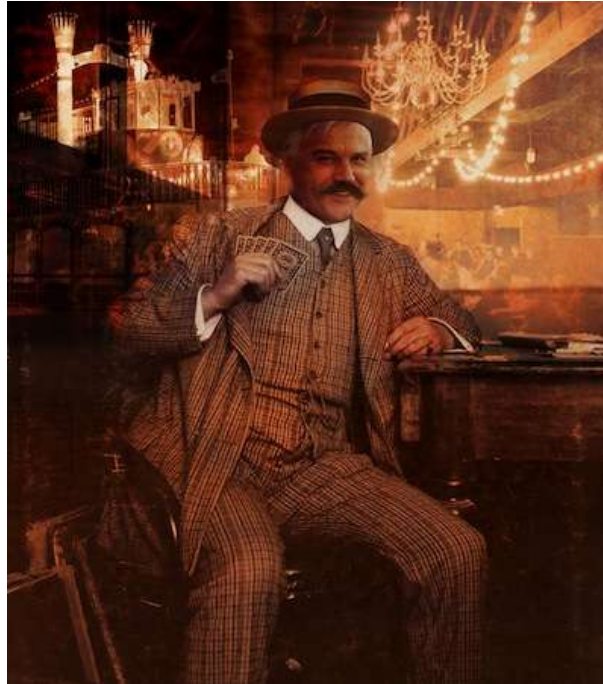


*I'M A RIVERBOAT BOY,
POEM ON HALSTED STREET (V2)*

By Michael Lee Johnson



As sure as church bells
Sunday morning, ringing
on Halsted near State Street, Chicago,
these memories will
be soon forgotten.

I stumble in my life with these words like broken sentences.

I hear and denounce myself in the distance,
mumbling chatter off my lips.

Fragments and chips.

Swearing at the parts of me I can't see;
walking away rapidly from the spiritual thoughts of you.

I'm disjointed, separated from my Christian beliefs.

I feel like I'm at the bottom of sin hill
playing with my fiddle, flat fisted, and busted.

So, you sing in the gospel choir; sang in Holland,
sang in Belgium, from top to bottom,
the maps, continents, atlas are all yours.
I detach myself from these love affairs drive straight, swiftly,
to Hollywood Casino Aurora.
Fragments and chips.
I guess we gamble in different casinos,
in different corners of God's world,
you with church bingo, and I'm a riverboat boy.
No matter how spiritual I'm once a week on Sundays,
I can't take you where my poems don't follow me.
Church poems don't cry.

VODKA OMELET



Make it clear in my mind, Jesus,
am I whacked-out on Double Cross Vodka
or have I flipped out calling myself
Limburger omelet chef?
I hate question marks and angels
with crazed wings.
You know the type, John the Baptist
toking weed, stoned out of his mind, storyteller,
foul smells from poor hygiene, eating habits
open mouth, swallowing grasshoppers,
so silky, smooth as sweet honey.
Add 3 eggs in a skillet, Parmesan/Romano blend,
2 cheeses add-on, shiitake mushrooms, turmeric,
chopped kale, hint hot chili peppers, cheers.
Scramble me, I'm cracked.
I rock faith in jungle music, dance nude.
Everything is a potential poem for me.
My omelet, my life, my booze, master cook,
vodka
omelet

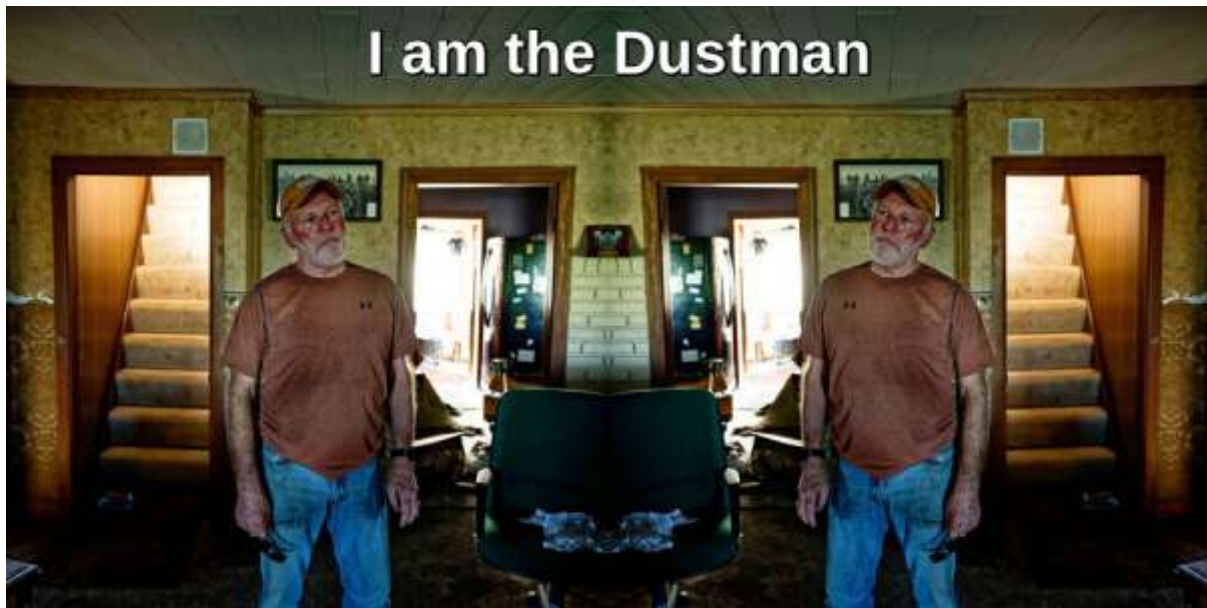
FAMILY FEUD



Break
in the rain,
thunderstorms;
bolt angular lightning
slithers away west.
Walking,
nanosecond flash
family memories,
personal,
revert,
tautology fault of style
acerbic chats
daggers in heart these words,
confused,
dicey dungeon sharp spike.
A labyrinth, ruined passages,
secret chambers, cellmates, now
for life.

Wind storms move away,
young willow trees natter—
smallest branches, still snap.

*I AM THE DUSTMAN,
CLUTTER COLLECTOR (V3)*



Surreptitiously
I am the dustman.
I am this lazy spirit
roaming, living within you
weaving around your mind,
vulture consuming cleaning
thoughts, space, your slender body.
I feel it all day,
this night alone.
I am your street sweeper,
garbage collector of thought the alternator
village dweller, walkway partner.
I am key door holder to entrance
man, to Summit house.

For years of abuse, I am dust eater.
I hang high outside on lampposts,
edged inside on top wall pictures.
I dim your lights yellow inside out,
ghost inspector.
Inside I roll the house over.
I am a damp cloth, Mr. Clean,
I smooth over, clutter-free,
tick-tock clocks, books,
antique silverware,
pristine future furniture pieces
solid state advances
fragment mistakes etched in mind.
Investigations exacerbate our relationship
unhinged. My snaking gets me kicked out.
I still remember those piled up old newspapers,
future books, scattered across your
living room floor.
Shake me, scrape out a new home,
cheaper, exasperated.
I am the dustman; dustpan shakes out.

Bio

Michael Lee Johnson lived ten years in Canada during the Vietnam era and is a dual citizen of the United States and Canada. Today he is a poet, freelance writer, amateur photographer, and small business owner in Itasca, DuPage County, Illinois. Mr. Johnson published in more than 1072 new publications, and his poems have appeared in 39 countries, and he edits and publishes ten poetry sites. Michael Lee Johnson has been nominated for 2 Pushcart Prize awards poetry 2015/1 Best of the Net 2016/2 Best of the Net 2017, 2 Best of the Net 2018.