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"To the Piano," "Midnight Cowboy," "Shoveling Gravel," "Felt-Board Cosmos," and "Panning for Gold"

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About the Author

David McNaron grew up and was educated in Birmingham, Alabama. He is associate professor of philosophy at Nova Southeastern University in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. He received the Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Miami, and the MFA in writing from Vermont College. His poems have appeared in *Ellipsis*, *Gulf Stream*, *Red Booth Review*, mississippireview.com, and a number of other literary magazines.

Selected Poems by David L. McNaron

*To the Piano*

You’re the math
I never mastered,
the second year of Latin
dropped. The love not
worked at hard enough.
Maturity running always ahead
like a father. A divine cosmology
still tenable. I balk
at the silence standing
before me, safe of tumblers
someone else will pick.
How I love to hear them fall.

*Midnight Cowboy*

In a perfect world,
the one that swims
before you in your
dreams, which hovers

above the grimy
streets, everyone calls
you Rico, not Ratso.
The women, poolside,  
swoon for your boy.  
The C-notes you’re peeling  
off are like so many  
carnival tickets—  
you get to ride and ride.

You are, for all  
the world, the client  
of Fate, which is  
everlastingly kind.

**Shoveling Gravel**

Stillness  
and summer heat  
grip a chert  
creek-bed  
running w/ red  
dirt valleys  
vacated  
by crawfish.

Daddy drops  
the shovel, wipes  
his brow, and says,  
Let’s shove  
this washtub  
in the station  
wagon, son, and get the hell  
out of here.

Safely down the road  
fourty years in my cozy  
study, I guard  
against the storm-  
yellowed picture  
from which I  
don’t think  
I’ve returned  
unscathed.
Felt-Board Cosmos

Kools, menthol green as caterpillar guts,  
we smoked them down  
by the chicken house. Platitudes of smoke  
hung like lazy dogwood boughs until  
summer gusts yanked them along.  
Bourbon flask on the dirt floor—

escapees holed up from the Boys’ Industrial School  
a mile away. Nothing but fields and woods to cross.  
A sunbeam fixed it through a slat, beacon  
to the amber heat. Unearthed Playboys  
older guys buried by the gate—  
they’d have beaten our butts if they’d caught us.

Opening Playboys, from that day forward,  
to the smell of damp forest floor, moldy  
pages nicked with red  
Alabama clay. Outside: cigars.  
Mama teaching Bible School  
in the living room. A felt-board cosmos:

cut-out circles for Body,  
Mind, Spirit, the Trinity.  
Flap after flap, the lessons turned.  
The most resplendent Lucifer  
hurtling downward. Shower of glitter.

We paraded past the bay window draped  
in ivy, vapors licking yellowed fingers.  
Days we tossed pinecone firemen to  
bonfires. We blew smoke rings,  
watched them lift, tear in the wind.

Panning for Gold

How many are in here, and how good?  
I stand in the stream. Shimmering,  
without its eyeteeth, the stream’s inexhaustible  
in its taunts and teases, in its diamond flow around  
golden crooks. I’m thirsty and dip my cup  
into the sun. Deposits on my pan: silt  
from elk horn, mountain loam—riffle and shift.
The water rushes on. I sip of the so many, the so-good. 
The creek-bed glitters when they’re gone.