

Bleed on Paper

“Young Poets” by Nicanor Parra

Write as you will  
In whatever style you like  
Too much blood has run under the bridge  
To go on believing  
That only one road is right.

In poetry everything is permitted.

With only this condition of course,  
You have to improve the blank page.

(trans. by Miller Williams)

“Teaching the Ape to Write Poems” by James Tate, 1943

They didn't have much trouble  
teaching the ape to write poems:  
first they strapped him into the chair,  
then tied the pencil around his hand  
(the paper had already been nailed down).  
Then Dr. Bluespire leaned over his shoulder  
and whispered into his ear:  
“You look like a god sitting there.  
Why don't you try writing something?”

Bleed on Paper

“The One Girl at the Boys’ Party” by Sharon Olds

When I take my girl to the swimming party  
I set her down among the boys. They tower and  
bristle, she stands there smooth and sleek,  
her math scores unfolding in the air around her.  
They will strip to their suits, her body hard and  
indivisible as a prime number,  
they'll plunge in the deep end, she'll subtract  
her height from ten feet, divide it into  
hundreds of gallons of water, the numbers  
bouncing in her mind like molecules of chlorine  
in the bright blue pool. When they climb out,  
her ponytail will hang its pencil lead  
down her back, her narrow silk suit  
with hamburgers and french fries printed on it  
will glisten in the brilliant air, and they will  
see her sweet face, solemn and  
sealed, a factor of one, and she will  
see their eyes, two each,  
their legs, two each, and the curves of their sexes,  
one each, and in her head she'll be doing her  
wild multiplying, as the drops  
sparkle and fall to the power of a thousand from her body.