



The Circle

Laurie Galbraith Weckstein

They gather behind whispering hands,
in 5th grade, the Circular Groups of Girls.
At recess, the playground dotted.
Boys burn like roman candles—
oblivious to the smoldering circles.

I stand in the dirt, all skinny legs and pigtails.
The girl-groups
remind me of buffalo on the Great Western Plain
circling their young.
Protecting . . . what?

Relegated to the boys.
Running and shouting, the simple
and only prerequisites.
Mean questions . . . “Is that the same dress you wore yesterday?”
breezy talk of make-up and bras,
sidelong, carefully disinterested glances,
roll and vaporize in the wake
of us wild-eyed, gleeful,
uncomplicated puppy-boys.

In 1971, the girls in the circles
became women before me.

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Invitation in hand, I ask Andrew
what Ariella, who he sits by in 5th grade,
would like for her birthday.

“I don’t know,” not looking up.

“What does she like to do?”

“Well . . . at recess,
she goes to those Circular Groups of Girls,”
looking up, hopeful.

“Does that help?”

“No, not really,” I smile.