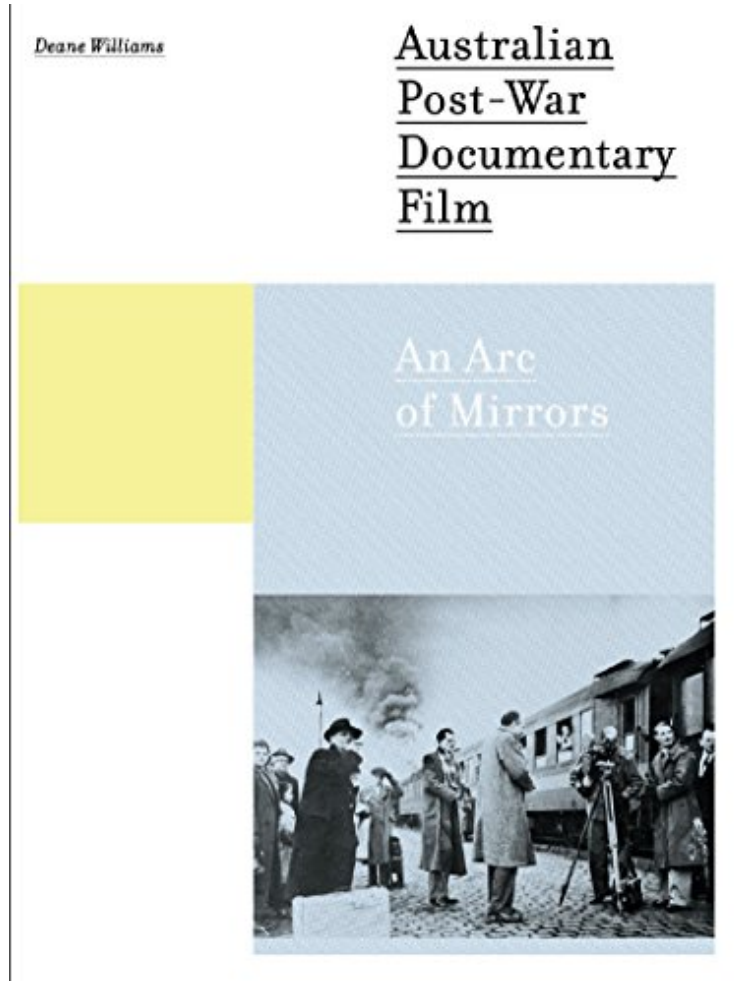


(Get free) Australian Post-war Documentary Film: An Arc of Mirrors

Australian Post-war Documentary Film: An Arc of Mirrors

Deane Williams

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Deane Williams : Australian Post-war Documentary Film: An Arc of Mirrors before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Australian Post-war Documentary Film: An Arc of Mirrors:

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. sources and development of post-War Australian documentary film By Henry Berry Williams cites the Englishman John Grierson as a seminal, though ambivalent and in some ways controversial, figure for the post-War Australian documentary film. Though called by some "the father of the British documentary film," Grierson was received coolly during a 1940 visit to Australia. The author does not delve into Grierson's varied, ill-defined, and ultimately ambivalent influences, but rather for purposes of this film study hones in on his "stylistic influences emanat[ing] from what was understood to be the social needs of a country like Australia" for Australia's assimilation and variations of such influences. With Australia "envisaged as needing reconstruction as a nation" after World War II, documentary film was looked to to play a major role in this "nation-building."

Documentary film was particularly suited to covering social problems and how these were being dealt with by the government and parts of society. But to be effective, documentaries had to forgo the traditional "kangaroos, koala bears and fields of waving wheat" for marginalized groups, sparsely populated areas, aspects of Australia's history, and individual settings and individuals exemplifying the social problems. From such grounds in the 1940s, Australian filmmakers developed a distinctive neo-realistic style, counterbalanced and sometimes integrated various parts of Australian society, and dramatized elements of the nation's history. Williams explores these paths taken by the Australian film. The documentary film is particularly important in Australian film as seen in the internationally-popular, critically-acclaimed films *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, *Walkabout*, and *Rabbit-Proof Fence* which, though not documentaries, are in the style of Australian documentaries Williams traces back to Grierson. Such films and others show a polished development of the basics of Australian documentary; notably the desolation of much of the continent, marginalized social situations, relationships between the white settlers and aborigines, and the realist subjects and visual style. Examining particular directors and films and with frequent, often multiline quotes from film historians, critics, and academics, Williams discloses the origins of post-War Australian film and charts its development. He lays out the expanse of the particular field more than fashions a perspective or theory. In so doing, he also perhaps inadvertently, exposes the limitations of Australian film growing out of the documentary aim. For Australian film seems mostly left out of the globalized filmmaking now being done most notably by China and India in Australia's sphere of the world and the United States too. As one can surmise from Williams, Australia's films were of interest in bringing the "real Australia" to a growing globalized world. But in working to accomplish this and in so doing making a number of classic Australian and world-class films, Australian filmmakers and screenwriters have left themselves stuck in a sort of no-man's land between the films with violence, gaudiness, and romance appealing to the global masses on the one hand and on the other, the ethnic, somewhat "arty," movies (e. g., Iranian) also of interest to a worthwhile segment of this audience.

The post-war period in Australian cultural history sparked critical debate over notions of nation-building, multiculturalism and internationalization. *Australian Post-War Documentary Film* tackles all these issues in a considered and wide-ranging analysis of government, institutional and also radical documentaries. On one level, the book is a selective history of Australian documentary film in the immediate post-war years. It also charts the rise of a progressive film culture. As a whole it is a thorough study of the international flows of film culture. Williams illustrates these themes by critiquing the key films of the era, including the seminal *The Back of Beyond*, often cited as the greatest Australian film of all time. *Australian Post-War Documentary Film* retells film history by reading these documentaries as part of a nexus of international, and particularly Australian filmic, written and dramatic texts, with close attention to textual analysis. The book will appeal to anyone interested in international cinema, the way that it theorizes the period and offers a host of international comparisons, widening its ideas to the fabric of cultural production that surrounds all art works.

“A significant contribution to documentary history, the history of left-wing thought in the West, and Australian studies.”