

The Advantage

for Christine Kennedy

A foot shorter than the college boys,
she chooses the front line, poised;
the Stanford girls remain a row behind
warming up with jittery, plyometric jumps.

At the gun, she runs with the males,
who stride with educated, well-oiled grace.
Her form is ragged, jerky—
a clear giddy-up in her gait.

Born in a poor land to parents
who could not hear or speak,
she paid for the school's daily milk
with a fresh slice of peat.

Here she comes! someone yells:

Short-waisted, stiff-backed,
her arms askew in front,
she outkicks them all
in the last—breathless—one-hundred.

Theresa McCourt