

Real Cricket

A crunch of spikes on concrete steps,
a few brave claps, a burst of cheers
from friends and families on the stand
as men in white, some whirling arms
step out a door, a changing room
marked *Visitors* and stroll onto the field.

They cross a rope, a boundary line
that rings a world of make-believe,
where cricket for a day transcends
the scams and scandals of the week,
where industry and farming pause
as caps and floppy hats inspect the pitch.

Bit green, says one, a spinner's track.

I look down at the close-knit roots,
at crack-lines in the flat-rolled clay,
at battered boots, their laces frayed
that live in lofts like dreams on hold
beside the fishing-rod, guitar and bike.

Man in! Old hands at tax and law,
young bloods in chicory and beef
spread out across the field, so glad
to range outdoors, to soak up sun,
to shed the rules, the roles of work
they're born again as slip or cover-point.

The batsmen waddle from the nets
in crested helmet, pads and gloves
to shouts and clapping from the foe.
Knights in armour, I think, a joust.
There are spectators under trees,
a small pavilion, a mast, a flag.

Two leg please. An umpire bends
above the stumps. At short square-leg
I marvel how such rites transmute
the thuggish rivalry of human genes
which thwarted subtly shaft a friend
or bomb whole cities into smoking ruins.

The umpire lifts an arm. *That's two.*
The batsman looks around the field
then settles down astride the crease.
Does evolution peak on planet earth
when families gather on green fields
and umpires call, as to the cosmos, *Play?*