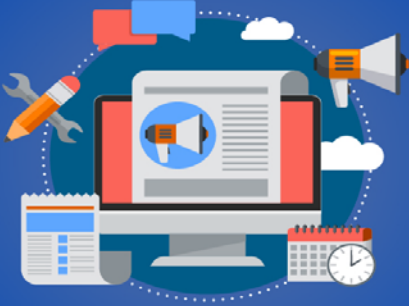


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## I'm a Riverboat Boy

Michael Lee Johnson

As sure as church bells  
Sunday morning, ringing  
on Halsted and 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 am disjointed, separated from my Christian belief.  
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,  
I can't take you where my poems don't follow me.  
Church poems don't cry.