

MINDS WENT WALKING: PAUL KELLY SONGS REIMAGINED

JOCK SERONG, MARK SMITH & NEIL A. WHITE

ABOUT THE BOOK

The curators of this anthology posed the question: what would happen if a group of Australia's finest storytellers were invited to let their minds go walking through the Paul Kelly songbook? Twenty-one writers responded with tales of forbidden love, with the ghosts that inhabit St Kilda and the 'special treatment' of the Noongar people; with the dumb things they did when they crossed the Nullarbor, and how a simple song could bind a father and daughter forever.

Like Paul Kelly's songs, the stories in this anthology will take you anywhere, and everywhere, and they will keep coming back to you like a cork on the tide.

ABOUT THE CURATORS

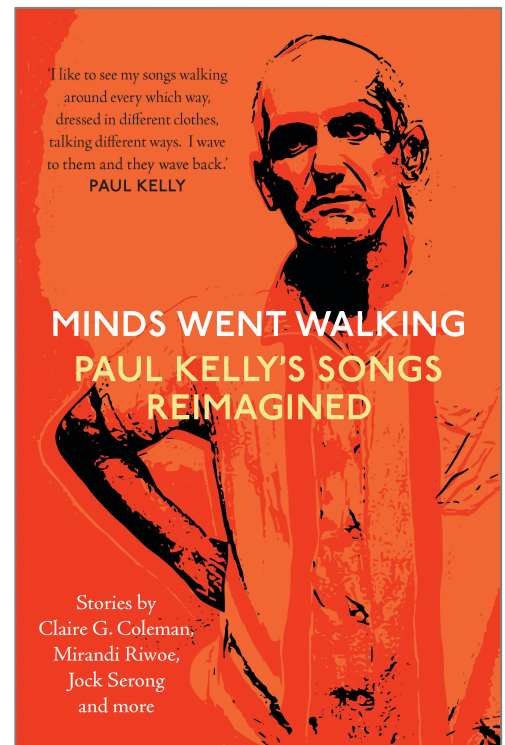
Jock Serong is the author of six novels, most recently *The Settlement*, and the founding editor of *Great Ocean Quarterly*. He writes for *The Monthly*, *The Guardian*, *Surfing World* and other publications. He lives with his family on Victoria's west coast.

Mark Smith is the author of four novels for young adults: *The Road to Winter*, *Wilder Country*, *Land of Fences* and *If Not Us*. Mark is also an award-winning writer of short fiction and his work has appeared in *Best Australian Stories*, *Review of Australian Fiction*, *The Big Issue*, *Island*, *The Victorian Writer* and *The Australian*.

Neil A. White was born in Melbourne and educated in his native Australia and the United States. He is the author of the novels *Closure*, *Turn a Blind Eye*, *Something for Bebe*, and a number of award-winning short stories. He and his wife live in Dallas, Texas.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Which is your favourite piece and why?
2. What do you think makes a good short story?
3. What do you think the title *Minds Went Walking* means? Which Paul Kelly song does it come from?
4. Tim Rogers talks about uncertainty behind the meaning of lyrics. Do you think it matters if your interpretation isn't the same as the songwriter's, if it means something to you?
5. Jock Serong writes 'An entire generation having passed him by ...' (p. 23) when talking about a character who hasn't changed, either in the story or in the narrator's mind. What larger concept do you think Jock is commenting on here?
6. What does Walt symbolise in Michelle Wright's piece? Did you connect with this story?
7. What layers of complexity about love does Mirandi Riwoe set out to explore in her story 'I'll Be Your Lover'?
8. What is the connection between Zoë Bradley's piece and the song it is inspired by?
9. In 'It Started with a Kiss' the narrator thinks, 'And something passed between us. A stirring in my soul. Warmth. Understanding. Or perhaps just my libido joining the conversation.' (p. 73) What levels of irony are operating in this piece?
10. The narrator in Claire G. Coleman's piece says, 'The tree can be free, why can't I?' (p. 89). What parallels can be drawn between this story and the history of First Nations people in Australia?
11. Lorin Clarke's piece 'Meet Me in the Middle of the Air' reflects on what Paul Kelly has meant to her and to her father too. What qualities do you think a memoir piece shares with a short story?



12. How does the title of Julia Lawrinson's piece, 'Dumb Things', play into its meaning?
13. In what way does Laura Elvery's piece 'Count Down the Little Things' capture the zeitgeist, which is represented in the 2020 song it is inspired by?
14. In Robbie Arnott's piece 'Every Fucking City', how does the world-weary character in the song resonate with the narrator of the piece, and how does the song's title interact with the story's meaning?
15. The refrain 'What is inevitable? / I am.' (p. 148) is repeated throughout 'Before Too Long'. What does it mean? Do you think the old man is real or a metaphor?
16. How does the title 'Soft Bite' convey the deeper meaning of Alice Bishop's piece?
17. What role do the song's lyrics 'Look So Fine Feel So Low' in Kirsten Krauth's piece have in creating a frame for the story that she tells? Does it make any difference that this is a memoir piece rather than fiction?
18. In Bram Presser's 'That Sweet Promenade' do you think we are reading the portrait of a place, a person or a time?
19. What themes are shared between Gina Williams' 'Special Treatment' and Claire G. Coleman's 'The Seed'? How can genre be used as a vehicle to convey different meanings?
20. What other stories in this collection do you think 'talk to' each other?
21. 'God Told Me To' is a commentary on politicised religion at the time. Do you think that mediums, like songwriting and music, are effective in conveying opinions on current affairs by offering the consumer (listener) a different point of view?
22. In Sam Carmody's piece 'Wake', the narrator says, 'A person leaves so much of themselves, even when they don't intend to.' (p. 231) In what ways does this piece capture the themes of the song it's inspired by, 'Song From the Sixteenth Floor'? In what ways are the echoes of the song itself found in this piece?
23. How do you feel about the narrator in Angela Savage's piece 'Don't Stand So Close to the Window'? What themes stand out most strongly to you?
24. Much of Sarah Drummond's story 'Desdemona' takes place in the events that are not there. How does this author involve absence and silence in her story?
25. 'See how easy it's taken us ...' (p. 270) What does the water current represent in Mark Smith's piece, 'An Archipelago of Stars'?
26. Why do you think music is so closely entwined with memories and stories for people?
27. If you were to let your mind go walking, which Paul Kelly song would you choose to write a story on?



@FremantlePress



Sign up for enews



fremantlepress.com.au