

Ars Poetica #92: Marcus Garvey on Elocution

*Elocution means to speak out.
That is to say, if you have a tale to tell,
tell it and tell it well.*

This I was taught.

*To speak properly you must have sound and good teeth.
You must have clear nostrils.
Your lungs must be sound.
Never try to make a speech on a hungry stomach.*

*Don't chew your words but talk them out plainly.
Always see that your clothing is properly arranged before you get on a platform.
You should not make any mistakes in pronouncing your words
because that invites amusement for certain people.*

To realize I was trained for this,
expected to speak out, to speak well.
To realize, my family believed
I would have words for others.

*An untidy leader is always a failure.
A leader's hair should always be well kept.
His teeth must also be in perfect order.
Your shoes and other garments must also be clean.
If you look ragged, people will not trust you.*

My father's shoe-shine box:
black Kiwi, cordovan Kiwi,
the cloths, the lambswool brush.

My grandmother's dressing table:
potions for disciplining
anything scraggle or stray

*For goodness sake, always speak out,
said Marcus Garvey,
said my parents,
said my grandparents,
and meant it.*