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With the recent release of spectacular blockbuster films from *Gladiator* to *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, the epic has once again become a major form in contemporary cinema. This new volume in the AFI Film Readers series explores the rebirth of the epic film genre in the contemporary period, a period marked by heightened and conflicting appeals to national, ethnic, and religious belonging. The original essays in this volume explore the tension between the evolving global context of film production and reception and the particular provenance of the epic as an expression of national mythology and aspirations, challenging our understanding of epics produced in the present as well as our perception of epic films from the past. The contributors will explore new critical approaches to contemporary as well as older epic films, drawing on ideas from cultural studies, historiography, classics, and film studies.

Author.

Robert Burgoyne is Professor and Chair of Film Studies at the University of St Andrews. His recent publications include *Film Nation: Hollywood Looks at U.S. History*, revised and expanded edition (2010), and *The Hollywood Historical Film* (2008).