

## NEUROTICALLY SEARCHING FOR SYMBOLS OF THE DEITY

### Mary Kennan Herbert

One never knows where or when the Jesus Prayer  
might come in handy, or when the Almighty might  
present Himself in guises impressive and layered.

One summer, a castor bean plant grew taller  
than the neighbor's garage. Yet the first freeze  
doomed it. It fell, humiliated in its tropical squalor.

On the other side of our yard, the Thomases  
grew grapes, never doubting they'd have a harvest  
by autumn, wine to enshrine, sunny promises.

The English setter up the street, a prize, I heard  
was valued as a hunting pal but never invited  
indoors. I'd give him my heart, just say the word.  
Yet he would bark at me on my way home. I was glad  
that dog was on his side of the white picket fence,  
and I was safe, heart beating wildly, on my side.

*Sol y sombra* shows how life is organized. Truth  
is brought by a gardener, vintner, or a hunter  
who dreams of the perfect hunting dog's soft mouth.

Mary Kennan Herbert teaches writing and literature courses at Long Island University, and at other colleges in the New York City area. Ms. Herbert holds a degree in art and education from Peabody College at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, and a master's degree in creative writing from The City College of New York. Her first collection of poems was published in 1998 by Ginninderra Press in Australia, which also published her second and third books of poetry, in 1999 and 2000. Her fourth collection was published in 2000 by Meadow Geese Press in Massachusetts, USA, and her fifth book has just been published by Ginninderra Press. She also received first prize in the 1999 poetry competition sponsored by the Midwest Conference on Christianity and Literature.