

Hopscotch

Peter Nash

When I was a boy,
a girl would chalk a game of hopscotch
on the playground of St. Agnes Elementary School.
Behind her on the blacktop,
a cluster of giggling girls
waited their turn
to hop-hop and leap
to where she landed
arms outstretched
balanced as on wings of an eagle,
cheering her,
secretly hoping
one of her feet would touch a line
and she'd have to take her place behind the others.

I played dodgeball and kickball, kicking and screaming
with the boys, afraid I'd be called
a sissy for playing hopscotch.

Hopscotch, devised by Alexander the Great
to bolster the strength and agility
of his Macedonian foot soldiers
clad in laced leather leggings,
rawhide armor and iron helmets
blue as hyacinth
as they pillaged Illyria,
burning hay-fields, slaughtering cattle,
and jumping from one terrified farm girl to the next,

a practice akin to the Buddhist belief
in *bardho*, the pinpoint of existence
between death and life
insanity and sanity,
bar meaning in between
dho meaning island or mark
like bounding across the river

from stone to stone

dho to dho

ultimately pitching into the water

when the space between two stones

is longer than you can leap.