i> <i>from Copyright Records</i>	181
472. The House of Darkness	42	<i>Index of Titles: 1913</i>	240
473. The Stolen Loaf	46	<i>Cumulative Index Of Titles:</i> <i>1907-1913</i>	242
474. Just Gold	49		
475. His Mother's Son	52		
476. A Timely Interception	55		
477. Death's Marathon	58		
478. The Mothering Heart	67		
479. The Yaqui Cur	78		
480. The Ranchero's Revenge	84		
481. Her Mother's Oath	86		
482. The Sorrowful Shore	91		
483. The Battle at Elderbush Gulch	96		
484. The Enemy's Baby	101		
485. The Mistake	104		
486. The Coming of Angelo	107		
487. [Mary Pickford and David Belasco on the Set of <i>A Good Little Devil</i> ]	109		

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## FOREWORD

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In its first six months, the year 1913 – the first major turning point in D.W. Griffith's career as a filmmaker – appears to be one of the best known in the context of his creative trajectory; much of the second half, however, is largely shrouded in mystery. This paradox is the result of an intriguing (and ultimately unclear) chain of events. Toward the end of his involvement with the Biograph Company, D.W. Griffith produced some of his most widely acclaimed films with titles such as *The Lady and the Mouse* (DWG Project, #469), *The Mothering Heart* (#478) and *The Battle at Elderbush Gulch* (#483). Griffith's reputation as a major personality was thus firmly established in the American film industry. In all likelihood, his emerging status as "the Biograph producer" was one of the circumstances that set the filmmaker and his company on a collision course, culminating in a confrontation during the production of his first feature film, the four-reeler *Judith of Bethulia* (#492). In a famous one-page advertisement published in *The New York Dramatic Mirror* (September 29, 1913), Griffith declared himself the "producer of all great Biograph successes", listing about 150 films to his credit and claiming the invention of technical innovations such as cross-cutting, close-ups, long shots and "restraint of expression".

A few weeks earlier, while Griffith was still in California with his cast and crew, Klaw & Erlanger – a wealthy theatrical production organization based in New York – had teamed with Biograph in order to produce three- and four-reelers. They set up a new firm, the Protective Amusement Company, with an initial investment of \$500,000 to copyright plays and handle the production end, with Griffith as head of production. According to plans, the films would be played at the East Coast theaters owned by Klaw & Erlanger (one of them was the Liberty Theatre in New York), filling slots that were not taken with stage productions. The agreement between Klaw & Erlanger and Biograph was announced in *Motion Picture News* (June 21, 1913, p. 12), which called it a "combine" and an "association". Production started in the late Summer or early Fall of 1913 (for details, see Paul Spehr's entry on *Lord Chumley*, #496). Releases were scheduled to begin in September 1913 but were soon delayed, and the first showing took place some four months later at the Palace Theatre in New York (January 19, 1914) with *The Fatal Wedding*. The results of this hastily planned joint venture were disappointing at best, both in terms of quality and box-office revenues. In the early days of its alliance with Biograph, Klaw & Erlanger was expected to produce 104 feature films from plays owned by the company; the number was quickly pared down to 52, and ultimately only 26 titles were copyrighted by the Protective Amusement Company. After unsuccessfully trying the programs in their theaters, Klaw & Erlanger changed the policy in June 1914 and began releasing through Biograph's arrangement with the General Film Company, which offered the films to moving-picture theaters that were booking longer productions in three and four reels.

The degree of Griffith's involvement with these films is unknown, as we have no clear idea of what Griffith was doing in the late Summer or Fall 1913 at Biograph. He officially resigned from the company on 1 October (as announced in *Motion Picture News*, October 4, 1913, and reported in *The Moving Picture World*, October 11, 1913), but it is possible that by then he already had little or no contact with what was happening in the studio, as



he had been filming in California earlier in the year and came back to New York only at the end of the summer. In his notes at the Museum of Modern Art (*D.W. Griffith Papers*), Billy Bitzer indicates that Griffith supervised a handful of Klaw & Erlanger titles: *Classmates* (#494), *Strongheart* (#495), *Men and Women* (#497) and *The Wife* (#501). However, we have no convincing proof that he actively participated in any of these productions, and the cameramen who were there were never asked about this point. It should also be stressed that none of the actors involved (Lillian and Dorothy Gish, Blanche Sweet, Lionel Barrymore, or Linda Arvidson) mention any Griffith connection with the Klaw & Erlanger films in interviews, articles, or books. Nor does Griffith ever mention them in his memoirs. In the absence of conclusive evidence, this volume includes entries only for those Klaw & Erlanger films made until October 1913, and only where members of the core group of Griffith performers – from the Gish sisters to Henry B. Walthall and Blanche Sweet – are prominently featured in the cast. As the team followed Griffith at the time of his departure from Biograph, it may be inferred that their presence in a Klaw & Erlanger cast could indicate that some form of relationship, however perfunctory, existed between the company and its would-be chief of production beyond the supervision of one-reelers. It must be stressed, however, that this is only a matter of conjecture.

Griffith's break with Biograph defines the boundaries of this volume, the seventh installment in a multi-year research project commissioned by the Pordenone Silent Film Festival in Sacile, involving the analysis of all the films where D.W. Griffith was credited as director, actor, writer, producer and supervisor. As in previous volumes, contributors to *The Griffith Project* were asked to analyze groups of consecutive Biograph films, listed here in their shooting order. Please note that it is the last day or month of shooting that determines the chronology and perimeters of each volume. The primary source for filmographic information on the Biograph period is *D.W. Griffith and the Biograph Company* (Cooper C. Graham, Steven Higgins, Elaine Mancini, João Luiz Vieira. Metuchen, N.J. and London: The Scarecrow Press, 1985). We gratefully acknowledge its authors and publisher, with special thanks to Steven Higgins – a longtime friend of the Pordenone Silent Film Festival – who provided invaluable advice on various aspects of the overall project. An annotated filmography of the Klaw & Erlanger films was published by Kemp R. Niver in *Klaw & Erlanger Present Famous Plays in Pictures* (Los Angeles: Locare, ca. 1976); supplementary information can be found in Angelo R. Humouda and Renato Venturelli (eds.), *I cerchi del mondo: la produzione Klaw & Erlanger* (Genoa: Cineteca Griffith, 1983 [Quaderni della Cineteca # 3]). Contributors to *The Griffith Project* have added or amended information contained in the Biograph and Klaw & Erlanger filmographies after viewing of extant prints and further research on written sources.

The criteria adopted for the inventory of archival sources have been discussed in the foreword to previous volumes of this series. The same applies to the Biograph plot summaries and continuity sheets deposited at the Copyright Office of the Library of Congress. An asterisk (\*) following the sequence number at the beginning of each entry indicates the titles for which a continuity sheet is available.

*The Griffith Project* would not exist without the generous help of all the individuals and institutions involved in the preservation of Griffith's work. Our special thanks go to Mary Lea Bandy, Anne Morra and Steven Higgins (The Museum of Modern Art, New York), Greg Lukow, Patrick Loughney, Madeline Matz and Mike Mashon (Library of Congress), who are currently in charge of this massive undertaking, initiated several years ago by Iris Barry and Eileen Bowser at MoMA and by the staff of the Motion Picture, Broadcasting, and Recorded Sound Division at the Library of Congress. Film preservation is by definition an international effort: several archives outside the United States have restored other Grif-

fith titles, or helped with additional documentation and research. We wish to express our gratitude to Elaine Burrows (National Film and Television Archive, London), Robert Daudelin (former director of the Cinémathèque Québécoise), Mark-Paul Meyer, Rommy Albers and Simona Monizza (Filmmuseum, Amsterdam), Eva Orbanz (Film Museum Berlin), Eddie Richmond and Charles Hopkins (UCLA Film and Television Archive), Dan Nissen (Det Danske Filmmuseum), Anca Mitran and the staff of the Arhiva Nationala de Filme (Bucarest), Paulina Fernandez Jurado (Fundación Cinemateca Argentina), Lúcia Lobo (Museu de Arte Moderna, Rio de Janeiro), Michelle Aubert, Eric Le Roy and Jean-Louis Cot (Archives du Film, Bois d'Arcy), Michael Pogorzelski and Fritz Herzog (Academy Film Archive), Edward E. Stratmann, Karen Latham Everson, Caroline Yeager, Chad D. Hunter, Deborah Stoiber, Daniel Wagner, Tim Wagner, Anthony L'Abbate and all the staff of the Motion Picture Department at George Eastman House, and Bo Berglund for their generous help in retrieving and sharing information on archival sources. André Gaudreault's entries for this volume have been translated from the French by Timothy Barnard. Last but not least, we are grateful to all the interns and students who contributed to the early stages of preparation of this volume: Jared Case, Kelly Chisholm, Sonia Genaitay, Kelli Hicks, Sungji Oh, Christina Porterfield, Linda Shah, Heather Stilin and John Woodard, 2001–2002 graduates of the L. Jeffrey Selznick School of Film Preservation at George Eastman House. Ember Lundgren, graduate at the 2002–2003 Selznick School, has assisted with supplementary research. My colleagues on the Board of Directors of the Pordenone Silent Film Festival (Davide Turconi, David Robinson, Piera Patat, Livio Jacob, Carlo Montanaro, Piero Colussi, Lorenzo Codelli and Luciano De Giusti) were instrumental in turning the Griffith retrospective into a unique opportunity to reassess the extraordinary contribution of D.W. Griffith to the art of film. Commentaries on the goals and methodological issues raised by *The Griffith Project* before and after the series started in October 1997 have been published in *Griffithiana*, Vol. XXI, Nos. 62–63, May 1998, 4–37; in the French journal *1895*, No. 29, December 1999, 187–88; and in Luca Giuliani (ed.), *The Collegium Papers I* (Gemona: Cineteca del Friuli / Le Giornate del Cinema Muto, 2001, 23–32), the inaugural volume of an annual collection of essays and workshop transcripts written or assembled by students participating in the festival.

Paolo Cherchi Usai  
Rochester, January 2003

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## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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KEVIN BROWNLOW has been collecting films since he was eleven. He joined the industry as an office boy in 1955, and embarked on his first feature a year later (it took eight years to complete). His passion has always been for silent films, and his restoration of *Napoleon* (Abel Gance, 1926) has still not been completed, although several versions are in circulation. With David Gill he produced the 13-hour TV series on the silent era, *Hollywood*. His latest film is about Chaplin and Hitler, *The Tramp and the Dictator* (2002).

PAOLO CHERCHI USAI, senior curator of the Motion Picture Department at George Eastman House, is professor of Film at the University of Rochester and director of the L. Jeffrey Selznick School of Film Preservation, established in 1996. Co-founder of the Pordenone Silent Film Festival, he is an adjunct member of the National Film Preservation Board at the Library of Congress and a member of the Executive Committee of the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAP). His latest book is *The Death of Cinema* (BFI, 2001).

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RUSSELL MERRITT is visiting professor in the film studies program at the University of California at Berkeley. He has written with J.B. Kaufman an account of Walt Disney's silent cartoons, *Walt in Wonderland: The Silent Films of Walt Disney* (1992), and a forthcoming book on the Silly Symphonies. He directed and produced "The Great Nickelodeon Show", presented at the Giornate del Cinema Muto in 2002. His most recent commentaries on Griffith can be read and heard on laser disks and DVDs produced by Film Preservation Associates for *The Birth of a Nation*, *Intolerance*, *Way Down East*, and the Biograph anthology *D.W. Griffith Years of Discovery: 1909–1913*.

CHARLES MUSSER is professor of Film Studies and American Studies at Yale University. His books include *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907* (1990), *Before the Nickelodeon: Edwin S. Porter and the Edison Manufacturing Company* (1991) and *Edison Motion Pictures, 1890–1900: An Annotated Filmography* (1997). He received the Prix Jean Mitry at the Giornate del Cinema Muto in 1996.

CYNTHIA ROWELL graduated in 1999 from the L. Jeffrey Selznick School of Film Preservation at George Eastman House. She is director of Acquisitions for Milestone Film & Video.

SCOTT SIMMON is professor of English and co-director of Film Studies at the University of California, Davis. For the Library of Congress, he supervised restorations of Oscar Micheaux's *Within Our Gates* (1919) and Lois Weber's *Where Are My Children?* (1916). For the National Film Preservation Foundation, he curated the DVD sets "Treasures from American Film Archives" (2000) and the forthcoming "The Silents: 50 More Treasures from American Film Archives, 1894–1931". Among his books are *The Films of D.W. Griffith* (1993) and, most recently, *The Invention of the Western Film* (2003).

PAUL SPEHR has been an archival consultant and film historian since retiring from the Library of Congress where he was Assistant Chief, Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division. He is the author of *The Movies Begin: Making Movies in New Jersey, 1887–1920* (1977) and *American Film Personnel and Company Credits, 1908–1920* (1996), as well as of a number of articles on archival matters and early film history. He is working on a book about the career of William Kennedy Laurie Dickson.

KRISTIN THOMPSON is an honorary fellow in the Communication Arts Department at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. Her books include *The Classical Hollywood Cinema* (1985), co-written with David Bordwell and Janet Staiger, *Exporting Entertainment: America in World Film Markets 1907–1934* (1985), and *Storytelling in the New Hollywood: Understanding Classical Narrative Technique* (1999). She is at work on a study comparing Ernst Lubitsch’s silent German and American features.

LINDA WILLIAMS directs the Film Studies Program at the University of California, Berkeley. Her books include a psychoanalytic study of Surrealist cinema, *Figures of Desire* (1981), a co-edited volume of feminist film criticism (*Re-vision*, 1984), an edited volume on film spectatorship, *Viewing Positions* (1993) and *Reinventing Film Studies* (co-edited with Christine Gledhill, 2000). In 1989 she published a controversial study of pornographic film entitled *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure and the Frenzy of the Visible* (2nd edition, 1999). Her latest book is *Playing the Race Card: Melodramas of Black and White, from Uncle Tom to O.J. Simpson* (2001).

NOTE ON LAYOUT

Filmographic information

Plot synopsis from actual viewing

THE GRIFFITH PROJECT: VOLUME 1

HER FIRST ADVENTURE

*Finishing date:* 9 March 1908  
*Location:* New York Studios/Leonia Junction, New Jersey  
*Release date:* 18 March 1908  
*Release length:* 500 feet  
*Copyright date:* 13 March 1908  
*Director:* Wallace McCutcheon, Sr.  
*Author:* none known  
*Source:* none known  
*Camera:* G.W. Blair  
*Score:* D.W. Griffith's (Author); Robert Harron (In crowd)  
*Archives:* Sources: The Museum of Modern Art, 35mm original negative, acquired in 1939; no main or intertitles

KIDNAPPED WITH THE AID OF A STREET PIANO

One little girl, more susceptible than the others, becomes so absolutely obsessed with the alluring charms of the music of a street piano, that she follows it circumstantially [sic] from stand to stand until finally she is unable to resist her steps. The organ grinder and his bizzare-attired wife pretend to show her the way, but in reality lead her further off.

At the home of the little one her absence is soon discovered, and agonizing anguish claws the heartstrings of Ma and Pa. Harry thought Rover, the baby's friend and guardian, is put on the scent. On and on he goes, leading the pursuing party through streets, lanes and fields, until he finally surprises the fugitives in a lonely wood, where they have hidden for refreshment. The miscreant meddlers [sic] are seized by the police and the child is restored to the arms of the now felicitous parents, while Rover frisks about with pardonable egotism. This film is exceedingly beautiful in incident and photography.

*Biograph Bulletin*, No. 128, March 18, 1908

A little girl follows an organ grinder and his wife who perform in the streets for money. Her absence is discovered by her parents, and the family dog is put to service following her scent. He leads the pursuers through the streets and into the country, where the meddlers have stopped to eat. The child is restored to the parents and the beggars are taken by the police.

*Her First Adventure* was made in the same child kidnapping-chase-dog rescue genre that supplied Griffith's first directed film, *The Adventures of Dollie*, a short time later. Earlier films in this strain include *The Lost Child* (1904/Photograph); *Raffie the Dog and Stolen by Captain* (1905/Edison); *Rescued by Rover* (1905/Hepworth); *Rescued by Carlo* (1906/Lubin). The production of *Her First Adventure* gave a leading role to D.W. Griffith as the distraught father, but the film added nothing new to the genre and even lacks a little clarity compared to some of the earlier films. It lacks the spatial clarity and rhythmic repetition of a *Rescued by Rover*, for instance. After two shots to set up the chase, there are seven shots for the chase through suburbs and countryside, including pantomime to fill

Program sequence number, production company

Plot summary from historical source

Critical analysis

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## LOVE IN AN APARTMENT HOTEL

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*Filming date:* begun December 1912, finished January 1913

*Location:* New York/California

*Release date:* 27 February 1913; reissued by Biograph, 18 June 1915

*Release length:* 1000 feet

*Copyright date:* 21 February 1913

*Director:* D.W. Griffith

*Script:* William M. Marston ["The Thief"]

*Camera:* G.W. Bitzer

*Cast:* Blanche Sweet (*Young woman*); Adolph Lestina (*Her father*); Henry B. Walthall (*Her fiancé*); Harry Carey (*Thief*); Mae Marsh (*Angelina Millingsford, a maid*); Edward Dillon (*Pinky Doolan, a bellboy*); John T. Dillon, Walter Miller (*Fiancé's friends*); Frank Evans, W.C. Robinson (*Hotel detectives*); Kathleen Butler (*Young woman's maid*); Kate Toncray (*Head chambermaid*); Robert Harron (*Desk clerk*); Joseph McDermott (*Fiancé's valet*); Clara T. Bracey (*Maid*); Jack Pickford (*Bellhop*); Matt B. Snyder, Harry Hyde, Gertrude Bambrick, Lionel Barrymore, Hattie Delaro?, J. Jiquel Lanoe, Walter P. Lewis (*In hotel lobby*)

*Archival Sources:* Library of Congress, 35mm paper print (fragment: 117 frames plus intertitles), Paper Print Collection; 35mm acetate negative (AFI/The Museum of Modern Art Collection), incomplete, no intertitles

In the apartment hotel lived the aspiring maid, whose solicitude maintained order in the bachelor's apartment. He was her ideal, and the all-adoring bell-boy was firmly but gently given to understand that maids who read "Heliotrope Glendening's Advice to Young Ladies" look higher than ice-water toters. A compromising complication, however, with an unexpected visit from a beautiful lady, quite convinces the aspiring one that wealthy young bachelors may be the grandest men ever, but their aspirations, when it comes to the crucial test, are not for chambermaids.

*The Moving Picture World*, February 22, 1913, p. 806

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A young chambermaid in an apartment hotel brushes off a co-worker, a bellboy, when he reveals his feelings for her. For the chambermaid has greater ambitions: she is secretly in love with a well-to-do young man who resides in the hotel. The latter is about to begin a game of cards with some friends when he learns that his fiancée is in the lobby, having come to pay him a visit. He quickly does his best to hide any trace of his more-or-less licit activity and hustles his poker companions out the door. No one is aware that a burglar, only a few minutes before, had tied up the chambermaid and shut her in the closet of the young man's bedroom. Just when the fiancée is visiting the bedroom, the chambermaid, who has regained consciousness and escaped her bonds, stumbles out of the closet and falls, half-unconscious, into the young man's arms. The fiancée has seen quite enough and quits the apartment forthwith. The thief, who had remained hidden under the bed, then does battle with the young man, who delivers him to the hotel detective. Realising her mistake, the fiancée rejoins her sweetheart, while the chambermaid, for her part, realises the social distance that separates her from the well-to-do young man and resolves to accept the bellboy's advances.

This film's production straddled December 1912 and January 1913, and also straddled New York and California. *Love in an Apartment Hotel* is in fact the first film that the Biograph acting company completed in California after its arrival there just after the Christmas holidays. Numerous sources indicate that the film was shot in the 14th St. studio in New York and that Griffith only completed it after he was installed in California. It is thus the very first film made by Griffith in the last year of his employment with Biograph. As for the 14th St. studio, *Love in an Apartment Hotel* represents, in a way, its swan song. As Richard Schickel (p. 182) recounts, "[Griffith] then began a romantic comedy, *Love in an Apartment Hotel*, was unable to finish it before it was time to leave for Los Angeles and, planning to finish it there, walked out of the old Brownstone on East Fourteenth Street for the last time". The new Biograph studio, in The Bronx, was then under construction, and "was to be completed and ready when the company returned from California" (Henderson, p. 148).

The film's first scene, made up of three shots (an establishing shot into which is inserted a close-up of a bank book being examined by the bellboy in love with the chambermaid), takes place in an interior, the chambermaid's pantry. This interior scene, however, appears to have been shot outdoors, in California, on sets erected against the four winds, since on several occasions the wind lifts the chambermaid's apron – just like in the days of the first shoots of staged action, at the turn of the century, when there were no studios (apart from that of Méliès). The wind will return to play tricks in the film's very last shot, which was filmed on the same set. It should be noted that the film makes no use whatsoever of California's natural settings, its action taking place exclusively "indoors".

The print viewed (a 16mm copy from the Museum of Modern Art in New York) appears to be fairly complete, although it is probably missing a certain number of shots. The order of the shots does not correspond exactly with the continuity script, which Biograph produced for its films for a time with the purpose of registering them with the Copyright Office of the Library of Congress, between 1912 and 1914. These continuities consisted of shot-by-shot descriptions of the film's action. Nevertheless, the differences between the screened copy and this master are relatively few in number and of minor importance.

*Love in an Apartment Hotel* is a good example of how, at Biograph in 1912–13 (and in the Griffith's work in particular), the filmic narrator (the editor) was not sparing in his use of cuts and matches; he might even be said to be prodigal in his use of them. This is true of the film's second sequence, which shows the two principal characters chatting affectionately on the telephone. Indeed the sequence is edited according to the conversation's rhythm, with the camera alternating shots from one speaker to the other, moving briskly from one space to the other and following the cadence of the characters' repartee. This sequence's editing, which represents a kind of virtual shot-countershot construction (because it is made up of a coming-and-going between two interlocutors who, in a certain sense, are facing each other), even matches the sweethearts' gestures as they send each other little kisses through the intermediary of the telephone (it is, as an intertitle suggests, a case of "LOVE BY WIRE"). The sequence's *temporal* matches thus, for their part, work effectively. The same cannot be said, however, for the *spatial* matches. The two characters, each in their own space, are both turned toward the right, one situated on the right side of the frame and the other on the left. In this way the spectator is deprived of the illusion of an artificial proximity between them, an illusion the classical cinema would attempt to create in similar situations.

We could say that the relatively frantic editing in this film is influenced by the frantic editing of this second sequence, that of the telephone conversation. It is as if the same rhythm was retained for the rest of the film. This is true in any event of the long sequence of the



attempted burglary. This sequence, moreover, includes a segment that is a special case in its own right, one thoroughly representative of Griffith's approach to suspense (here, in one of its more restrained manifestations). This segment consists of a series of shots following upon one another once the chambermaid discovers the burglar after having, for a few seconds, the sensation of a strange and troubling presence in the room next to the one she is in. The segment then develops over fifteen or so shots, alternating between the two adjacent spaces, the hero's bedroom and his sitting room. The difference between this segment and the sequence of the telephone conversation is, of course, that during the telephone conversation the movement from one space to the other was motivated by an action of one of the characters. Here the alternation is derived from the profilic itself, whereas in the burglary sequence the motivation for cutting is of a purely narrative order. It is the narrator, in this sequence, who decides when to cut – quite often, considering the lack of any profilic motivation.

The film's editing is peculiar in another sense. In the sequence of the telephone conversation, the first two shots of the fiancée (Blanche Sweet) are establishing shots. The "monstrator" foresaw the entry of her maid into the frame, in order to answer the telephone and then pass it to her mistress. To have framed this scene in closer from the start would have required, at the very least, a reframing of the action, if not a form of montage. As soon as the maid has left the room and Griffith returns to this space, the framing, which maintains the same axis as before, is now in medium close-up – as it "should be" for a telephone conversation, particularly an intimate conversation of this sort.

*Love in an Apartment Hotel* is a privileged example of the effort Griffith and some of his actors expended in order to impose a new acting style – a "verisimilar byplay", to adopt the term suggested by Roberta Pearson in her Ph.D. dissertation. Pearson offers an interesting analysis of Henry B. Walthall's acting in the first shot in which he appears, the day after proposing marriage to his fiancée. Indeed this segment is exemplary of an acting style in which the film character allows himself to breathe and to let certain emotions and personality traits transpire without there being any animated action on screen. The character is there, before the viewer; he acts as if nothing was happening and allows himself seemingly innocuous little gestures that the camera captures in a completely innocent manner. This adds to the realism of the scene and gives depth to the character. Moreover, as Pearson argues (1987, pp. 257–58), "the props are somehow more personalized: rather than serving as general symbols of a man in love, they aid the actor in the construction of a particular character in a particular situation ... throughout the film, Walthall's gestures and use of props combine to create the picture of an elegant 'toff' in a romantic daze". These efforts to create a higher degree of realism contrast with the rather summary acting style, which dates from an earlier era, of Edward Dillon, who plays the role of the more humble suitor, Pinky Doolan – whose name is quite a story in itself! What is at work here then is a form of co-habitation, within a single film, of the sort of contradictory signals that the entire period often bears witness to.

André Gaudreault

459\*

BIOGRAPH

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## BROKEN WAYS

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*Filming date:* finished 13 January 1913

*Location:* California

*Release date:* 8 March 1913; reissued by Biograph, 16 July 1915

*Release length:* 1045 feet

*Copyright date:* 3 March 1913

*Director:* D.W. Griffith

*Script:* T.P. Bayer ["Heart Throbs"]

*Camera:* G.W. Bitzer

*Cast:* Henry B. Walthall (*The road agent*); Blanche Sweet (*His wife*); Harry Carey (*Sheriff*); Frank Opperman, Joseph McDermott (*Road agent's gang*); Charles Gorman (*Hold-up victim*); Walter Miller (*In town*); Alfred Paget, William Carroll (*In posse*); Robert Harron, Dorothy Gish, Adolph Lestina, Gertrude Bambrick (*In telegraph office*); Gertrude Bambrick (*On street*)

*Archival Sources:* George Eastman House, 16mm acetate positive (Hirsh–Aywon reissue); Library of Congress, 35mm paper print (fragment: 92 frames plus intertitles); The Museum of Modern Art, 35mm acetate fine grain master (Hirsh–Aywon reissue)

In this story the young wife concerned is called upon to solve a rather momentous question. After separating from her husband, whom she has discovered to be a brute and a criminal, she is about to give herself to another man, believing her husband dead, when he appears before he[r] fleeing from justice. Shall she deliver him to the law or surrender to his claims? She yields [i]n one instance, but not in the other. Then justice intervenes.

*The Moving Picture World*, March 1, 1913, p. 922

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In the 1880s, a young telegraph operator marries a man she believes to be good, but not only does he turn out to be brutal and unscrupulous, he is also a highway robber – a “road agent”. Because of his cruelty towards her, the young woman decides to leave him. She finds new work as a telegraph operator and develops a friendship with the local sheriff in her new home. The sheriff would very much like to marry her, but she refuses him without explaining why. In order to escape the law, the young woman’s husband spreads news of his own death. She thus considers herself to be free of obligation, but realises her mistake when her husband, on the run from the law, turns up in her office and demands that she hide him. The bandit ends up being shot by his pursuers, and the young woman is finally able to give her heart to the sheriff.

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This film, which was released in March 1913, was also shot during the Biograph acting company’s annual sojourn in California. Unlike *Love in an Apartment Hotel*, however, *Broken Ways* makes use of California’s natural settings, in particular the Apache Pass, which separates the two villages where the action unfolds.

The only extant print of this film is a version that was modernised in the 1920s (“Nathan Hirsh Presents ...” and “Distributed by Aywon Film Corporation”, we learn from the cred-

its). We thus do not know for certain exactly how the film appeared in its original version. We have a good idea of what this version would have looked like, however, from the continuity script (a shot-by-shot description of the film's action) deposited by Biograph with the Copyright Office of the Library of Congress. Comparing this continuity script to the extant version of the film is a highly instructive exercise, because it allows us to identify certain practices still in use in 1913, even by Griffith – practices classical cinema would attempt to correct a few years later when it tried to bring this film more into line with the new 1920s vision of what was understood as film language.

In this light, the major difference between the original film and the 1920s version resides in the use and placement of the intertitles. In fact the modernised version is stuffed with dialogue intertitles, while the original version contained only explanatory intertitles. What is more, the modernised version's dialogue intertitles are systematically cut into the precise spot where the character speaks the dialogue, which was far from being a consistent practice in early 1913. Naturally, films with dialogue intertitles existed in the early 1910s (and even before!). (In this sense, the film discussed here could very well have contained a certain number of these.) But, as a rule, the prevailing custom at that time was to place dialogue titles (as well as those representing the voice of the narrator, for that matter) *before* the shot and not to insert them into the shot. (On this subject, see my discussion of the intertitles in *The Heart of an Outlaw* [1909, DWG Project, #180].) This was true even if the dialogue rendered by the intertitle was uttered only at the very end of the shot. This out-of-sync quality was typical of early cinema – a particularly startling example is the appearance in *The Ex-Convict* (Edison, 1904) of the exclamation "THAT MAN SAVED MY LIFE!" in an intertitle that appears before the shot in question and which refers to a line of dialogue that comes extremely late in the shot.

Those responsible for the modernised version of *Broken Ways* also altered the narrative intertitles. In the original version, these were few in number and highly laconic. The new titles shed new light on the film's action, and even on its narration. At times these titles make it possible to render the context in which the action is unfolding more precise, while at other times they provide a new interpretation of the action from the point of view of the narrator. The narrator in the modernised version, for example, adopts a moralising tone when he remarks that "VICES, LIKE MEN, ARE RIPENED AND STRENGTHENED BY THE PASSAGE OF TIME", in contrast with the much more restrained commentary in the original version: "AS TIME GOES ON". The intertitles in the modernised version can also serve to let the action breathe a little: "AFTER THE MARRIAGE – THE WIFE LEARNS THE TRUTH" becomes "AFTER HER BRIEF HONEY-MOON HAS FADED, AND LIFE AGAIN TAKES ON THE SOBER HUES OF EVERY-DAY". Or, the intertitles can bestow a soul upon those shadowy spots that are the film's characters, particularly by encouraging us to view them as having individual identities; in the modernised version, the lead character is no longer just "the wife", she now has a full name: "KATHERINE COLLINS, THE DEMURE AND PRETTY TELEGRAPH OPERATOR AT APACHE PASS". So too are the husband and sheriff given names, Mike Donovan and "Rawhide" Dick Dawson. Even the town where Katherine takes refuge finds itself with an identity: Caliente.

Those responsible for this modernisation, who adopted a relatively critical attitude toward the film language Griffith employed in early 1913, finding this language too rudimentary, are the titler (who was responsible for the new texts) and the editor (who was responsible for inserting these titles into the action). In a certain sense, we might think of these two figures as having elevated themselves to the rank of "co-authors" of the film in its modernised version. In any event, the "producers" of this new version made no mistake and included mention of their role in the credits: "Edited and Titled by M.G. Cohn and J.F. Natteford".

One thing stands out when consulting the continuity script deposited with the Copyright

Office, and that is the systematic – one might even say systemic – alternation between the film's adjacent sets. Indeed it is remarkable that this film, whose form is actually quite linear, most often operates on a simple but effective procedure of alternating between two adjacent and contiguous sets (one sequence alternates almost mechanically between the two rooms of the young couple's home, while two others alternate between the interior and the exterior of the station where the woman works).

On the level of the *mise-en-scène* and the arrangement of the sets, we can see that here Griffith has solved one of the problems which certain spatial configurations had caused him. We see in this film (as well as in a few others before it) a situation I have already drawn attention to in my analysis of the film *The School Teacher and the Waif* (1912; see DWG Project, #414), when a character passes through a door and thus moves from outside a building to the inside, or vice versa. This kind of action always poses a matching problem, because the interior décor is often a set constructed in a studio, which could be miles from the outdoor setting. The matching problems that arise when working with one scene shot in a studio and another shot out-of-doors are generally related to the actors' movements, the camera's placement, the characters' eyelines, etc. These are problems that were generally resolved in 1913, as we can see in *Broken Ways*, where such transitions are executed fluidly and without interruption (even if the two sets do not match exactly – notice the window, for example).

Another problem that filmmakers of this period encountered quite often in similar situations concerned the placement of the camera in the interior set in relation to the door opening onto the outdoors. Whenever this door is situated at the back of the set, facing the screen, a matching problem will arise between what is seen of the outdoors when the door is opened and the outdoor setting as it is seen in shots showing the building from the exterior. The image we see of the outdoors when the door is opened will necessarily be of an artificial set (if the interiors were shot in a studio) whose disparity with the real outdoor setting will be apparent. This was precisely the problem that Griffith encountered with *The Lonedale Operator* (1911) in particular (here the station's waiting room opened directly onto the exterior of the building, but this was not clear in the film, which sent out contradictory signals in this regard). The same kind of set reappears in *Broken Ways* (here again there is a telegraph office opening onto the exterior of the building), and Griffith's simple solution to the problem was to place the door causing the problem at a right angle to the screen; this is something he would henceforth do more often. By the way, isn't it odd to see Griffith make a film in a telegraph office without the telegraph being used to send calls for help or create suspense?

André Gaudreault

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## A GIRL'S STRATAGEM

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*Filming date:* finished January 1913

*Location:* California

*Release date:* 10 March 1913

*Release length:* 998 feet

*Copyright date:* 5 March 1913

*Director:* D.W. Griffith or Anthony O'Sullivan

*Script:* George Hennessy ["The Midnight Hour"]

*Camera:* G.W. Bitzer or not known

*Cast:* Mae Marsh (*Girl*); Kate Bruce (*Mother*); W. C[hrystie] Miller (*Father*); Joseph Graybill (*Sweetheart*); Charles West (*Burglar chief*); Dell Henderson (*Loafer*); Alfred Paget (*Saloon keeper*)

*NOTE:* Partial cast identification taken from *The Moving Picture World*, March 23, 1913, p. 1219 (source provided by Russell Merritt).

*Archival Sources:* Library of Congress, 35mm paper print (fragment: 78 frames plus intertitles; nitrate damage and fusion, soaking required); The Museum of Modern Art, 35mm nitrate negative (incomplete)

The young man has been deceiving his mother in his letters home and upon the reception of a letter from her his better self is for the moment aroused, but only for the moment, as he finds evil associates hard to ignore. But it seems that the letter has brought with it a blessing and his mother's prayers have been heard because his meeting with a young woman in the tenement district proves to be his moral uplift. She, by a clever scheme, prevents him from committing a crime which would have been his irretrievable downfall.

*The Moving Picture World*, March 8, 1913, p. 1018

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No print of this film is currently available for screening, although the Museum of Modern Art in New York possesses an incomplete nitrate print. The Library of Congress in Washington holds a few fragments of the film, which are in too poor condition to be consulted or examined.

This film was released in March 1913 and was also produced during the Biograph acting company's annual sojourn in California. According to some sources, the film was not made by Griffith but by Tony O'Sullivan. This is the opinion of Russell Merritt who, in an e-mail message to this writer in December 2002, wrote:

*A Girl's Stratagem* was directed by either DWG or Tony O'Sullivan (Dell Henderson, the third Biograph director in winter-spring 1913, was restricted to split-reel comedies). I'm partial to thinking O'Sullivan directed it only because of the timing of its release. Based on the Biographs we can positively identify, the company released one Griffith, two split-reel comedies, and one non-Griffith per week in late 1912-early 1913. *A Girl's Stratagem* was released the week of March 10, 1913, along with two Henderson split reels and Griffith's *The Unwelcome Guest*.

In another e-mail message, also from December 2002, Merritt adds the following, concerning

the presence in the cast credits of the names Joseph Graybill and Charlie West:

Griffith stopped using West as a lead after 1912; instead, he became one of O'Sullivan's regular leading men. Of course he's not the lead here, but the plot summary makes it sound like a bigger role than anything Griffith assigned him in 1913. This is likely Graybill's last appearance; he died in 1913. The corkscrew is Mae Marsh in the lead. Griffith hadn't let anyone else direct her since 1912. She was arguably Griffith's favorite actress at the time.

Take notice, everyone: the bets are open!

André Gaudreault

NEAR TO EARTH

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*Filming date:* finished January 1913

*Location:* California

*Release date:* 20 March 1913; reissued by Biograph, 13 November 1916

*Release length:* 999 feet

*Copyright date:* 15 March 1913

*Director:* D.W. Griffith

*Author:* James Orr

*Source:* not known

*Camera:* G.W. Bitzer

*Cast:* Lionel Barrymore (*Gato*); Robert Harron (*His brother*); Gertrude Bambrick (*Gato's sweetheart*); Mae Marsh, Kathleen Butler (*Her friends*); Frank Opperman (*Friend*); Walter Miller (*Stranger*); Joseph McDermott, W. Christy Cabanne (*Businessmen*)

*Archival Sources:* Library of Congress, 35mm paper print (fragment: 99 frames plus intertitles); The Museum of Modern Art, 35mm nitrate negative

This is the story of Gato, an Italian emigrant, who lives with his wife, Marie, and his younger brother, Giuseppe, on a small truck farm in the West. Gato becomes so intent on his work that he neglects to show his wife the little attention she demands. A foppish wandering Italian, Sandro, sees in this an opportunity to work his ends, but is prevented by the timely interference of Giuseppe.

*The Moving Picture World*, March 15, 1913, p. 1128

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As the film opens, Gato is seen shaving, with his brother looking over his shoulder. The reason for his concern about his appearance soon becomes obvious, as Gato goes down to the shore to meet his sweetheart. After a small lovers' quarrel they embrace and he brings her home to meet his brother, passing a roadside shrine along the way. After they are married, Gato becomes so engrossed in his truck farm and bookkeeping that he ignores his new wife. She becomes increasingly restive. A handsome stranger arrives and is hired on as a laborer, but his true intentions are soon revealed when he makes an unwanted advance on the young woman. Later, Gato is in the midst of closing an important business deal and is playfully dismissive of his wife's concerns. She storms out of their house, encounters the stranger and agrees to leave with him. As Gato departs the bank with a full wallet, his wife leaves him a note and runs off with the stranger. Gato's brother hears her depart and pursues the two lovers, knife in hand. As the wife passes the little roadside shrine she has a crisis of conscience and hesitates. The brother catches up with them and, after a scuffle with the stranger, he and his sister-in-law return home. Gato has since arrived and read his wife's note. He threatens to kill her and she readily gives him a knife to do so, but he relents and showers her with presents bought with his newfound wealth.

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Within a month of his arrival in southern California in early January of 1913, D.W. Griffith managed to direct three, perhaps four, one-reel subjects, while also finishing a film that he

had begun in New York before the trip west (*Love in an Apartment Hotel*). In addition to Griffith, Biograph's directorial staff now included Dell Henderson, who had taken over the comedy unit in mid-1912 after Mack Sennett's departure for Keystone, and Anthony O'Sullivan, who was given charge of what were advertised as Biograph's melodramas. In theory, this second dramatic unit was established to generate enough "product" to fill the regular release schedule while Griffith devoted more time to the making of fewer films. From the evidence of the surviving Biograph films, the only real difference between Griffith's and O'Sullivan's 1913 work would seem to be the latter's regular use of the company's second-string actors, thus limiting somewhat his dramatic palette. In every other respect, including story selection, editing and photography, Anthony O'Sullivan mirrored his mentor.

It took a while, however, for O'Sullivan to make his presence felt in the release schedule. At the beginning of 1913, Griffith was still responsible for virtually all of Biograph's dramatic output. This meant that he was expected to supply two full reels every week; by comparison, Dell Henderson supplied two split reels, or the equivalent of one full reel of comedy in the same amount of time. As a result, Griffith often lacked for inspiration and fell back on hackneyed stories and stock characters to carry his films. This had been the case throughout his career at Biograph, of course, but by 1913 Griffith's command of his craft had developed to such an extent that even the most banal scenario could – and often did – receive the same care as a more challenging one. Such is the case with *Near to Earth*.

The plot synopsis outlined above says it all, at least in terms of dramatic incident. Griffith had told this story of a wife led astray by the wiles of an unscrupulous tempter many times before, if not exactly in the same manner. In this version of the tale, her husband's brother brings about the wife's rescue, while the husband remains blissfully ignorant of his wife's misery. This variation leads to an unexpected confrontation between the brother-in-law and the wife's lover, but it does little more than pad the story out to a full reel; without it, Griffith would have come up short of the required thousand-foot release length.

As with so many of his late Biographs shot in California, Griffith finds striking locations within which to stage the action of his film. The shoreline of the Pacific Ocean and its surrounding bluffs, while somewhat incongruous for a story set on a truck farm, nevertheless provide *Near to Earth* with dramatic possibilities. Gato's house is set high up on a cliff, overlooking the ocean, and the constant comings and goings near the front door of the cabin attain a certain urgency when set against such an unusual background. By situating Gato's home so far above the shoreline, Griffith requires his characters to climb up toward the house, thus suggesting a variety of emotional and psychological subtexts when convenient. Gato goes down to the beach to court his future wife, bringing her up to their new life together by climbing the bluffs, passing a shrine on the way. Most notably, the stranger who will wreak such havoc on the couple first encounters Gato's wife sitting by her door, literally walking up to her, as if from some netherworld. When the two make their escape, they frantically descend the bluffs, signaling to the audience a tragic loss of innocence. As if to drive home the point, Griffith has them come to a fork in the road, before which they briefly hesitate.

Throughout the film, Gato is oblivious to his young wife's distress. Concerned as he is with making a success of his business, he good-naturedly ignores her pleas for attention, laying the groundwork for her inevitable receptiveness to the stranger's overtures. The novel touch in all of this is Gato's brother. He maintains a respectful distance from, and concern for his sister-in-law, even encouraging her to seek Gato's approval for the simple baking of a loaf of bread. It is he who discovers the note left behind by the wife to explain her departure, and it is he who chases after the pair as they attempt to escape. Why he should be so incensed by this turn of events is never explained, but one can easily surmise an injured sense of family honor in the violence of his actions. His pursuit is relentless and his scuffle with the stranger



results in the latter's fall down a cliff. The young man is momentarily taken aback by this turn of events, but quickly regains his righteous anger when he sees that the stranger is not seriously injured. With a thump of his chest, he turns on his heel and goes home, leaving his sister-in-law to follow. In the meantime, Gato has returned home and found his wife gone. When she admits to her flight, she hands him a knife and bares her breast, offering herself in atonement for the wound she has inflicted. Gato looms over her, but he cannot bring himself to commit so terrible an act.

As a title, *Near to Earth* makes sense only if one assumes that it describes the characters, both physically and psychologically. Griffith had no equal in the American cinema of the time when it came to his ability to plumb the psychic depths of his characters, but his success was always dependent upon the empathy he could bring to them. Unless he was dealing with protagonists who were WASPs, and thus could connect to their psyches through personal experience, Griffith invariably fell back upon ethnic typing and its coded patterns of behavior to give his characters substance. Lionel Barrymore and Robert Harron act the stereotypical Italian immigrants in this film, their every movement grossly exaggerated, their reactions to events passionate and emotional. Their portrayals express perfectly the nativist American assumption that southern Europeans are wild and earthy, prone to spontaneous and irrational behavior. Barrymore's Gato is, at least, genial, but Harron's brother is all stoop-shouldered and snarling disaffection. In fact, his acting in *Near to Earth* is unsettlingly close to his portrayal of Weakhands in *Man's Genesis* (1912), a fact that apparently went unnoticed at the time, but which is nevertheless troubling in its implications. Such performances, grounded as they are in caricature and ignorance, mar a great many of Griffith's films, not only because they are unnecessary dramatically but because they also bespeak a troubling tendency in Griffith to pander to his audience's prejudices, as well as his own.

Steven Higgins

462\*

BIOGRAPH

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## A WELCOME INTRUDER

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*Filming date:* finished ca. January 1913

*Location:* California

*Release date:* 24 March 1913

*Release length:* one reel

*Copyright date:* 22 March 1913

*Director:* D.W. Griffith or Anthony O'Sullivan

*Author:* Belle Taylor

*Source:* not known

*Camera:* G.W. Bitzer or not known

*Cast:* ? (*Child*); Kate Toncray (*Neighbor*); Charles Hill Mailes (*Father*); Charles H. West (*Workman*); W. Chrystie Miller (*Shopkeeper*); Joseph McDermott (*Policeman*); Frank Opperman (*Hurdy-gurdy man*); John T. Dillon (*On street*); William Carroll, ? (*Wagon drivers*); Claire McDowell (*Their sister, a widow*); Adolph Lestina (*Construction boss*); Frank Opperman (*At second site*); ? (*Desk sergeant*)

*Archival Sources:* Library of Congress, 35mm paper print (fragment: 91 frames plus intertitles; brittle); The Museum of Modern Art, 35mm nitrate negative

A widower received aid from a kind-hearted neighbor, who not only helped the man with the light housework, but usually kept a watchful eye over the little boy. The father is a boss carpenter and is forced to leave the little one alone the whole day long. A discharged workman sees in the boy a chance for revenge, which opportunity he takes and while it nearly drives the father insane, it results as a great blessing for all concerned.

*The Moving Picture World*, March 22, 1913, p. 1248

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A widower with a young son makes his living as a construction foreman. One day, he finds a workman drinking on the site and fires him. The disgruntled man exacts his revenge on the foreman by abducting the little boy, who has wandered away from home to follow a hurdy-gurdy man, and placing him in the back of a hay wagon. The sleeping child is taken, unknowingly, to the home of a widow and her two brothers. They take the child in and care for him as if he were their own. Meanwhile, the father becomes so distraught he is unable to work. His boss visits and urges him to return to the job. At the new construction site, where by coincidence the widow's two brothers also work, he finds a teddy bear on the ground. When the widow comes to retrieve it, he tells her of his lost boy and she realizes at once that he is the father of the little foundling. She hesitates briefly, but soon reunites the boy and his father, giving the child a picture of herself in remembrance of their short time together. Back home, around the Christmas tree, the father comes to miss the widow. He and his son leave hurriedly for her house, where the two adults agree to marry.

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While the attribution of *A Welcome Intruder* to D.W. Griffith is likely, the records that survive in the Biograph Collection at the Museum of Modern Art do not absolutely confirm it. The film's scenario was written by Belle Taylor, a writer favored by Griffith. Eight of her stories

had already been filmed by him, and two of them – *The Broken Doll* and *A Child's Stratagem* (both 1910) – also featured children as protagonists. *A Welcome Intruder's* story is slight, being little more than an extended device to bring together the film's two adult characters, played by the Biograph husband and wife team of Charles Hill Mailes and Claire McDowell, yet it is handled deftly and with a gentle touch.

The film opens with a happy family breakfast. The widowed father of the little boy rushes off to his work as a construction foreman, leaving his son in the care of a neighbor. From the outset, the audience is shown that the father is caring and responsible, and that great affection exists between him and his son. On the job site, he chastises a workman for being late and, after work, the employee is shown entering a bar. This contrasts sharply with the behavior of the father, who is shown stopping off at a toy store to buy his son a teddy bear. The next time we see the father he is confronting the workman for drinking openly at the job site and fires him on the spot. This leads quickly to the abduction of the boy by the disgruntled worker and his placement of the child in the back of a hay wagon, where he is eventually found and cared for by a widow and her two brothers. It is just a matter of time, and handy coincidence, before the widower and the widow meet and agree to marry.

It would be wrong to suggest that *A Welcome Intruder* is a major work, filled with the telling psychological touches for which Griffith is justly admired. Even so, and despite the fact that it is almost completely driven by its plot, and not by character, this minor film is a well-crafted and simple tale that engages and touches the viewer by its very simplicity. Small details make all the difference.

When the little boy wanders away from his home, he does so not in a fit of pique or through any willfulness, but because he is attracted to the happy sounds of a hurdy-gurdy man and the crowd of children that follows him down the street. The discharged workman does indeed abduct the boy, but he then places him gently in a wagon full of hay, after he has fallen asleep. The scenes of the father looking desperately for his lost son are intercut with shots of the wagon making its way through the streets of the town, but no attempt is made to create tension through the editing; rather than anxiety, the audience is made to feel the father's sadness. The widow and her brothers clearly care for the child and make every effort to make him comfortable and welcome in their home, so we never feel as if the boy is in any actual danger. In fact, the two brothers smoke the same kind of pipe as does the boy's father, thus signaling to the audience that they, too, are honest laborers, and that the child is in good hands. And if there were ever any doubts as to the widow having the child's best interests at heart, they are laid to rest when she willingly returns the little boy to his father, even though her heart is broken in the process.

So then, who is the intruder of the title? One could well argue that the discharged workman is the intruder, because it is his act, committed in vengeance, which leads to the happy ending. Perhaps the widow is the intruder, for even though she comes between the father and son, she does so in such a way as to lead to the best of all possible solutions. A good case can even be made for the boy himself being the intruder, inserting himself as he does in the widow's life and thus bringing a happy change to her situation, as well as his father's. No matter who the intruder is, the premise of the film remains the same – that unforeseen circumstances, though often a cause of great sadness or distress, can sometimes lead to great happiness. Through its stubborn refusal to build any real sense of danger or fear into the abduction of the boy, as well as in the calmly unaffected acting of Mailes and McDowell, *A Welcome Intruder* proves to be not a cautionary tale about a kidnapping, but rather an adventure story in which an innocent child manages to bring together two souls saddened by loss. To make anything more of it would be to weigh it down unfairly with a significance it was never meant to sustain.

Steven Higgins