Review Article

The "Tough Songs" of John Berryman

I

There is much of Dr Faustus in the modern American poet and his scene. To be a poet and to possess imagination is felt almost as a kind of magic, a special state of freedom, and a unique way to self-realization and fulfilment. It is the American Dream come true at its highest point of culture. As such, it has been recognized by American society—in retrospect at least—in a deep-seated veneration of its poets and prophets from Emerson onwards, and in its academic traditions of the scholar-poet or poet-scholar. No other modern society has been able to match America in preserving such an open ground for the imagination. Dream itself takes on a form of Reason, and Romance enters Intellect: it is a place, in short, where Plato might still feel at home. It also happens to have been one of the most creative traditions in Western literature and thought in modern times.

Within this tradition John Berryman needs to be seen as its latest and most representative figure, and—arguably—as its last and most problematical. *Love & Fame* (London: Faber, 1971), the final one of Berryman's books to be published before his death early in 1972, illustrates the dramatic quality of a life being lived at the level of myth. The book is a classic study of the poet's world, American-style. It tells the story of Berryman's life from the vantage point of a man who, after a late religious conversion, is able to go back through thirty or more years of the poetic life, and relive it imaginatively in a manner of affectionate yet devastating irony. As, for example, when he recalls his departure for Europe in 1936, a budding poet and scholar about to exchange Columbia for Cambridge in England:

> Yeats, Yeats, I'm coming! it's me. Faber & Faber,
> you'll have to publish me some day with éclat
> I haven't quite got the hang of the stuff yet
> but I swamp with possibility

If Berryman is a Faustus figure, then he is also his own Mephistopheles. He is able to undercut his own ambitions and illusions simply by indulging them, and by self-dramatization to place his early life firmly before the reader's eyes—as lost. Yet he has a genuinely double stance to his writing: the past comes to life just as much as the present; and it is only gradually that Berryman's withdrawal from the illusory world of "love and fame" of mid-century America unfolds itself in the book. The stanza which follows the one quoted above is possibly more typical of the intelligence of the style generally:

> My God, we're in open water
> I feel like Jacob with his father's blessing
> set forth to con the world too, only *I* plan
> to do it with simple work & with my ear

It is a secularized *sub specie aeternitatis* state, one in which the poet's

self is able to stand out comically—in an egregious and gratuitous way —as being unplaceably human.

The style of *Love & Fame,* indeed, is so pungently clear that it is possible to mistake the life for the poetry; and since this point always appears with work of a confessional kind, it will be well to begin with Berryman's own statement of the issue:

> I am not writing an autobiography-in-verse, my friends.
>
> Impressions, structures, tales, from Columbia in the Thirties
> & the Michaelmas term at Cambridge in '36,
> followed by some later. It's not my life.
> That's occluded & lost.
>
> That consisted of lectures on St Paul,
> scrimmages with women, singular moments
> of getting certain things absolutely right.
> Laziness, liquor, bad dreams.
>
> That consisted of three wives & many friends,
> whims & emergencies, discoveries, losses.
> It's been a long trip. Would I make it again?

It is as though Berryman is able to separate off the self from the ego, and to flatten into fact his own awkwardness as a character. He clearly has exhausted his capacity for living: all he has left is his imagination to help him understand what it is that he did in those thirty or more years, and to help him in the final role which he has to play—to save what he can of his soul. As he puts it himself:

> We will all die, & the evidence
> is: Nothing after that.
> Honey, we don't rejoin.
> The thing meanwhile, I suppose, is to be courageous & kind.

It is as though the legend of Fausus could end as a comedy. Illusion's energies exhaust themselves, and the soul knows it has only the simplest of roles and security left for itself. Here lies the unfolding structure to Berryman's book, and to the strange simplicity of its conclusion.

Love & Fame has four parts, the first three dealing with Berryman's life and the fourth being a surprising expression of religious concern. It is called "Eleven Addresses to the Lord" and will surprise as much by its manner of address as by the fact of its being a re-found faith. Berryman creates a beautifully free sense of his own identity as well as a comic tone while proceeding to act out a role of deep and persuasive piety.

> Master of beauty, craftsman of the snowflake,
> inimitable contriver,
> endower of Earth so gorgeous & different from the boring Moon,
> thank you for such as it is my gift.
>
> I have made up a morning prayer to you
> containing with precision everything that most matters.

> "According to Thy will" the thing begins.
> It took me off & on two days. It does not aim at eloquence.

His stance at the end of the book has a force of inevitability which no-one could have anticipated but which once there no-one can deny. Its rightness lies in a bedrock quality, as a *reductio ad quem* for the "love & fame" theme; and in a strangely *summum bonum* tone for the soul which had been hiding in the humour of the self-dramatization and the illusory life.

But whether this new stance grafts into Berryman's life and work as a whole is a question which *Selected Poems 1938-1968* (London: Faber, 1972), chosen by the poet shortly before his death, will be needed to explain. Such a poem, for example, as "The Dispossessed," the title poem of Berryman's 1948 first book of verse, points to a loss of faith in terms similar to those of its now being refound.

> "and something that . . . that is theirs—no longer ours"
> stammered to me the Italian page. A wood
> seeded & towered suddenly. I understood.—

It seems as if Berryman has lost not only his way like his Dantean prototype but even the sense that any faith could make meaning return to the world. Christian doctrine seems to slip into grim vaudeville terms:

> The Leading Man's especially, and the Juvenile Lead's,
> and the Leading Lady's thigh that switches & warms,
> and the grimaces, and their flying arms;

Myth seems to descend into solipsism, and emptiness to seize the soul of man and his culture:

> *our* arms, our story. Every seat was sold.
> A crone met in a clearing sprouts a beard
> and has a tirade. Not a word we heard.
>
> Movement of stone within a woman's heart,
> abrupt & dominant. They gesture how
> fings really are. Rarely a child sings now.

Berryman, however, is on surprisingly familiar terms with whatever it is that is being dispossessed. In fact, the dispossession seems more like —essentially—an inability to identify: the ego has to escape or be absorbed; and while this may mean a loss of faith, it does not necessarily mean its destruction. In this sense Berryman by accepting a destiny for himself to be alone in life without the comfort from or capacity to have a faith does not preclude it as a possibility; hence his return in *Love & Fame* in a mood of benign wilfulness may appear to be not as surprising as at first it seemed.

In between Berryman's egregious and gratuitous ego and the reality of "the Lord" there exists the whole area of the poet's personal experience, development as an artist, and understanding of America. The two key terms come together only after a life's history has been lived; and when Berryman does eventually come to find God, it is as much a

finding of himself. He puts it as disarmingly as any human has so far dared:

> I fell back in love with you, Father, for two reasons:
> You were good to me, & a delicious author,
> rational & passionate.

The terms "rational" and "passionate" are remarkably acute here. They may well apply to God. But in a more obvious though indirect sense they apply more clearly to Berryman himself, and between them they describe the axis round which his poetry has been moving throughout his career.

The critical aptness of the terms explains why Berryman needs to be seen as central and representative in modern American poetry: his life, intellect and poetic experimentation have belonged to the mainstream of American poetry coming out of the Romantic tradition; and his self-consciousness has isolated essential questions of form, character and sensibility. Such poems or series as *Homage to Mistress Bradstreet, 77 Dream Songs* and now from his late works *Love & Fame* have come to be seen as the most challenging large body of verse in contemporary writing; and with *Selected Poems* extending the range somewhat, it is now possible to review his output and suggest how his imagination has grown through various states of the rational and the passionate into a rare and peculiarly modern maturity.

II

Homage to Mistress Bradstreet (1953) marked an important change in Berryman and in American poetry. Some rational instinct led Berryman to displace myth with history, and to explore the passionate human world in the several voices he heard in Anne Bradstreet—the seventeenth-century American Puritan poet.

Formally speaking, also, the poem marked a watershed between the use of the old dramatic monologue style, derived from the nineteenth century by way of Eliot, and what was later to become the new "life studies" manner of Lowell and Mailer. To look at Lowell's earlier poetry as in *The Mills of the Kavanaughs* (1951) is to see a poet lost in the labyrinth of an overworked metaphysical style, endlessly piling up mythological elaborations for his simple—and indeed intimate—subject of a failed marriage. Anne Kavanaugh the widow is measured up against Persephone, Daphne, Echo and an Ovidian sense of love. Lowell himself is present only as the impersonal projector of this world. Admittedly, within a year or two he was to begin "Beyond the Alps," which marked the great change in his writing; but it is arguable that Lowell never has been able to relate the dramatic and the rational interests of his work in the supple way which Berryman achieves at this point of his career.

Berryman in *Homage to Mistress Bradstreet* settles firmly for a figure in history. He blocks off the reference of his poetry from going beyond the literal world of Anne Bradstreet's time and place, even though this world involved his subject in an intensely pious and theo-

centric culture and experience. There is a sufficient dimension of fact for Berryman in Anne Bradstreet's coming to New England with the early Puritans from the Old World, and in her subsequent life as a woman, mother and poet in the new American society; the limits of historical experience obviously suited the rational principle in Berryman's imagination.

7

> How long with nothing in the ruinous heat
> clams & acorns stomaching, distinction perishing,
> at which my heart rose,
> with brackish water, we would sing.
> When whispers knew the Governor's last bread
> was browning in his oven, we were discourag'd.
> The Lady Arbella dying—
> dyings—at which my heart rose, but I did submit.

8

> That beyond the Atlantic wound our woes enlarge
> is hard, hard that starvation burnishes our fear,
> but I do gloss for You.
> Strangers & pilgrims fare we here,
> declaring we seek a City. Shall we be deceived?
> I know whom I have trusted, & whom I have believed.
> and that he is able to
> keep that I have committed to his charge.

There are also other voices for Anne Bradstreet in his poem besides the historical. She reveals capacities for passion and dissent which may have been historically true but which Berryman enforced as a modern interpreter somewhat beyond the evidence. Then there is Berryman's own specific contribution in making the leap of wit across the centuries from his own sophisticated, if dispossessed, Catholic background into a primitive and feminine Puritan world. In discovering and doing justice to Anne Bradstreet's experience, Berryman was revealing his own capacity for understanding the complexity of the spiritual life generally. Later, this was to be assumed within his own more personal and autobiographical writing. In *Homage to Mistress Bradstreet*, however, it is sufficient to see Berryman present as a craftsman, analyst and secret lover of his subject.

To take three stanzas where many of the signs of Berryman's innovations are evident, and where his complex but rational new range of attitudes is gathered up into a dramatic crisis, we may note Anne Bradstreet's feeling for the free-thinking but ostracized Anne Hutchinson:

24

> Forswearing it otherwise, they starch their minds.
> Folkmoots, & blether, blether. John Cotton rakes
> to the synod of Cambridge.
> Down from my body my legs flow,
> out from it arms wave, on it my head shakes.
> Now Mistress Hutchinson rings forth a call—
> should she? many creep out at a broken wall—

affirming the Holy Ghost
dwells in one justified. Factioning passion blinds
25
all to all her good, all—can she be exiled?
Bitter sister, victim! I miss you.
—I miss you, Anne,
day or night weak as a child,
tender & empty, doomed, quick to no tryst.
—I hear you. Be kind, you who leaguer
my image in the mist.
—Be kind you, to one unchained eager far & wild
26
and if, O my love, my heart is breaking, please
neglect my cries and I will spare you. Deep
in Time's grave, Love's, you lie still.
Lie still.—Now? That happy shape
my forehead had under my most long, rare,
ravendark, hidden, soft bodiless hair
you award me still.
You must not love me, but I do not bid you cease.

Multiple perspectives, changing modes of address, language unfixing itself in its forms and reference: the manner is indeed difficult. But the matter, especially the final emotion, seems to set itself out in sharp, free and clear relief; and the move from a historical world of fact across into a pure psychic state is made with assurance. It is a hard-edged, passionate scene. But the poet Berryman is also there. Sculpting the rhyme, arranging the rhythmic breaks, sensing when to raise the tone, and always moving deftly and deliberately even when this means fracturing the language and syntax to achieve his ends. The poetry of these stanzas gives off the impression of not presuming to be bigger than the world it is serving to render. In fact, an idiom of smallness seems to be characteristic of Berryman's style. He makes the terms of his imagination deliberately smaller than the life they are rendering. Conciseness is everywhere. The last line quoted says a great deal with regard to the personal relationship, but with poise and tact.

Clearly, passion dominates the scene. Yet there is real distance between the poet and his subject, and an openness of terrain which allows access discretely to the historic, the dramatic and the poetic identities Berryman is creating. It is at quite a remove from the simplistic world of a Browning dramatic monologue, and from the obsessive correlation of poet and *persona* which may be argued for Eliot. Berryman certainly creates a figure in Anne Bradstreet who is dramatically representative of powerful interests for him: yet she also remains herself, and he remains himself in the poetry. The historical and the discursive occur alongside the dramatic. In this way Berryman shook off the romantic elements of the dramatic monologue tradition with its centering on the ego of the person in the poem; and by fragmenting the structure of the presentation in *Homage to Mistress Bradstreet* Berryman opened up the range of possibilities for poetry in the mid-fifties in terms of access to more direct statements of feeling and to more flexible and confident statements of reason.

Some ten years later in *77 Dream Songs* Berryman was able to establish his own poetic identity with even more authority. The tone of these poems is more composed and self-assured. Partly this comes from what one reviewer calls "a grave modern humour" in the writing. Partly it also comes from the dream state itself allowing Berryman to locate his characters and their situations *just inside* the borders of a seeming actuality. The dramatization is finely sufficient for poetic ends, but no more. It is clear that the action is happening in the poet's mind and soul. Hence Berryman's somewhat testy criticism of readers who did not sense his control over the characters of "Henry" and "Mr Bones" and their place in the scheme of things:

> The poem, then, whatever its wide cast of characters, is essentially about an imaginary character (not the poet, not me) named Henry, a white American in early middle age in blackface who has suffered an irreversible loss and talks about himself sometimes in the first person, sometimes in the third, sometimes even in the second; he has a friend, never named, who addresses him as Mr Bones and variants thereof. Requiescant in pace.

Henry is as representative (and as transparent) a figure of modern times as ever Tom Jones and David Copperfield were of theirs. We meet him first as a comic Achilles, a hero who refuses to come out and fight. He belongs to "the tranquillized Fifties." But not happily so. He is in a time of peace what Stephen Crane's Henry Fleming (whom Berryman once studied closely) was in time of war—a rather wilful hero for whom self-consciousness is both a passion and a *raison d'être*.

Huffy Henry hid the day
unappeasable Henry sulked.
I see his point, —a trying to put things over.
It was the thought that they thought
they could *do* it made Henry wicked & away.
But he should have come out and talked.

The tone of banter between poet and character is a nice point of self-knowledge. Berryman catches both sides of the argument in the "passion" versus "reason" debate, and incorporates them into his humour as a single complex state of awareness. He allows Henry to move in and out of sympathy and irony.

All the world like a woollen lover
once did seem on Henry's side.
Then came a departure.
Thereafter nothing fell out as it might or ought.
I don't see how Henry, pried
open for all the world to see, survived.

Presumably, Berryman is touching on his own case here. But in his sophisticated shorthand he is also lightly pushing the American Dream itself to one side, without at the same time wishing to deny its sometime va'ue. The interplay of ironies permits the verse to settle at a low and level pitch for the final discursive statement of Dream Song 1:

What he has now to say is a long
wonder the world can bear & be.
Once in a sycamore I was glad
all at the top, and I sang.
Hard on the land wears the strong sea
and empty grows every bed.

Something close to a sonnet form feels under pressure to be dramatic, but declines the gambit. Instead, the poetry comes out as lyrical, and as Song. In its tough way it carries a deal of news, fact and drama. The final effect, however, is more often like a simple sigh in the Dream Songs, and sometimes even a shudder.

The humour into which the ups and downs of life seem to be resolved for Henry is often disturbed; and when too heavy an attitude has got hold of the verse, it is time for "Mr Bones" to appear:

The high ones die, die. They die. You look up and who's there?
—Easy, easy, Mr Bones. I is on your side.
I smell your grief.

It feels like the voice of the epigraph line to *77 Dream Songs*: "Go in, brack man, de day's yo' own." Some character who has seen all, and known all there is of suffering and social degradation, seems to be speaking. He could be the straight-man of Negro vaudeville, but Berryman wisely does not say. He is more an unplaceable instinct for sympathy in man which Berryman knows about but will not name. It is the sympathy of the eternal survivor, the one who ought to be but cannot be destroyed by misfortune. It is a voice without ego, and in this sense a judging voice amidst the petty crises of Henry's career. And, finally, it both supports and chastens the increasing elegiac tone of Berryman's writing in the Dream Songs.

Often Berryman does not need, or chooses not to use, the mediation of his characters in their formal dramatizing roles. Life itself is too dramatic to distance in this way. A shift into pure psychic record and reaction takes hold of some of the Dream Songs:

34

My mother has your shotgun. One man, wide
in the mind, and tendoned like a grizzly, pried
to his trigger-digit, pal.
He should not have done that, but, I guess,
he didn't feel the best, Sister,—felt less
and more about less than us . . .?

Now—tell me, my love, *if* you recall
the dove light after dawn at the island and all—
here is the story, Jack:
he verbed for forty years, very enough,
& shot and buckt—and, baby, there was of
schist but small there (some).

Why should I tell a truth? when in the crack
of the dooming & emptying news I did hold back—
in the taxi too, sick—
silent—it's so I broke down here, in his mind
whose sire as mine one say way—I refuse,
hoping the guy go home.

The difficulty of the verse is not to do with meaning so much as with feeling. Presumably, Berryman has had news of a suicide (possibly Hemingway's), and this triggers off a disintegrative reaction in him which picks up speed, incoherence and melancholy as the three stanzas proceed. The dream song is here a waking nightmare. His own father had suicided, and Berryman (as Song 384 says so powerfully, "I stand above my father's grave with rage") from beginning his poem in an attempt at controlled detachment and conversational small-talk finally cracks, himself, under the recollection. The "truth" is that his own mind has its "schist." The verse enacts his state of feeling, —a sort of rock-like, multi-layered, splitting in thin irregular sections.

The movement of the verse is obviously away from the formalism of dramatization towards a confession which is equally dramatic but which takes place at a point where rationality and traditional language leave off. Berryman's understanding and his art are still exact. How acutely rational is the line: "felt less/and more about less than us . . .? But the raw, exposed and uncontrolled neurosis in "there was of/ schist but small there (some)" suggests the power of a subject matter overwhelming the poet. He can hardly bear to note the symptoms.

Dream Song 34 is an extreme way of seeing how Berryman was in the grip of a profoundly dark emotion, which was again and again to colour the tone of his poetry. The striking series of elegies throughout *77 Dream Songs* and *His Toy, His Dream, His Rest* addressed to his fellow American poets in their deaths during the sixties—his work is a kind of modern *In Memoriam*—points to some sense of the exhaustion of the Faustian myth among his brilliant generation of writers. Berryman was the right poet to voice the sense of loss and deep disillusionment: from within the very centre of the mainstream of American letters and education, he had believed intensely in the myth of the poetic imagination. His own personal experience with an irreversible loss in early middle age, his predisposition to grieve, and the inescapable prefiguring of his own death by suicide in his writing—all these were the elements which went into the Songs to Faulkner, Frost, Williams, Jarrell, Roethke, Schwartz and Plath. They make The Dream Songs the equal of the earlier metaphysical mode in American poetry and its complex verse manner; but they turn the reference of the poetry inwards towards a simple state in the poet, his personal feelings and actual experience. Berryman's Dream Songs are, among other things, the richest personal essays of our time.

III

To return finally to *Love & Fame* is to see how Berryman is searching for some new resolution to the role of the poet in modern

society. He accepts his own life as his most meaningful subject matter, but finds in these late poems a way of coming at the question of the self in a non-dramatic manner. This is to say that he is able to create and "place" the concerns of his life from a point outside the ego, and to tell the details of his experience as if in a narrative form. His manner, however, is not undramatic. Many readers will feel (and have felt) that Berryman the poet is indistinguishable from Berryman the man. Parts I, II and III of *Love & Fame* present his career from student days through post-graduate times in England into the traumatic experiences of middle-age breakdowns. Yet it is surely autobiography-as-history that Berryman is creating and not autobiography-as-drama as Lowell arguably has given in *Life Studies*. The quality of the verse and the transcendent stance of Part IV of *Love & Fame* are the crucial differences.

Berryman has spoken of the opening poem to his book as having "a certain administrative rhythm-set." This point picks up what the reader will notice of the tone; it is flat, detaching and comic to the point of being cruel towards the characters introduced into the poems. These qualities of judgment need emphasis since the image of Berryman as a character which surfaces in the verse is often felt as indulgent, stupid and objectionable. A true reading of *Love & Fame*, however, has to balance out these opposed aspects coming from the poet as creator and the poet as creature in his own verse. And, as it happens, this conflict of personality is incidental to the disclosure of a more general character in the American way of life—which it is fascinating to have so sharply documented.

Berryman's account of meeting with "the most passionate and versatile actress in Cambridge" while doing post-graduate study in England is characteristic of his comic love-hate relation with his own past, expressing itself here with the high, clear, but throw-away irony of a Saxon cartoon in *The New Yorker*:

> famous for Good Deeds in *Everyman*
> famous for Cordelia & the Duchess of Malfi
> overwhelming in *Heartbreak House*
> with a ballet career behind her in Italy
>
> reading Modern Languages now at Newnham
> & working up Katherine in *Love's Labours Lost*
> for a Garden production at Lord Horder's place
> down near Southampton's old estate in the Spring.
> . . . . . .
> . . . . . .
> I never expected to meet her again.
>
> But Cambridge is a small place, & a few days later
> she was almost out of Portugal Place wheeling her bike
> as I was wheeling mine in. *She greeted me.*
> With heartburn I asked her to tea. She smiled, & accepted.
>
> O! I had my gyp *prepare* that tea.
> But she wasn't hungry or thirsty, she wanted to talk.
> She had not met an American before,
> to *talk* with; much less an American *poet.*

> I told her honestly I wasn't much of one yet but probably
> would be.
>
> She preferred Racine to Shakespeare; I said I'd fix that
> & read her the King's cadenzas in *All's Well*
> about that jerk Bertram's father.
> . . . . . .
> . . . . . .
> She skipped dinner at Newnham.

It is a fine international scene, and yet peculiarly American in its humour. Access to high places, naive and professional equally in manner, not showing his hand poetically—these are aspects of the American scholar-poet and his tradition at a point where the rational and the passionate meet as comedy.

By the end of Part III of *Love & Fame* Berryman has stripped his ego bare of all the illusions of success and security in the objectified way in which they present themselves in a modern secular world such as America. He is in a non-objective state at the beginning of Part IV, and the realization occurs that his mode of imagining can only proceed as an act of faith. Hence the coincidence occurs in Berryman's final manner of "Eleven Addresses to the Lord" between theology and imagination.

> Under new management, Your Majesty:
> Thine. I have solo'd mine since childhood, since
> my father's blow-it-all when I was twelve
> blew out my most bright candle faith, and look at me.
>
> I served at Mass six dawns a week from five,
> adoring Father Boniface & you,
> memorizing the Latin he explained.
> Mostly we worked alone. One or two women.
>
> Then my poor father frantic. Confusions & afflictions
> followed my days. Wives left me.
> Bankrupt I closed my doors. You pierced the roof
> twice & again. Finally you opened my eyes.
>
> My double nature fused in that point of time
> three weeks ago day before yesterday.
> Now, brooding thro' a history of the early Church,
> I identify with everybody, even the heresiarchs.

It is both acclamation and confession; addressing itself beyond poetry, and springing from a person who is obviously more than a *persona.* It it is a poetry where an excess of attitude makes the elements of piety fall into place. The flat programmatic base tone seems just right for a venture into modern religious expression. It seems impossible to lie or be a fool in such a style.

Berryman denies nothing of himself in his final piety. Indeed, he anticipates his own end and the environment of America brilliantly in his last poem:

Germanicus leapt upon the wild lion in Smyrna,
wishing to pass quickly from a lawless life.
The crowd shook the stadium.
The proconsul marvelled.

"Eighty & six years have I been his servant,
and he has done me no harm.
How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?"
Polycarp, John's pupil, facing the fire.

Make too me acceptable at the end of time
in my degree, which then Thou wilt award.
Cancer, senility, mania,
I pray I may be ready with my witness.

The firm way a modern mind can see itself here inside a classical situation is the effect of the poet's long working with the scholar within himself; and the American poet in particular seems to have a special right in claiming the analogy for himself. Berryman steadies the terms of his imagination finely in this concluding poem. He finds in his will the power to hold the rational and the passionate together in relation; and in this he moves beyond his own Faustian myth into new possibilities of risk and reward in being human.

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The Photograph

The polo stopped so suddenly the spectators imagined
the level green oval had jerked like a carpet pulled
hard or a sneeze hurling men, horses and the red "out
of bounds" flags into a frieze where only the keen-
est fans could see the game's obvious development. But
those few seconds made sports' history collapse, for
as one of the captains had remarked some days before
"It's a pattern" and now his words took on a new, more
luminous meaning as this mass seizure into marble
left no one holding their breath for years after, while
those with a yen for the bric-a-brac of change can
see the cool, blurred process like an embrace in this
one photograph, already taking on the patina of auth-
enticity, snapped by a lucky photographer and bringing
a long overdue and welcome fame to reflex action.

John Forbes

HYDE PARK PRESS PTY. LTD.

Southern Review

Vol. VI, No. 3—September, 1973

Published from the English Department, University of Adelaide,
and the School of English Studies, Macquarie University