

EMERGENCY EDITION

DEAR FORMAL SELF

Silver, Spanx and sweat patches: the makings of a memorable formal.

TINDER POETRY

Swipe right for poetry.

THE MAILY FAIL

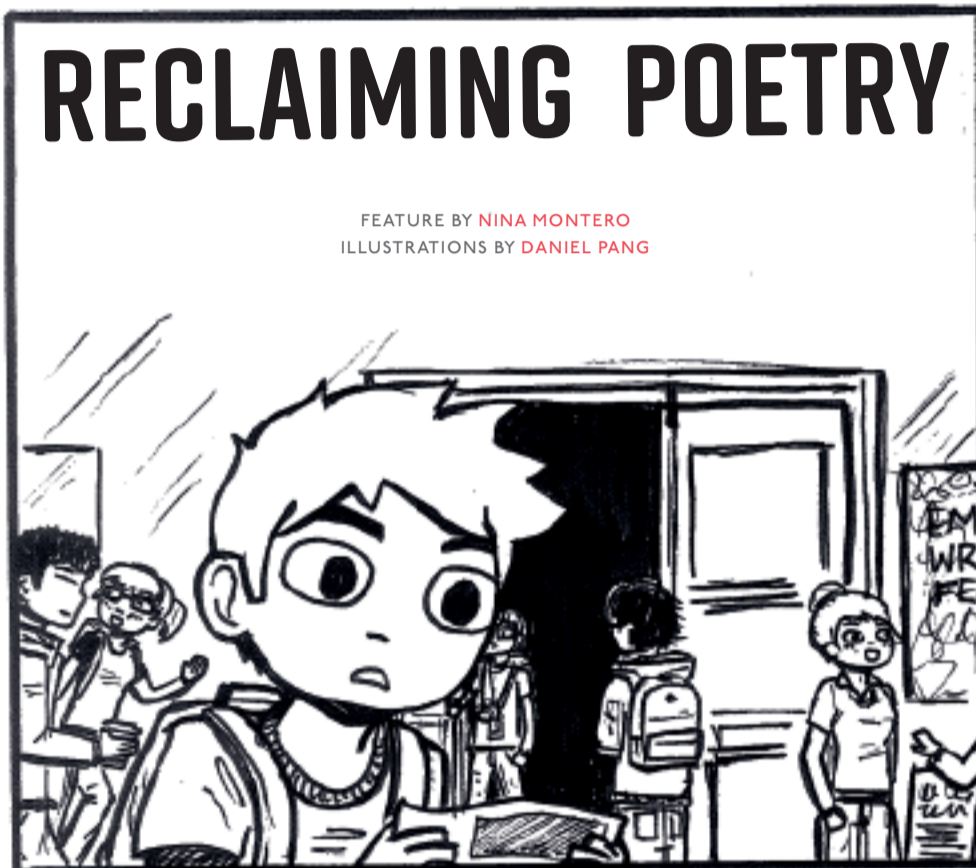
Who needs Trump for fake news?

LOOKING FOR A REASON

Fiction becomes unexpected nostalgia.

RECLAIMING POETRY

FEATURE BY NINA MONTERO
ILLUSTRATIONS BY DANIEL PANG



For decades now, poetry has been proclaimed unequivocally dead. Rejected by certain literary circles and the modern zeitgeist.

Outdated, buried and decaying, along with the stench of dead white men and their decomposing typewriters—only to be occasionally resuscitated by idealistic arts students and opportunistic card-makers.

Boring, derivative, pretentious; stirring up unpleasant connotations of Shakespeare and seriousness; bloomers and berets; high school English classes and simmering private school-boy misogyny. Poetry has been gate-kept and guarded from women and people of colour by card-carrying academics with their classics and their special editions bound in leather that reek of elitism. But with death comes new life—like when the earth's elements are recycled and through space, the sprinkling stardust forms new atoms. Poetry has emerged from its near-death experience, braver than ever and glittering across the cosmos. It is guided by creative types and those who are unafraid of finding a new language to express the experiences which poetry could never convey before. In creep the female, coloured, queer and young voices; once ignored, now calling out. Voices that were oscillating in the shadows are now lighting up the way for those who could have never dreamed of calling poetry their own.

As a new generation, we have taken parts from the past and the present, elements of old and new. Poetry has become a Frankenstein form that has been revised in practise, content, style, structure and performance. It is slowly becoming more accessible to a diverse range of people, an inclusion that could be attributed to a new-found freedom in self-publishing. Zines, social media, artist-run spaces, festivals, the internet and virality, YouTube (responsible for the spread of slam poetry), street art, rap and other forms of music easily distributed and democratised on SoundCloud and other online spaces.

A lot of the confidence and connection necessary to undertaking poetry comes down to knowing what's possible. For me, that moment of awakening was browsing the poetry in the first issue of *Voiceworks*. 'Document 2' by Zhi Yi Cham stood out glaringly. The simplicity of the structure, which

is made up of two parallel paragraphs featuring one or two-word lines, torn apart in heartbreaking enjambment, caused me to gasp aloud. I didn't know that was possible. How come I never knew? How had I never thought of that before? Something seemed so female about it: fleeting, disposable and seasonal. Something about its appearance was dazzlingly sporadic and ephemeral. I'd never connected to poetry in this way before, never felt like it was speaking to me instead of some rambling professor or literature boy about to quiz me on my knowledge of the classics.

It was the line breaks that resonated with me—liberating and unfixed. The form allowed room for timidity and broken-up stanzas in a way that felt more authentic to the way young people communicate, to how I communicate—cryptic, nuanced, intangible; experiences and feelings are expressed while interpretation remains obscured. This mode—succinct or wandering or both—speaks directly to a generation bound up in images, emojis, symbols, succinct phrases and omitted punctuation. Mostly the piece just felt modern—I got it. I finally understood poetry. I went to work immediately, and each day after that chance encounter—every tram ride since—I filled the white of my journal, phone and laptop with words that made more sense when they were scattered across the page than when they were forced together in contrived unity. The final product might look haphazard and chaotic but the process was meticulous; mostly based on emotion and intuition—the satisfying feeling of filling up the entire space or leaving it empty according to mood, time, place, song choice, weather, sock pattern, etc.

Before, poetry was scary because for it to be deemed 'important', it needed the perspective of the valiant, 19th century male writer—saturated with existential pleas for death and sex and romance; and sometimes grit and darkness. Commentary on society and excess pervaded literature. It needed to be final and ubiquitous and instantly classic. Freeing is the thought that my own experiences—however seemingly mundane—have some sort of human value, some urgency, some poignancy. Details can personalise poetry and cement this human

connection. The coloured font of Cham's piece wasn't necessarily important to the general reading of the poem but some synesthetic, visual part of me was lured in by the beckoning of the pale-yellow writing. It was like it was whispering to me instead of shouting or hissing (which is what words usually do). And what it whispered through the wall of gloss scented paper was: you don't have to be serious all the time ... but you can if you want to and that's cool too. Sometimes when I make drafts now on Microsoft Word, I change

the page font to a soothing mint green so the words sing to me melodically rather than begrudgingly.

Another moment of clarity came to me over a \$2.50 iced coffee at Workshop Bar, flicking through a zine by an artist called Kathy Sarpi—one page simply featured two text bubbles in a sea of cloudy white, which would be safe to assume, were meant to replicate private Tinder messages. The first was sent by Leonard '52 minutes ago' and read: 'So, I study philosophy and play guitar, in other words I'm

looking for someone who'll pay for dinner.' Another was sent by Rudolph 13 minutes ago. 'Can I make a bold assumption here? You like memes and you're depressed.' These topics seem frivolous, but they speak of modern experiences that can be transcribed to poetry and connect to a new generation of writers.

Poetry isn't dead; it probably won't be for some time either. It's just in the process of growing up, adapting, learning, evolving. It's crucial as young and/or emerging writers, that we find ways to make

it our own—continued reincarnation is pertinent to long-term sustainability. There's nothing intrinsically wrong with traditional poetry—Chaucer, or Byron, or even Plath. But if I had a Ouija board (why would I test the universe like that?) I'd summon these guys and demand their opinion on this form in flux. Something tells me they'd answer: poetry is never stagnant. —G



Illustration by Pallavi Daniel

Out of the Dark

BY NAOMI JOHNSON

*They cut out her tongue so she could not talk.
They cut out her sex so she could not love.
They kept her in chains so she could not run.*

She is not the only one. Shackles clatter against iron bars into the night; a substitute for tongueless screams. Between the gaps in her square steel cell she can see her neighbours. The man who occupied it died last week. The stink filters through the dark and burns her nostrils. It is more vile than the usual stench; even in the city centre, the alleyways all reek of piss.

They are not fed in the cages. This is their 'welfare'. The Ornamented release them for one hour at midnight for feeding. They come to her now, dressed in golden cloaks. They turn the key and take up her chains. Her wrists are scarred from past resistance. She lets them lead her with the others from the alleyway to the agora.

The gatherings at the agora are ever-decreasing. Once thousands came here, to sit at the grand tables, of free will and in concord. Tonight, there are 300—who have been dragged across corroded streets to be fed. The Ornamented still label it an act of democracy; the people in chains 'choose' to eat.

She is yanked to sit at the wooden bench between a boy and an elderly woman. Her chains clank against theirs as they are dropped. The Ornamented step back to watch over the mass, guarding from behind. The table has been set with bread, olive oil and soup. It is lit by few candles. The people are allowed to leave only to fetch a drink from the fountain; though its water no longer flows clear.

The Ornamented belong to the House of Government that borders the agora. The white steps

to the building have been stained, but they are still a sharp contrast to the black of the night. The House also watches over the sitting people. And the House doesn't blink.

The Ornamented propose a toast. *The 200th anniversary of the confederation!*

It is an anniversary of her own, too. *25 years a citizen.* Twenty-five years nameless. Voiceless. Loveless. She takes up an oil bottle in place of a glass.

The Ornamented smile and clink their weapons together. *Celebrations!* Celebrations for all who are adorned—but not adored.

As they chortle away, she crawls from the table. The people watch in silence. The boy looks worried; he is too young to see the truth. The old woman nods in understanding.

She stops a metre out from where the Ornamented stand and laugh. She pours oil as she rises. In her other hand, she holds a candle. She lets it drop. Fire encircles her. The constitution shall rattle with her bones.

Before she is consumed, she takes the candle back from the blaze. The wax melts over her hand and leaks onto the dirt floor. She dances with the flames and spreads the dripping wax. In the pit of the inferno she spells her name.

And out of the deepened, darkened heart of the fire she emerged—a writer. —G



Photography by Gloria Tanuseputra

Dear Formal Self

BY J'AIME CARDILLO

It started in 2008, when I volunteered to be the event coordinator of the Year 10 formal. I had never thrown a party but people had to come to this, right?

Dear former self,

I owe you an apology.

After what can be quantified as 34 hours of shopping and a similar number of tantrums, you find the dress. It has a silver bodice with opaque detailing and a black chiffon skirt. You spray yourself with orange tan and purchase a headpiece to match your dress. Do people wear headpieces to formals? You do. It's flimsy, made of elasticised lace with two feathers poking out, hinting at the 1920s, even though there isn't a theme. You stuff yourself into a pair of Spanx while your friends coordinate their bras with their G-strings because they all have boyfriends. You're a virgin who falls in love with any boy who puts you in his top friends on MySpace, but don't worry, your time will come. Probably.

Even though you organised a limousine for your friends, your mother insists on driving you. You take your cousin as your plus one because the only people you could take are already there. Your friends take photos drinking pineapple Cruisers in the limousine while your mother lectures you on the negative effects of underage drinking. Your sixty-seven-year-old principal approves of your choice of headwear and for some reason you keep it on. You take photos of your friends standing in the 'prom pose'—always the photographer. You dance to Spice Girls' 'Wannabe'. Your dress betrays you—the silver is decorated with huge sweat patches under both

arms. Now your friends take photos. You cry. Your mother won't let you go to the afterparty so you go home. The police shut down the party. Your silver sweat patches are the main topic of conversation on Monday morning.

In 2017:

- You have learnt that spray tans are revolting.
- You do not wear headpieces.
- You are best friends with Spanx.
- You coordinate your bras with your G-strings.
- You are not in love with moronic men and MySpace is dead.
- You do not need a plus one, especially not family members.
- You do not drink pineapple Cruisers; you are sophisticated and drink cheap wine.
- You still have tantrums after spending 34 hours shopping.
- Your formal dress still hangs in your cupboard—still silver, still stained.

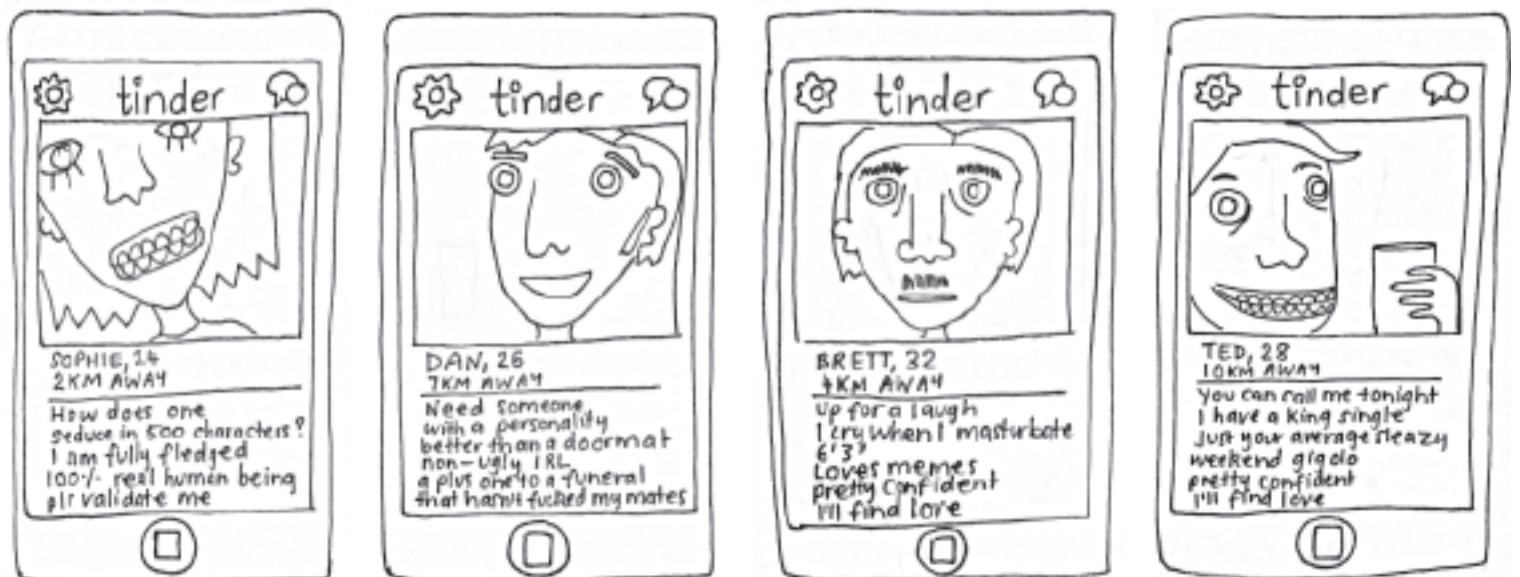
No apology necessary.

Love and luck,
Future self —G

Tinder Poetry

BY SOPHIE NILSSON

Part of me wants cute a.f. couple goals and part of me wants a wild one-night stand.



Illustrations by Darcy Rock



Visual Poem by Lauren Dymke

The Maily Fail

BY ALEXANDRA MILNE & NINA MONTERO

MELBOURNE IN CHAOS: THREE SUSPECTED FATALITIES AFTER CBD TRAM ATTACK

- Violent thug on bail attacks elderly couple on CBD tram.
- Multiple victims left with bite-related fatalities.
- Myki inspector injured on the job.
- Tram driver 'sick of this shit'.

A Melbourne tram was forced to cease operation after a violent criminal, free on bail, attacked passengers. Intelligence suggests the suspect was connected to extremist fare-evading groups on Facebook. His identity is yet to be confirmed.

Witnesses report he boarded the 96 in an agitated state, visibly injured, when he had a minor convulsion and proceeded to bite the face of Bruce and Lesley Bigotson, tourists from Canberra, who were standing nearby. 'He was growling', a witness stated.

The couple were having their Mykis checked by inspector John Topup when they were attacked, sustaining injuries to the face and neck.

Witnesses described the attack 'as if he was trying to eat them.'

Bystanders were horrified when, after several minutes of moaning and writhing in pain, the elderly couple turned on Mr Topup.

'I've seen all sorts of tactics to get out of Myki fines', driver Craig Delay is quoted as saying, 'but I've never seen anyone try to eat the face of an inspector.'

PTV officials have issued a statement saying this is 'the worst case of fare evasion the city has ever seen'.

CityLink have claimed responsibility for the attack. —6

RELATED ARTICLE: POLLY PRANSON PROMISES TO IMPLEMENT A 'TRAM BAN' TO PREVENT FURTHER INCIDENTS.

RELATED ARTICLE: 'THE NEXT PLAGUE' LEAKED BY THE CSIRO? DOOMSDAY PREPPERS FLEE THE CITY TELLING PRESS 'WE TOLD YOU SO'.

Old Certainties Crumble

BY JOHANNA THEWLIS

The patriarch's final hymn.

I can see his skeleton through his skin. Like his face is melting, falling off into the grave. It would scare me if his features weren't so familiar. Instead, I just feel a numb grief; grief with a side of smile. Mostly smile actually. But that's the Thewlis style. 'Never let them see you cry.' That's the mantra, the advice given to my mother when she joined the family. A legacy I'm very much a part of without even realising.

I chat to him like he can hear me and sometimes he responds, forcing open gummy eyes, head lolling and slack mouth mumbling could-be words.

'What was that darling?' says Nana, like he's just spoken a bit quietly. She smooths back his sparse white hair and kisses his forehead. Eyes bright with love and not a trace of fear on her face. Smile firmly fixed.

It's all just a bit odd. It's hard to reconcile the shrunken form in the hospital bed with the *Thewlis patriarch*; the man who towered over his three sons. The teller of so many religious-themed golf jokes. The honourable Reverend. The head of the family. Preacher. Joker. Golf enthusiast. Dag.

I remember when he first started to go. Telling me the same story again and again, every time I visited. The same heartbreak fluttering in the background.

'50 years!' he'd say, eyes bright and intense, '50 years and we had no idea what had happened to him.' *Him* being Granddad's older brother Neale, lost on a flight over Papua New Guinea in the final days of World War II. His body recovered 50 years later.

I remember the first spark of an unfamiliar anger: the frustration at his failing memory.

I remember the polite questions—'do you have any siblings?'—a reminder of the loss and grief.

I remember saying goodbye before I went overseas, the last time I saw him fully lucid, praying over me for my future while tears streamed down my face; a blessing from Father Thewlis.

But he's not the *Thewlis patriarch* anymore.

Dad stands by the bed telling a joke about Roman Christians biting the testicles of lions. He soothes his father. Reads to him; smiles with tears visible in his eyes as Granddad sings old hymns in his sleep—slack mouth warbling softly.

Dad's the carver of roasts now. The man we look to for support in crises. Just 'Dad' and sometimes 'Jezza'. The respected Youth Pastor. Talented musician. Teacher. Joker. Surf enthusiast. Dag. —6



KEY QUOTES FROM THE NATIONAL WRITERS' CONFERENCE

COLLATED BY LAUREN DYMKE

'You don't have to write a book. Screenwriting, video games and other forms are all options.'

Michelle Law @ms_michellelaw

'I have as much passion and fear and joy for my writing as 25 years ago.'

Melina Marchetta @MMarachetta

'Don't wait for someone else to give you the green light. Be flexible and let the story unfold. Be brave. Risk criticism.'

Anna Krien



Collage by Katerina Capel

'Be yourself. Write the story you're compelled to write. Find a story that is close to your heart.'

Inga Simpson @Nestofpages

'Make your writing practice central to your life. A routine, a rhythm.'

Inga Simpson @Nestofpages

'Says write for reaction: irritate, provoke feeling, add to happiness.'

RC Do Rozario @docinboots



Looking for a Reason

BY CALLIE BEUERMANN

Photography by Vincent Guth & 胡卓亨: unsplash.com/chalis007

'Remember Looking for Alibrandi?' One of my friends stage-whispered to me in the back of Year 10 English. Yeah, I thought. Mostly the annoying little shit that was Josie Alibrandi.

The group of us erupted into laughter over the sheer idea of the novel—or the movie version that we watched instead—not wanting to waste our precious Year 8 time.

It's my first year of university and I'm spending my limited free moments devouring the poetics and honesty of Melina Marchetta's work. I read *On the Jellicoe Road* and enjoy the intriguing confusion of the early stages of a non-linear novel. I gain solace—a feeling of belonging—reading of Taylor and Jonah stopping in Yass, recalling a drive through the town with my family. I see this Australian brand stamped on her work and I sigh with relief. There are only so many books one can read in their life, meaning that the filters applied need to be rigorous. How can I embrace a wide range of ideas without reading every single type of writing? Yet, how should I refine my voice and style without honing in on feminist Australian writers, people who write like me?

We held our copies of Looking for Alibrandi over our faces as we gossiped and giggled about our peers, until our English teacher threw an aggressive shush in our direction. Reading time in the library meant reading the chapters that had already been referenced in class and trying to get the most out of the hour allocated to further our illustrious social lives. The words we read washed over us; they left remnants of Marchetta's preoccupations in flashes.

Now, I remember fragments of Josie Alibrandi that go past the overarching themes of her story. Her illegitimacy and Italian background create a fiery foundation for her personality, but it is the enjoyment in things like picking up tomatoes for my evening meal and trying to call my grandparents more regularly where Josie's narrative makes me smile in unexpected ways.

Dry classes were stopovers between breaks with food, talk and friends. Teachers held our attention with threats looming over us in the form of deadlines and The Future. We turned to the required page, read

the required passage and pulled out the required symbols. We discussed the type of society represented in Looking for Alibrandi and thought about what Josie might be trying to tell us. In the end, though, she was an increasingly frustrating character that spoke words we had to memorise for essays. We wrote and rewrote quotes, staring at them with glazed eyes for 10 minutes before we needed to conjure them up for the assessment. We slept with the book under our pillows in the hope it would lead to absorption through osmosis. We didn't ever want to touch these words after the year was over, but in the moment, they were of utmost importance.

As it turns out, no memorisation technique can compare to the absorption of impression, the influence of a female character on a young girl, stumbling through friendships in tights that fall down under hemmed gingham school dresses. I can be angry, strident and steadfast in what I believe in. I can channel all of the parts of Josie Alibrandi that leaked between my insecurities and know that I have become a version of someone I admire.

We finished the essay and left the classroom, along with our knowledge of Marchetta's work, behind us, freedom enveloping the group of us. For years all we would think of when reminiscing about Looking for Alibrandi is how it interrupted the more important things that we did with our fourteen-year-old selves. We would embrace it as an inside joke, one to tighten the knit of our year level. We laughed about the characters, about the time that we thought about dressing up as them for a Book Day, but deciding on something a lot more distinctive and therefore, obviously, more fun. What were assigned texts for, after all, if not for ridicule?

Now, I ridicule books that spit out the same plot that I have seen a thousand times, along with the same world-weary teenagers that I have seen a thousand more. But I still appreciate the undertones of innocence and the lilt that authors introduce, all new to me. I can only read the

smallest fraction of all of the words available to me and so I extract something from every single one that I can. The formation of an inside joke based on a novel is a precious thing only really available to exclusive book clubs and English classes and we definitely didn't take that for granted. Even more precious is the shared inquiry into the ideas that lie behind the boisterous protagonist of the story and the heart-wrenching emotion that we all felt but failed to mention at the grief experienced by Josie.

I stacked my school-assigned novels at the end of the year to go into storage along with the used exercise books and text books with folded corners. My hand hovered over Looking for Alibrandi and I ran my fingers over the multitude of post-it notes plastered throughout. I hesitated, looking at the pile of books filled with information forgotten so long ago. Something about this novel stayed my hand. Something about Josie Alibrandi planted itself in my mind. Something about her unapologetic frustration and existence in her world of men made me want to laugh—not at Josie, but at someone else entirely.

Perhaps this shift in perspective wasn't salient to me at fourteen, but eventually it became obvious that Melina Marchetta had infiltrated my personality in the best possible way. I began to laugh at people who told me that anger is a disease and that women are the carriers of it. I found a way to carry anger with the passion and fervour of Josie Alibrandi and to leave room for love and hope.

And so the book stayed on my shelf.