

# Double Dutch

By Gregory Pardlo

The girls turning double-dutch  
bob & weave like boxers pulling  
punches, shadowing each other,  
sparring across the slack cord  
casting parabolas in the air. They  
whip quick as an infant's pulse  
and the jumper, before she  
enters the winking, nods in time  
as if she has a notion to share,  
waiting her chance to speak. But she's  
anticipating the upbeat  
like a bandleader counting off  
the tune they are about to swing into.  
The jumper stair-steps into mid-air  
as if she's jumping rope in low-gravity,  
training for a lunar mission. Airborne a moment  
long enough to fit a second thought in,  
she looks caught in the mouth bones of a fish  
as she flutter-floats into motion  
like a figure in a stack of time-lapse photos  
thumbed alive. Once inside,

the bells tied to her shoestrings rouse the gods  
who've lain in the dust since the Dutch  
acquired Manhattan. How she dances  
patterns like a dust-heavy bee retracing  
its travels in scale before the hive. How  
the whole stunning contraption of girl and rope  
slaps and scoops like a paddle boat.  
Her misted skin arranges the light  
with each adjustment and flex. Now heather-  
hued, now sheen, light listing on the fulcrum  
of a wrist and the bare jutted joints of elbow  
and knee, and the faceted surfaces of muscle,  
surfaces fracturing and reforming  
like a sun-tickled sleeve of running water.  
She makes jewelry of herself and garlands  
the ground with shadows.

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