

During Recess

Linda Sillitoe

Spring sneaked into town while court convened.
One noon, I walk from my office to my
old neighborhood and find it well-kept.
The ditch I'd hurtle galloping home
from school has been curbed and guttered.

Jack's shop is owned and run by Asians now
who mop, exchanging Vietnamese. I buy candy
from the uncrowded shelves and return to work
tracing my old route to junior high, now a shell.
Behind me, my grade school hollers its recess.

Listening back, I hear my own voice, my own
shoes on the hopscotch, swiftly recalling how
to ignore the bell until the line forms
then beat the blood in my face to the door
where I assume that Miss Blunt still waits.

No one supposes I am walking back to my ugly notes
on a double murder, a naturalist losing spring
to unearth a spider web. Extricated, it must gleam
geometrically, word by word. Sunstreams, continue your
hard green in the surprised leaves; give me, unjustified,

what killing cost: more sky, more time.