Jubilate Messi

some poems about football

Steve Ely

Shearsman Books
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Tohuwabohu

Goddess ex nihilo burlesquing naked from tohuwabohu
parthenogenetic hush-lipped logos waltz-whelping wind
wave and welkin wyrm
womb-whelmed son-serpent sperming the fat-papped
snake-hipped shekinah Iahu exalted dove

What came first
the streptopeliac platform of bitten off birch-twig
bobbing on brine of cosmic amnion or the egg
black-winged Night on brooding waters (some say)
or sevenfold coils of nachash proleptic imago of the male red-necked phalarope
brood patch hotter than Big Bang’s blood
Word’s hammering egg-tooth birth-breaking chrysalic-empyrean naming nidifugous
night day firmament waters land
grass lights fowls whales cattle
Man formed from dirtblood
Hawwah Mother of All-Living (save those that lived before) but

On boreal flat-field lit by star-spurt creaming cosmos cropped grass-glade fenced with knife-skinned aspens gleaming gainst the viridescence leathern egg of pterandon aepyornis or moa
percnopterus rondo breaking with stones
the blonde head of Jehovah
throne down by Eden’s Angel

Shadow and brawling
the billioned clamour of ectopistes migratorius
jewelled splintring aspens pearls
far bigger than pigeons’ eggs
cast before condemned swine

Go forth lone blackbird
multiplierous whistling
homely dunnock go forth in motley

Aspens detonate
and Spirit descending

Fiery Pramanath
explodes with ball
and roaring
Football in Crowe Street, 1721

Daybreak, Bartlemy Fair. Inns trashed with Saint’s-Eve flotsam; butchers, haberdashers, poet-suckers, punks, the wits and whimsies of unwashed Wen, wasted on bottle-ale, neat jenever. Slum-Lords sotted on malmsey and sack, lap-lounging, quim-queasy queans. Gross Chanticleer trumpeting wilted streets, Goose, Cock, Crowe: time to get up.

Rude rhythm of tabor and cat-call of drum, trestle-top trap-dancing pattens; two powdered and periwigged toothless drabs burlesquing Bent Bob and his Sour Kraut King. The German presents, the Englishman enters. A revel! No Justice, no Peace; Slack Alice, Moll Quicksheet, bowing bare-cheeked and exiting Pye-wards, showered in glistening nobbins.

Drunk soldiery pouring from gin mills assemble; on rough-field from Bart Church to Clerkenwell gate, sun shines on the liveried golden boys swarming the piss-pocket, guttersnipe streets; haberdashers, butchers and joiners-to-chaos — cut-purses, apprentice-boys, pimps and proud beggars — pacing and prowling, restless for riot.

Sun-flash cleaver — howl and blood-splash Red Sea parting; skull-hacked haberdash, nimbused in claret; stretchered from market to Giltspur’s gutter — out-of-bounds. Then tempting fate from the plank of the scaffold Jock Chartres announcing Sally-from-our-Alley, the ball-bearing bully-off mistress of game. Mob surgent
and brawling — tart tumbled from table,
bow-legged and loose from a half-score of Lords:
the ball slipped her skirts like a rabbit — *game on!*

A shark-mouthed butcher-boy boots the ball skyward;
the field follows stampeding like Dungeness beef-kine,
hard-hoofed hobnails rattling cobbles, storm-surge roar
and shattering shingle on Smithfield’s slaughterhouse streets.

Ball flies from Crowe to St. John’s Lane
cries up ball under herd wheels and sucks
to scrummaging vortex shoulder-to-shoulder
head down grappling
in maelstrom ball
up someone’s jumper but
aproned-pit-dogs ploughshare through
fist-down
trample
snotsplash snapteeth
howl murder cry
*that ball* —

Shark-mouthed butcher-boy
rolling from tumult leapt hacks
ductt forearms
swerved
headlocks and nelsons *catch me if you can*
smashed gutterwards screaming cannonball blindside —

Ball spurts form the ruck
open door of the coffee-house
where windows went through
and tables went over
gentil-men scalded books broken
specs trampled
haymakers head-butts
guffaw and rawping
and —

Shark-mouthed butcher-boy
racing away
vaulting trips
fending side-swipes
and wrenching free
from outstretched arms
and grasping fingers
John-Gate’s goalhole
arching before him
spring
leap like a leopard
straining for
Glory —
Shark-mouthed butcher-boy
rickety
chancred
fleet as a greyhound
brave as a bear
wrecked sudden
on streetlight
piled frenzy of wolves
back and forth
back and forth
scrum and brawl
back and forth
all day
with broke jaws
chawing and gouging
split lips and shiners
snapped forearms and shinbones
knotskulls and crackribs
shivvings and coshings
backforth
from Bart-Gate to goalied St. John’s
when —
Shark-mouthed butcher-boy
    pride of Crowe Street
squirmed from the melee
    with ball at his feet

Shrugged off the maulers
    and rakers of ruck
and dribbled for glory
    out of blood and the muck

Dropped-shoulder step-over
    drag-back and feint
he stooped like a hawk
    on the gate of the Saint

Nutmegged the gaoler
    left him flat on his arse
and smashed the pig’s bladder
    through Clerkenwell Arch.

*Sunrise, the Feast of St. Austin: up the workers.*
*Face like raw liver. Bones bruised and buckled,*
*a nag to the knackers. Bonce banging with beer —*
*and the ague and the plague and the pox*
*and the stocks; I’ve been better. Ten thousand*
*ways to die. One way to live. Sleeping beside me,*
*Sally-from-our-Alley, lauded and lorded.*
*Bit ’o rough. That fucking cockerel.*
*Time to get up. Still clutching the ball.*