

## **Make-believe, caught by Tony**

Rommi Smith

'It's important we don't let this moment go.'

— Azeem Rafiq

Sometimes, you might believe this *is* your son,  
staking his war-torn cricket bat into this bombsite-  
playground. W.G. Grace is wide-  
awake. Young twelfth man rises from the stands –

steps up to take his place. In upturned super-  
hero mask, he asks: *who owns this game?*  
The answer is a run the length of Portobello's  
ghost – Green Lane – a run the distance of the dream

in the witness box of the High Court of Learie  
Constantine; a run whose light outdoes  
the spark of the Electric Cinema; a run  
the strip of consciousness and farther still

and farther; brighter than the Glory of the awe  
growing in the orchard of the Little Sisters of the Poor.

A WritersMosaic commission in response to the celebrated photographer and filmmaker Ken Russell's photograph of a young boy cricketer; part of his 1954 series: 'Portobello Road – Scenes of Everyday Life'. This image is one of 34 which Rommi Smith has selected and written about for the TopFoto exhibition *Changing the Story: photographs of British life in Black and White (1917-1962)*, which she has curated at the North Wall Gallery, Oxford. The North Wall is based on the campus of St Edward's School.

### **Rommi Smith**

Rommi Smith is an award-winning poet, playwright, theatre-maker, performer and librettist. A BBC Writer in Residence, she is the inaugural British Parliamentary Writer in Residence and inaugural Poet in Residence for Keats' House, Hampstead. A Visiting Scholar at City University New York (CUNY), she has presented her research and writing at institutions including: The Segal Theatre, The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture and City College New York.

A Doctor of Philosophy in English and Theatre, Rommi is recipient of a Hedgebrook Fellowship (USA) and is a winner of The Northern Writers' Prize for Poetry 2019. She was recently awarded a Cave Canem fellowship in the US. She is writer-in-residence for Topfoto, the UK's leading photographic archive and a forthcoming poet in residence for the Wordsworth Trust, Grasmere.

A recording of this poem can be found at [writersmosaic.org.uk](http://writersmosaic.org.uk)

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