

Classic Poetry Series

Geraldine Connolly

- poems -

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Blue Bridge

Praise the good-tempered summer
and the red cardinal
that jumps
like a hot coal off the track.
Praise the heavy leaves,
heroines of green, frosted
with silver. Praise the litter
of torn paper, mulch
and sticks, the spiny holly,
its scarlet land mines.

Praise the black snake that whips
and shudders its way across my path
and the lane where grandmother
and grandfather walked, arms
around each other's waists
next to such a river, below
a blue bridge about to be
crossed by a train.

In the last gasp
of August, they erase the time
it might be now, whispering
into the darkness that passed,
blue plumes of smoke and cicada,
eager and doomed.

Submitted by Nola Garrett

Geraldine Connolly

New Territory

Sent off to boarding school
at twelve, with a pair of oxfords,
a pair of patents, my sterling
silver christening rosary
and two dozen name tags stitched
like drops of blood onto the collars
of starched blouses, I stare
down the hall, long and dim,
slippery from too many waxings.
Plaster statues of the holy family live
here, in cave-like niches, the Blessed Virgin,
her face soft and chalky, cheeks
powdered pink. Everything about her
is pliable; she is to be our model.
Joseph is nondescript, covered by
a long brown robe. The baby sleeps.
I eye the nuns, black and fluttery,
and my parents, in wool, with fur collars,
giddy with their new freedom.
I unpack my suitcase and survey
the territory. One iron bed,
one chest of drawers, one slender closet.
A crucifix pierces the white wall.
A dark trunk opens its jaws
to swallow my life.

Geraldine Connolly

The Summer I Was Sixteen

The turquoise pool rose up to meet us,
its slide a silver afterthought down which
we plunged, screaming, into a mirage of bubbles.
We did not exist beyond the gaze of a boy.

Shaking water off our limbs, we lifted
up from ladder rungs across the fern-cool
lip of rim. Afternoon. Oiled and sated,
we sunbathed, rose and paraded the concrete,

danced to the low beat of "Duke of Earl".
Past cherry colas, hot-dogs, Dreamsicles,
we came to the counter where bees staggered
into root beer cups and drowned. We gobbled

cotton candy torches, sweet as furtive kisses,
shared on benches beneath summer shadows.
Cherry. Elm. Sycamore. We spread our chenille
blankets across grass, pressed radios to our ears,

mouthed the old words, then loosened
thin bikini straps and rubbed baby oil with iodine
across sunburned shoulders, tossing a glance
through the chain link at an improbable world.

Geraldine Connolly