1997

The Competition

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Recommended Citation
Available at: https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.4928

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The Competition

Seven years old. You are in school. During récréation. An all boy school—
une école de garçons. Yes, a French school. You were born in France. It’s
not your fault. You had no voice in this decision.

During récréation the older boys—eleven and twelve years old—go to
the far end of the yard near the big wall to play. You go with them even
though they always make fun of you because you are rickety and clumsy.
That too is not your fault. The older boys let you play with them
because they like to laugh at you.

In the far corner of the yard near the big wall where the Pion [l’instituteur
in charge of watching the boys during récréation] cannot see the boys,
the tallest boy draws a line on the wall above his head with a piece of
white chalk, then he draws another line on the ground about six mètres
from the wall. Then the boys, half a dozen of them, beside you, start
the competition to see who can pee the highest above the line on the
wall. You never win. Only once did you succeed in peeing above the
white line, but that’s because you stood close to the wall, about one
meter away, and also because you held back all the pipi you had in you
since the night before in anticipation of the competition. You were
excited to have managed for the first time to pee above the line, to pee
into the sky, even if you did not win the competition that day. The
other boys said you cheated because you crossed the line on the ground.
Only those who pee on the wall from the line on the ground are
qualified. Those who cross the line are disqualified. That day you were
disqualified as a high altitude pisseur. This you will never forget.