

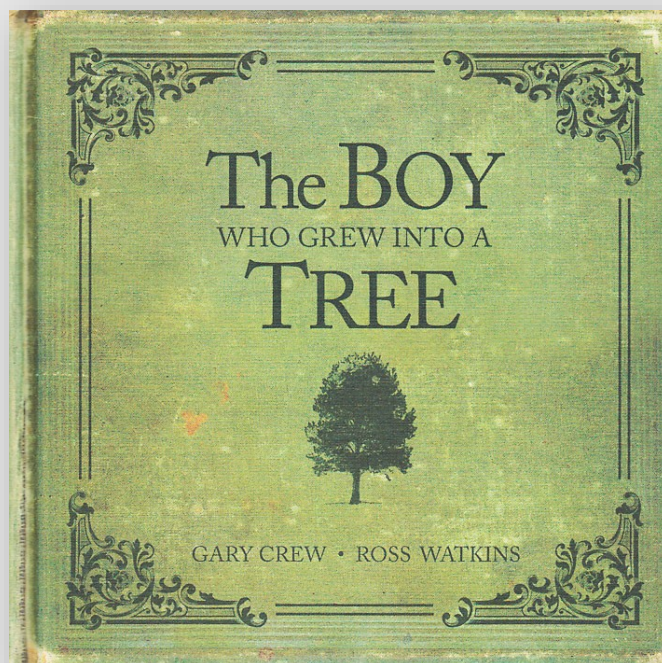
Title: The Boy Who Grew Into a Tree

Author: Gary Crew

Illustrator: Ross Watkins

Publisher: Penguin Group (Australia)

Year: 2012



Research Background

Saxby (2002) states: 'A demand for more realistic illustration by more professionally trained illustrators' saw the demise of the Australian Fairy Tale in children's fiction. Given this gap in fantastic literature the research challenge in creating *The Boy Who Grew into a Tree* was to write and illustrate a Fairy Tale in response to certain 'fantastic' elements of the Australian adult classic, Patrick White's *Voss* (1957). In that novel the child, Mercy, is the physical offspring of the psychical union between the explorer Voss, his mystic lover, Laura Trevelyan, and their fantastical spiritual intercourse with the Australian landscape.

Research Contribution

The Boy Who Grew into a Tree is an innovative contribution to that illustrated book genre, its plot being based upon the psychical creation of the boy Arbour (part child, part tree) through the fantastic spiritual intercourse between his human parents and the Australian landscape. The illustrations enrich the narrative by extending its possibilities as they offer alternate visual interpretations, particularly those related to the publishing industry since Arbour is ultimately felled and transformed into a book.

Research Significance

Evidence of the significance of this research is in its publication by Penguin Books (Australia) and short-listing for the 2013 Aurealis Award for Best Children's (8-12 years) Illustrated Work. Further, Maurice Saxby reviewed the book, stating: 'Ultimately it is the fable, metaphor, allegory, all of these, embodied in the text that provide narrative form to a thought provoking myth-like tale...' (Reading Time 57:1).

Works cited:

Saxby, Maurice 2002 *Images of Australia: A History of Australian Children's Literature*, Scholastic, Sydney
Saxby, Maurice 2013 "'The Boy Who Grew Into a Tree' (Review)', *Reading Time* 57:1 (February): 10