

THE PROSE POEM: AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL

Volume 7 | 1998

Untitled At Hong Fats Sean Thomas Dougherty

© 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/>

Sean Thomas Dougherty

UNTITLED AT HONG FATS

(for JW)

When you stared at the two Croatian men in the corner, wondered if they were War Criminals, I suggested they'd escaped with a priceless horde of stolen art, opened a gallery on the second floor of some Soho shop—that old Chinese woman emerged with a glass of water, something like an eyelash floating near the top—she shouted so many Mandarin words they understood, paid and left. We watched them walk into the cold of 3 A.M. The next night you would write a paragraph that began, *Our hands hold the bowl to drink*, and ended with *the snow resists the dark as taxis who cut yellow stripes*, before you drove to the graveyard shift through thick New Jersey traffic to oversee the men who work the machines, tape on your ear from the broken bottle you took at the meeting over wages—*Just a piece of negotiations*—you said, touching your sliced lobe; you laughed, *Who needs ears to hear?* And we sat there in the back, until the old woman scurried us out for the young couple who envied our table—just arrived from some chic nightclub full of junk and hip-hop-jazz. What does this all mean, I asked? The faces of strangers, snippets of eavesdropped conversation? The lives who intertwine between the cars, restaurants, cafés, the clubs where bodies glance and sway through spinning lights? I rode the subway home, lost in the ambivalence of New York nights. A man in a dirty purple smoking jacket sprawled on the seats across from where I sat . . . Once you lived alone like that you told me, wandered for months after the plant had closed, sleeping on the streets. *There is no spirit in poverty*, you spoke between bites. *There is only the fear of nothing to eat.*