

Mr. Kunitz, Mr. Lowell, Mrs. Craig

by Ann Bogle

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Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.

The Academy of American Poets.

Stanley Kunitz: "I've already said everything I have to say this evening, except three words, Mr. John Berryman."

John Berryman: "Thank you for that storm of applause. I'm going to ignore Mr. Lowell's remarks. He seems to have constituted himself this evening as a sort of cheering section. We don't want to have a mutual admiration society, let me put it that way. So, I'll have something to say about him later. Mr. Kunitz I'll deal with privately {in private}. The program is extremely simple. First, I'm going to tell you a story, and, not true. And then I'll read a section with a one stanza from an unfinished plan. Then I'll read you a stanza from a finished plan. Then I'll read you some sections from another unfinished plan. Then we'll wind up the night. Isn't that the most unappetizing program you ever heard {a}?"

"I've been listening constantly, with all four ears, to Mr. Kunitz and Mr. Lowell, and I didn't hear that they ever said anything about {point of} poetic diction. Now, why should they? *Weal, the reason they should is BECAUSE* Mrs. Craig, who is master{mising} mining this series asked me repeatedly by long-distance telephone to talk about poetic diction which is supposed to be our theme {thing} this evening. So, I've prepared some remarks about poetic diction, and you know what? I plan to give them. We start with the story.

[Here my transcription becomes inexact, due to my creeping fear and fatigue in relistening, so without quotation marks, yet closely related to John Berryman's speech.]

Besides, I'm not teaching this yet.

Which is supposed to be our theme this evening. I don't believe in themes {things}. I haven't given a reading in New York in about twelve years. Sort of makes you think.

Place is crawling with them, friends, family, enemies, mutuals. So I'll tell you a Halloween story. I don't like the word "legend," but where else to go. It's about a Big Banker, but a really big banker, a complete and absolute Jerk. He prides himself on his good doing.

The less said, better. So it sort of makes you think. Twohree years ago, in a Middle Western city called Minneapolis, big bank, but a really big banker. He prides himself on his good doing. ... Big Red Ones. Polished them apples. Sit down by his fire and wait to do good. And he answers the door. And the child looks up to him, and he says, "Trick or treat?" And the banker. And he looks up to the banker, and he said, "You big shit. You've broken my apple, my cookie, my toy." I ruined the story. Although I think we can easily work it out because we are not here in the Yale graduate school, and diction is the theme of the story. Diction is a choice in language. It ought to be decorous, meaning appropriate to the subject. Meaning rejection of other kinds of language. But some subjects, how can you be appropriate to? The top is appropriate, in my opinion. Providence. ... Diction to a situation. Or do you take into account of the ridiculous and grotesque, horrible, dementious aspects of the situation? Fifteen years ago, I had nothing better to do, I was working on a poem. ... The main speaker, in fact the only speaker, is a sage called Mahzu. The Chinese don't believe in Heaven, I understand that. They have group therapy. This stanza goes, the poem is unfinished.

... We once saw seven Dietrich films in one day.

