

The White Bicycle

Chained to a fence
in Paris, it suffers all winter the skinny
sleet, a white dog
in sad weather. Imagine the saucers
of such a dog's eyes; its deflated
wheels were worrisome that way, the bike
all bones, leaning soulfully,
becoming pure ghost. Where had its rider
gone? And why?
Wandering, I became proprietary,
glimpsed it again in the flea
market earrings, those pearly twins
from the forties. I couldn't afford
the bad luck of their origin; the woman
who wore them is dead.
I passed murals celebrating
the Occupation's end. Girls on bikes
in the mid-century style: skirts blown, hair
wind-caught. World breathless.
Just yesterday, a soldier pedaled past
on his Schwinn, his girlfriend
perched on the handlebars, clasping his neck,
waving to everyone they were passing.
He sang, troubadour, to her.
The white bicycle persisted,
the swanned Os of its fenders, mated
for life. Like good food, poor fool,
the booted, on foot.
I sang, Who could leave behind
a thing so fine? I sang my swell song
to a doll or a gal, in the forties' style.
Sailing anthem to keep up
the boys' spirits, You've got an angel
back home, remember.
The white bicycle became a brassiere, hitched
to a bedpost, then two Shasta daisies

in a glass on the table. Dogged and weary,
as if it had been here, like the moon's
reflection on water, or war,
or beauty, forever.

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