

Elaine Bougie Gilligan

“A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle”

~ Gloria Steinem

IF I DID

I don't have a bicycle, but if I did
I could push the pedal with my mouth
and watch the lovely froth spinning out

to rise to the surface.

I could try the saddle,
and if it fit me truly,
sleep in it all night,

the thunder of the surf above us.

And although he couldn't talk to me,
being out of his element,

in sleep he might drift and turn
and tell about rolling free
carrying his owner-captive
up where the world is lighter and
more difficult and
where offspring must struggle
to escape their mothers.

We would admire each other's
flash and form—
my rounded sleekness,
his arcing handlebar.

continued/...



And maybe a transposition of some kind
could accrue in the rich air of home,
with seaweed plaiting itself
around his spokes, salt and sand
prying open his tightness,

and I writing a saltwater syllabus
on the hierarchy of the manufactured world,
in case we ever want to rise up
out of the real world,
we, fish.

