

among stone and stars

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among stone and stars is the outcome of a reflective journey and subsequent attempt to demystify unreferenced themes and subject matter in the Australian children's fantasy novel, 'The Nargun and the Stars'. However unintentional, the novel can be seen as an example of whitewashing and erasure of First Nation's culture, as it speaks on creatures and sacred places inappropriately and with no reference to their cultural origins, stemmed in the creation and dreaming stories of the people of the Gunaikurnai nation. The book tells the story of a child relocated to a bush farm where they meet the mysterious creatures of the land: the scaly and slimy Potkoorok, the tree dancing Turongs, the cave-dwelling Nyols and the Nargun, a frightening half stone, half human creature.

What started out as the revisiting and exploration of this book opened a portal to an entirely different intention and process of thinking around the ideas that had captivated my imagination and connection to place. This book remains special to me but is tainted. I have set out to demystify the characters I was introduced to through research, creation, and reflection in the hopes of resurrecting the story in a new space and with a new way of engaging that resolves associated tensions. I acknowledge that there are limitations but hope to share this work with courage and integrity.

The origins of the story that inspired the author were *taken* from creation and dreaming stories of the people of the Gunaikurnai nation in what is now known as so called "East Gippsland". Below a small waterfall lies the den of Nargun, a cave opening once rimmed with stalactites that have since been taken by lustful viewers. From it's den, the Nargun slips, woken by a call from the land and its creatures.

To learn more about these stories you can access media managed by Traditional Owners:

Gunaikurnai Traditional Owner Land Management Board -

www.gunaikurnai.com.au/about/our-people

Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation -

www.gunaikurnai.org.au/

Some important books and articles from my research journey are cited below and can be accessed via the links:

Books

The Nargun and the Stars, Patricia Wrightson, originally published 1973

Deconstructing the Hero: Literary Theory and Children's Literature, Margery Hourihan, originally published 1997

Decolonizing Solidarity: Dilemmas and Directions for Supporters of Indigenous Struggles, Clare Land, originally published 2015

Drop Bear, Evelyn Araluen, originally published 2021

Afrofuturism: The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture, Ytasha L. Womack, published 2013

Articles

Den of Nargun, Mitchell River National Park, Sharnee Sergi and Ian D. Clark, published 2014

www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.2478/9783110370119.5/html

Patricia Wrightson's Book of Wirrun: Religion, Folklore, Hero-Tale? John Murray

www.openjournals.library.sydney.edu.au/index.php/SSR/article/view/11683

INHERITING THE LAND? - SOME LITERARY AND ETHICAL ISSUES IN THE USE OF INDIGENOUS MATERIAL BY AN AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S WRITER, 1960-1990, John Murray

<https://openjournals.library.sydney.edu.au/index.php/SSR/article/view/11620/10955>

Australian children's books in the U.S.A., Jean A. S. Cain, 1976

<https://www.proquest.com/openview/3e07b5d4e32e887a3ef9f52bacfe8bb1/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>

Reflections on an Australian Fantasy: constructing the impossible

<https://revistes.ub.edu/index.php/coolabah/article/view/CO20161803/18835>

Web Sources

<https://cv.vic.gov.au/stories/aboriginal-culture/nyernila/gunaikurnai-brataualung-nrung-a-nargune/>

<https://cv.vic.gov.au/stories/aboriginal-culture/meerreeng-an-here-is-my-country/den-of-nargun/>

https://www.geco.org.au/first_nations

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oN4bA0bEmek>

https://www.deadlystory.com/page/aboriginal-country-map/Aboriginal_Country_Completed/gunaikurnai/totems

<https://gunaikurnai.org.au/who-are-the-gunaikurnai/>

<https://www.rd.com/article/what-whitewashing-means-and-why-its-a-problem/>

<https://indigenouknowledge.unimelb.edu.au/curriculum/resources/understanding-and-respecting-creation-stories>

<https://www.gunaikurnai.com.au/about/our-people/more>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nargun>

<https://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/art-and-design/the-nargun-and-the-stars-20090102-gdt8c6.html>

<https://tintededges.com/2015/03/02/the-nargun-and-the-stars/>

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-04-30/research-into-ancient-aboriginal-migration-across-australia/100105902>