

British Bulldog

Iced cobwebs on the railings,
thin threads white against peeling
black paint.

The bell, its lolling tongue forced
from metallic rasp into a high
brass pitch.

Playtime. Tarmac time.
Time to add scabs to scabbed knees.

Jabbed into the middle
caught between waves of children
so many, too many,
to catch

as she snatches
small shots
of breath.

The children flow past her,
she's too slow
her empty arms clutch cold air.

Wobbling folds and an underbite
and a reluctance to rugby tackle
not quite the pedigree required here.

Next to the railed periphery of the yard
her eye catches

a British Bulldog
partly inbred mastiff
a blue-blood quirk straining
on his lead. One leg
cocked as if in salute.
Victory steams as the bell rings
to signal the end of this minor war.