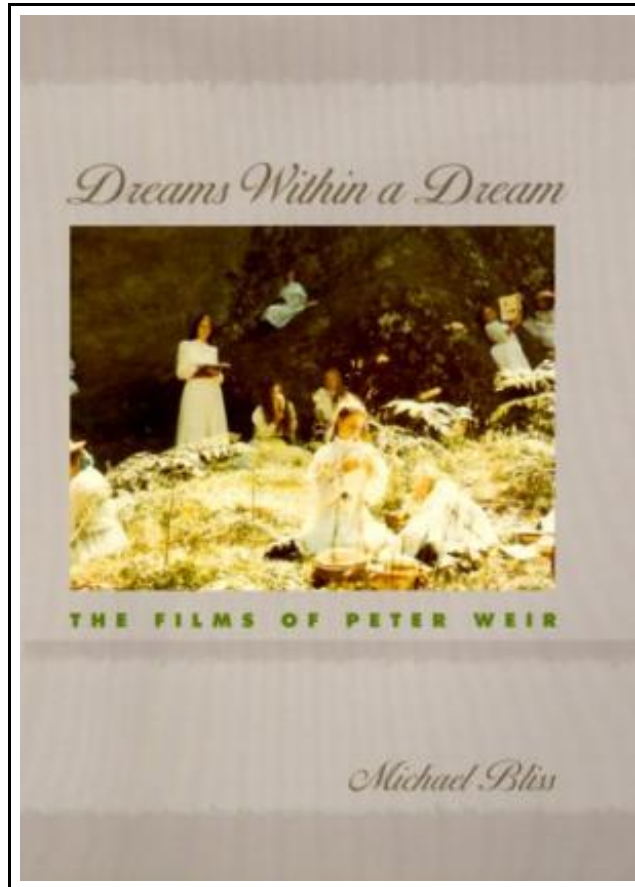


Dreams within a Dream: The Films of Peter Weir



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Reviews

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(Derick Brekke)*

DREAMS WITHIN A DREAM: THE FILMS OF PETER WEIR



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Southern Illinois University Press. Hardback. Book Condition: new. BRAND NEW, Dreams within a Dream: The Films of Peter Weir, Michael Bliss, "What we see, and what we seem, are but a dream, a dream within a dream". Michael Bliss views Miranda's voice-over at the beginning of "Picnic at Hanging Rock" as so pivotal in explaining the films of Peter Weir that he borrows her words to create the title of his own study of the Australian filmmaker's work. Bliss views Weir as an artist whose values are rooted in the realm of the dream, of the unconscious. Surrealistic in technique, Weir avoids the pedestrian assurances of a material realm in favour of an irresolution that, while potentially frustrating, is nonetheless for him a more truthful representation of what he considers reality. For Weir, as for Plato, Bliss demonstrates, "empirical reality is nothing more than a shadow of what is real". Bliss also considers Weir's heritage. Australian cinema, Bliss explains, is characterized by melodramatic narratives born of a desire to see good and evil portrayed in striking opposition. Weir, for example, dramatizes the contradictory forces of light versus darkness, reason versus mystery, and rationality versus magic in such films as "Picnic at Hanging Rock" and "The Last Wave". This melodramatic emphasis is evident as well in the polarized characterizations in such films as "Witness", "Dead Poets Society", and "The Truman Show". Bliss also discusses Weir's use of another staple of Australian cinema - "mateship", the celebration of the bond between male companions. But by making self-knowledge dependent on action involving one's friends, Weir gives mateship a new meaning. Moreover, like other Australian filmmakers, Weir emphasizes the starkness of the Australian landscape, which functions either as a hazard or a deadly challenge, at least until American mythology caused him to see nature...



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