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

David L. McNaron
Nova Southeastern University, mcnaron@nova.edu
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
everlasting ly 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
forty 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.