BERRYMAN, John

**Dream Song 384**

The marker slants, flowerless, day's almost done,

I stand above my father's grave with rage,

often, often before

I've made this awful pilgrimage to one

who cannot visit me, who tore his page

out: I come back for more,

I spit upon this dreadful bankers grave

who shot his heart out in a Florida dawn

O ho alas alas

When will indifference come, I moan & rave

I’d like to scrabble till I got right down

away down under the grass

and ax the casket open ha to see

just how he’s taking it, which he sought so hard

we’ll tear apart

the mouldering grave clothes ha & then Henry

will heft the ax once more, his final card,

and fell it on the start.

**Dream Song 4**

Filling her compact & delicious body

with chicken páprika, she glanced at me

twice.

Fainting with interest, I hungered back

and only the fact of her husband & four other people

kept me from springing on her

or falling at her little feet and crying

‘You are the hottest one for years of night

Henry’s dazed eyes

have enjoyed, Brilliance.’ I advanced upon

(despairing) my spumoni.–Sir Bones: is stuffed,

de world, wif feeding girls.

–Black hair, complexion Latin, jewelled eyes

downcast … The slob beside her feasts … What wonders is

she sitting on, over there?

The restaurant buzzes. She might as well be on Mars.

Where did it all go wrong? There ought to be a law against Henry.

–Mr. Bones: there is.
 **Dreamsong 14**Life, friends, is boring. We must not say so.

After all, the sky flashes, the great sea yearns,

we ourselves flash and yearn,

and moreover my mother told me as a boy

(repeatedly) ‘Ever to confess you’re bored

means you have no

Inner Resources.’ I conclude now I have no

inner resources, because I am heavy bored.

Peoples bore me,

literature bores me, especially great literature,

Henry bores me, with his plights & gripes

as bad as achilles,

who loves people and valiant art, which bores me.

And the tranquil hills, & gin, look like a drag

and somehow a dog

has taken itself & its tail considerably away

into mountains or sea or sky, leaving

behind: me, wag.

**Dream Song 29**

There sat down, once, a thing on Henry's heart

só heavy, if he had a hundred years

& more, & weeping, sleepless, in all them time

Henry could not make good.

Starts again always in Henry's ears

the little cough somewhere, an odour, a chime.

And there is another thing he has in mind

like a grave Sienese face a thousand years

would fail to blur the still profiled reproach of. Ghastly,

with open eyes, he attends, blind.

All the bells say: too late. This is not for tears;

thinking.

But never did Henry, as he thought he did,

end anyone and hacks her body up

and hide the pieces, where they may be found.

He knows: he went over everyone, & nobody's missing.

Often he reckons, in the dawn, them up.

Nobody is ever missing.

**The Ball Poem**

What is the boy now, who has lost his ball.

What, what is he to do? I saw it go

Merrily bouncing, down the street, and then

Merrily over—there it is in the water!

No use to say 'O there are other balls':

An ultimate shaking grief fixes the boy

As he stands rigid, trembling, staring down

All his young days into the harbour where

His ball went. I would not intrude on him,

A dime, another ball, is worthless. Now

He senses first responsibility

In a world of possessions. People will take balls,

Balls will be lost always, little boy,

And no one buys a ball back. Money is external.

He is learning, well behind his desperate eyes,

The epistemology of loss, how to stand up

Knowing what every man must one day know

And most know many days, how to stand up

And gradually light returns to the street,

A whistle blows, the ball is out of sight.

Soon part of me will explore the deep and dark

Floor of the harbour . . I am everywhere,

I suffer and move, my mind and my heart move

With all that move me, under the water

Or whistling, I am not a little boy.