

J. M. Linebarger: On "Dream Song 29"

The Song is about Henry's response to the death of the father, the funeral itself (the "cough," "odour," and "chime"), and Henry's hallucinations about killing others. Berryman quoted the poem in 1965 to illustrate his technique, and then he commented about it: "Whether the diction of that is consistent with blackface talk, heel- spinning puns, coarse jokes, whether the end of it is funny or frightening, or both, I put up to the listener. Neither of the American poets who as reviewers have quoted it admiringly has committed himself so I won't."

from *John Berryman*. Copyright © 1974 by Twayne Publishers, Inc.

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[2] <http://www.modernamericanpoetry.org/poet/john-berryman>

[3] <http://www.modernamericanpoetry.org/creator/j-m-linebarger>

[4] <http://www.modernamericanpoetry.org/poem/dream-song-29>