THE PROSE POEM:
AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL

Volume 5 | 1996

Beatniks

Michael Bowden

© Providence College

The author(s) permits users to copy, distribute, display, and perform this work under the following conditions: (1) the original author(s) must be given proper attribution; (2) this work may not be used for commercial purposes; (3) the users may not alter, transform, or build upon this work; (4) users must make the license terms of this work clearly known for any reuse or distribution of this work. Upon request, as holder of this work's copyright, the author(s) may waive any or all of these conditions.

The Prose Poem: An International Journal is produced by
The Berkeley Electronic Press (bepress)
for the Providence College Digital Commons.
http://digitalcommons.providence.edu/prosepoems/

Michael Bowden

BEATNIKS

Red neon staggers through tubes, endlessly leaving arrows at the entrance to the Wigwam Motel. Indicating vacancies. Outside the secondhand store, a Free Box bloated on mysteries and a romance in hardback. A slightly-used treatise on Being open to a random page on the scuffed linoleum. Now some cat with a black goatee mews his poem into a pool of shadows, looking for a mate or maybe just his bongos. Trumpeting the advent of a viral melancholy. Was it Ginsberg who first spotted the dead poets tramping back into ordinary streets-Whitman at the market, bagging blue plums? Cupping each in his palm a long moment, enjoying the skin's smooth coolness? So perhaps that is Rimbaud emerging from the flophouse alley, disappearing into the hissing doors of the Central bus. A rucksack thrown over his shoulder. A halo gouged into his scalp by some barber college novice. And there's Follain climbing down a manhole ladder to inspect a broken main. The past is a Class One narcotic. Memory, its dimebag. Its proactive agent. Everyone knows where to cop a fix. Everyone's loaded with stories. Remember the toyshop owner who bought a monkey to promote his store? He unlocked the doors one morning to find Jocko in a riot of torn boxes and dolls, his jaunty beret askew. A stacked cheerleader in one paw, his penis in the other. Which explains why the green parrot in the barbershop window munched a black gumball, watching, unable for a moment to imitate the real speech of men.