

## *Two Poems*

Mary Kennan Herbert

*Life on the Home Front during World War II has inspired a number of my poems, and those memories remain clear, unsullied by changing ideology or revisionist history. Right or wrong, juggling a variety of current perspectives, a writer must ultimately dig into that childhood memory bank for images that remain fresh and reassuring. Presidential candidates come and go, but my brother's tricycle still sparkles in the sunlight.*

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American poet Mary Kennan Herbert was born in St. Louis, Missouri, but now she lives and writes in New York City. She teaches literature and writing courses at Long Island University in Brooklyn, NY. Her poems have appeared in literary journals and other periodicals around the world, in about 25 different countries. She has received several awards, and collections of her work have been published by Ginninderra Press in Australia.

Good Guys vs. Bad Guys

Our Colt .45 pistols were our cowboy toys,  
plastic symbols of penile glamour.  
Childhood in the Forties,  
when we chased peers with the click-click  
of our guns, exploding amour,  
Triumph of good over evil,  
my team vs. your team, girls vs. boys,  
sound effects replacing truth and lies.  
Great fun then, as we galloped  
through vacant lots with our joys,  
replaying films of the Pacific Theater,  
black and white footage of war at sea,  
lights, camera, action to show the world we  
are the cool and competent cavalry.

End of the War

Steamy August in St. Louis:  
if you spent your childhood there,  
you earned your stripes.

The British once regarded St. Louis  
as a hardship post, its climate no better  
than Calcutta or Bombay or

where the dawn comes up like thunder.  
Japan surrendered, news like gold.  
Word spread fast through open windows

in our protected paradise, before air-  
conditioning and television turned  
communities into cocoons.

Still, forgive a geezer's digressions.  
It's 1945. How do you like my dress,  
embroidered with peacetime flowers?

The war is over! Cars drag joyful  
tin cans, racing down our street  
to make noise defiant and sweet.

We do not own a car. But my brother  
shows American ingenuity: he ties  
a tail of tin cans to his tricycle

and pedals up and down Wren Avenue  
to tell the world we are winners  
red, white, and even when sometimes blue.