

## RIVERS FLOW

### REFLECTIONS ON THE SONGS OF ARCHIE ROACH & RUBY HUNTER

CURATED BY KIM SCOTT

FOREWORD BY AMOS ROACH

EDITED BY CASEY MULDER

### ABOUT THE BOOK

*Rivers Flow* honours the profound musical and cultural legacy of Archie Roach AC AM – a Gunditjmara (Kirrae Whurrong/Djab Wurrung) and Bundjalung man – and Ruby Hunter – a Ngarrindjeri, Kokatha and Pitjantjatjara woman. Curated and introduced by two-time Miles Franklin winner, and Noongar man, Kim Scott, this special volume brings together twenty-three First Nations writers from across Australia to share stories, personal reflections, and poems that resonate with the legacy of Archie Roach and Ruby Hunter. With the support and blessing of Amos and Eban Roach, sons of Archie and Ruby, this anthology stands as a tribute to the strength, artistry and enduring spirit of two of Australia's most cherished artists and cultural leaders.

Contributors include:

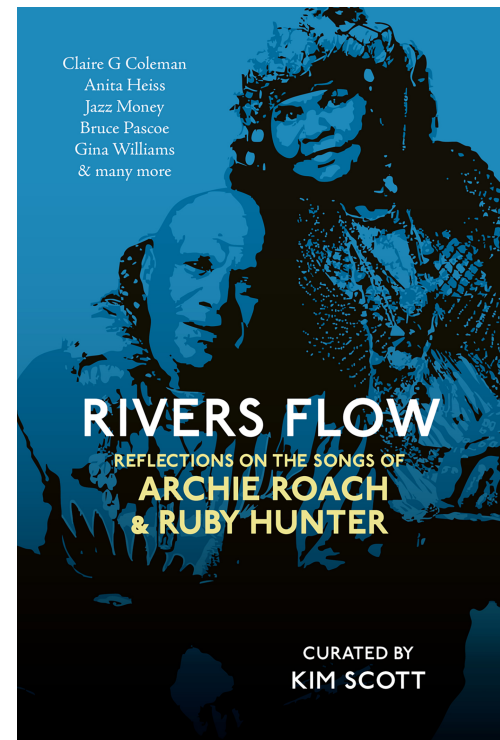
- Graham Akhurst (Kokomini)
- Lou Bennett (Yorta Yorta Dja Dja Wurrung)
- Isobel Bevis (Wilman, Ballardong Noongar)
- Mandy Brown (Peramangk/Ngarrindjeri)
- Claire G Coleman (Noongar)
- Ali Cobby Eckermann (Yankunytjatjara/Kokatha)
- Dakota Feirer (Bundjalung-Gumbayngirr)
- Natalie Harkin (Narungga)
- Anita Heiss (Wiradyuri)
- Terri Janke (Wuthathi/Yadhaigana and Meriam)
- Cheryl Kickett-Tucker (Wadjuk Noongar)
- Ambelin Kwaymullina (Palyku)
- Jeanine Leane (Wiradjuri)
- Gary Lonesborough (Yuin)
- Luisa Mitchell (Nyungar)
- Jazz Money (Wiradjuri and Irish)
- Charmaine Papertalk Green (Yamaji)
- Bruce Pascoe (Yuin, Bunurong and Tasmanian)
- Cindy Solonec (Nigena (Nykina))
- Jared Thomas (Nukunu)
- Bianca Valentino (living on Yugambeh Country, working on Turrbal & Yuggera Country)
- Gina Williams (Balladong (Noongar) & Gitja)

### ABOUT THE CURATOR

**Kim Scott** is proud to be one among those who call themselves Noongar. He began writing for publication shortly after he became a secondary school teacher of English. *True Country*, his first novel, was published in 1993 by Fremantle Arts Centre Press. His subsequent books include *Benang: From the Heart* (FACP, 1999), *Kayang & Me* (FACP, 2005), *Lost* (Southern Forest Arts, 2006), *That Deadman Dance* (Picador, 2010) and *Taboo* (Picador, 2017). Kim's writing has won numerous national and international awards, including the Miles Franklin Literary Award (twice), the Commonwealth Writers' Prize, the ALS Gold Medal, two Victorian Premier's Literary Awards, and three Western Australian Premier's Book Awards. He is currently Professor of Writing at Curtin University in Western Australia.

### ABOUT THE EDITOR

**Casey Mulder** is a Ballardong Noongar educator, writer and editor from Quairading. She works with a wide range of publishing companies, such as HarperCollins, Audible, UWA Publishing, Night Parrot Press, Allen &



Unwin, Affirm Press, Simon and Schuster, Penguin Random House, Hachette, Fremantle Press and Magabala Books. She is the Director of First Nations Writing and Programs at the Centre for Stories and is currently working on a creative non-fiction manuscript. Casey takes joy in supporting mob to tell our stories in our ways.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Where does the title of the anthology come from? What do you see as its metaphorical relevance?
2. Before you read: looking at the table of contents on p.5, which title appeals to you the most? What do you think this story or poem will be about?
3. Are any (or all!) of the songs on p. 4 familiar to you?
4. What are some of the ways that 'rivers flow' in this collection?
5. What themes emerge across these pieces? Can you connect these themes to historical and ongoing impacts of colonisation?
6. What themes of resistance and joy are contained in the pieces?
7. Which pieces remain with you after reading?
8. What glimpses do we get of Uncle Archie and Auntie Ruby from the life writing in this anthology? How would you describe their legacy?
9. Choose a favourite piece from the collection and listen to the song that inspired it. What do you see as the relationship between the two?
10. How do some of the poems in the collection use space and line breaks to align form with meaning?
11. On p.10, Kim Scott says, 'I was huddled among crumbling, inner-city renovations the first time I heard a Roach and Hunter song. Over the rooftops came this song, their singing. Winter sunlight splintered on corrugated iron, speared through tangled grapevine and fell in coins around my feet as the song entered and expanded me. It was only a recording and not the real thing but so very, very human and so precious. At the time it seemed a most special gift.' Can you think of a song in your own life that made you feel this way?
12. If you were to choose your own artist to respond to, who would it be? Which song would you choose and why? Would you write it as poetry or prose, fiction or life writing?
13. If you are in a book club or writing group, you might consider constructing your own mini-anthology, and sharing and ordering the stories, poems and life writing pieces you create.

## INTERVIEW WITH THE EDITOR

### *What was the genesis of this anthology?*

Fremantle Press has produced a series of anthologies where writers respond to the songs of an artist (Paul Kelly, Nick Cave and Kylie Minogue, previously). This iteration in the series came from a discussion between consulting editor Kirsten Krauth and Fremantle Press. They felt strongly that such a project needed to be First Nations-led, and Kim Scott was invited to curate the series, with me as editor. It was important to us that we sought and received the blessing of the family of Archie Roach and Ruby Hunter for this project. We were thrilled when one of their sons, Amos Roach, agreed to write a foreword.

The songs of Archie Roach and Ruby Hunter are the soundtrack to our lives as First Nations people. The Fremantle Press team then met with Kim Scott and myself, to discuss curating and editing this anthology, which was to be comprised of all First Nations writers. Kim and I built a list of possible contributors: well-established writers along with emerging writers from around Australia. I then set about contacting each person. As soon as we got a 'yes' I asked the writer to select an Archie Roach or a Ruby Hunter song. 'Took the Children Away' and 'Down City Streets' were selected immediately. Over the months that followed, the writers each worked on a piece of prose, poetry or memoir. Once submitted, I edited each piece with the author.

### *Why was it important for you and Kim Scott to invite only First Nations writers to contribute to it?*

While the songs of Archie Roach and Ruby Hunter reached a broad audience, and they were beloved performers throughout Australia, the experiences they describe in their songs can evoke stories of our own similar experiences. For me, certainly, Archie Roach's 'Took the Children Away' was the first song I was ever introduced to in a school context that was written by another Aboriginal person. Archie and Ruby spent their careers uplifting and encouraging younger mob to tell their own stories, through music or in any form, and this book – and the stories within – honours this legacy.

### ***Why does the music and legacy of Archie Roach and Ruby Hunter matter?***

As Amos Roach says in the book's foreword, *'From Yorta Yorta Country, Mooroopna, where Dad was born, and to the Riverlands of South Australia, where Mum was born, the Murray River connects them. From the desert to the forests and the rivers to the seas, North to South and East to West, their Bloodlines and Songlines connection to the land: they connect each and every one of us, making sure no one is left behind, and as they complement each other as Man and Woman, Husband and Wife, Father and Mother, they conduct the whole ceremony. Song Man and Song Woman.'*

Through their songs, they connect us to the land and to each other. And the stories in this anthology serve to do the same. In editing this anthology, I listened to each song selected over and over and over. I encourage you to access the Spotify playlist we have provided. Sit with these songs as you sit with these stories, and the significance of the music and legacy of Archie Roach and Ruby Hunter will be very clear.



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