John Forbes (1950-1998)

Roman Poem

the rhythms of the Italian language
& the Belgian figure skating team
in town tonight are
partly what it's like. As are
3 kiwi fruit ripening on a window sill
or sunlight through a bottle of light, red wine.

Here, plastic furniture seems like a good idea,
more natural on a marble chip
& concrete terrace, as though
what we treat as objects,
they take for granted
(hence "style"
and how for us this word belongs in ads
or gets subsumed as technique—
casually kick tyre,
adjust slouch hat
or beneath the Duc
d'Aosta's boast on
their monument,
NULLE RESISTE
AL BERSAGLIERI—
meaning they beat
the Pope—
want to spraypaint
Except the 6th Division, sport & don't).
But if you leave out the injured & the rich,
it must have been something like this
those expatriates missed, who let
their eyes go hard & said
"I do not love Australia."

University of Iowa
is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve, and extend access to
The Iowa Review
www.jstor.org