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## Performance Poets

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## PERFORMANCE POETS

Dressed in boots and camouflage,  
 shooting an empty pistol he leaps  
 over tables, over chairs, ranting  
 about Serbs, apartheid, faulty pop-top cans.  
 The teacher mutters, "Ambitious,"  
 classmates shuffle papers,  
 a woman works on a hangnail.

Swaggering back to his desk, he listens  
 to a girl in a drifting black dress  
 whisper her "Ode to a Prairie Flower."  
 The teacher murmurs, "Lovely,"  
 students applaud.  
 He sneers, gazes out the window,  
 secretly admires her images.

Next day he pours out a love lyric —  
 a longing to care for the girl  
 as if she were a philodendron on his coffee table.  
 His voice cracks, his hand reaches toward her.  
 She snickers.  
 Laughter spreads like a virus through the room.

Shoulders hunched, collar up,  
 he muscles the departing poets aside,  
 runs home, fills his notebook  
 with thoughts from a new mine:  
 how her pale eyes glint hard as diamonds,  
 her laughter sweeps him away.

— *Constance Vogel*

## CHICAGO

Off the train we move,  
 person to person  
 recycling gas-fumed oxygen  
 sharp angry honks  
 screeching tires  
 whooshing air brakes.  
 You welcome me, Chicago  
 wrap your arms around  
 so tight  
 I suffocate.

— *Patricia Petros*