Patricia Wrightson’s Book of Wirrun: Religion, Folklore, Hero-Tale?

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Abstract
Some time ago I received a letter from Gillian Adams of the University of Austin, Texas, listing what she believed were some essentials for an article on Patricia Wrightson’s novel 'The Nargun and the Stars'. High on the list was the need for discussion of the religious aspects of the spirit creatures that Wrightson brought to their first successful expression in that novel. Professor Adams was showing an interest that I have found common among North American academics, an interest in the religious beliefs and practices of indigenous peoples implicit or explicit in works written for children and adolescents.

Full Text:

Patricia Wrightson obituary. Australian children's author inspired by Aboriginal folklore. Julia Eccleshare. Sun 9 May 2010 18.24 BST First published on Sun 9 May 2010 18.24 BST. Patricia Wrightson, who has died aged 88, was one of Australia's most distinguished children's authors. Her writing career having begun with traditional adventure stories in the 1950s, her reputation came to rest largely on her magic realist titles. During the second world war, she moved to Sydney and worked in a munitions factory before becoming a hospital administrator in Bonalbo in the mid-1940s. She married in 1943 and had two children, Peter and Jenny, before a divorce in 1953. In the mid-60s she became assistant editor, and later editor, of School Magazine, a literary publication for children. Patricia Wrightson was born in Lismore, New South Wales, Australia on June 19, 1921. During World War II, she worked in a munitions factory in Sydney. She wrote 27 books during her lifetime and entwined Aboriginal mythology into her writing. Her first book was The Crooked Snake. Her books have won many prestigious awards all over the world, including an OBE (Officer of the British Empire) in 1977, the Dromkeen Medal in 1984 and the Hans Christian Andersen Medal in 1986. She is a four-time winner of the Australian Children's Book Council Book of the Year Award: in 1956 for The Crooked Snak The three volumes of Patricia Wrightson's "Book of Wirrun" are obviously not a series in the sense that, say, the William books of Richmal Crompton are, or Hugh Lofting's Doctor Dolittle books, or the stories of Enid Blyton's Famous Five or Secret Seven. But "The Book of Wirrun" is not just a single long story either, divided into three volumes for the convenience of its publishers. There is a central character, the Australian Aboriginal youth, Wirrun. Some other characters, human and non-human, appear in more than one of the stories, though very few appear i