

J. M. Linebarger: on "Dream Song 22"

Dream Song 22, "Of 1826," criticizes America for its anti-intellectualism, Dale Carnegie salesmanship, domineering women, and devotion to television. The last stanza mentions one important fact we have forgotten ("Collect" here means "prayer"): "Collect: . . . the dying man / . . . is gasping "Thomas Jefferson still lives" / in vain. . . ." Berryman said in 1967 that "no national memory but ours could forget the fact that John Adams and Thomas Jefferson both died on the same day?the fourth of July in 1826." Adams did make the remark "Thomas Jefferson still survives" as he lay on his death-bed.

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[1] <http://modernamericanpoetry.org/category/publication-status/excerpted-criticism>

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

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

[4] <http://modernamericanpoetry.org/poem/dream-song-22>