

Ars Poetica of Charlie Murphy

A poem should taste like the first time you had McDonalds, should only walk upright on two feet at holiday parties and company functions, should live on a diet of Dr. Funkenstein and it should shit Parliament albums.

A poem should embrace the darkness.

Be an ethos, a motto, a creed and a crest, like Polo or Izod, Tommy Hilfiger. Fuck that, a poem should be Puma, be ink and black and dark shadow thought, all the things Ralph warned us about in those midnight train to Georgia ramblings and prophecies.

A poem should drink peach Schnapps till its vomit curdles, throat gagging sounds like Planet Rock, Soul Sonic Force.

It should run on in its sentence to piss off anyone who knows what *ars* means keep *-ing* and *-ly* dangling from back pocket right next to a slingshot.

A poem should feel like razor slivers in cotton candy on tongue, should feel like all things pink and tricky to compose or contain, feel slick under thumb. A poem should be a fingerprint taken against your will.

The poem should have a voice.

Homer kept several slaves
(some for record keeping)
But the blackest one, named Afrique
was his lover. At night he would trace the intricate
pattern of tattoos on the buck's back, ask what the
fleshy braille said. Afrique would tell him stories
of how his people used the barbs and ink of a puffer fish
to make the skin bubble up just so.
However, since neither spoke the others language
and Afrique's tongue had been plucked out years ago,
Homer interpreted his back of throat murmurs to his own delights.

A poem should sound like Brer Rabbit kicking in your door with a no-knock warrant, Baltimore police cracking crab legs for practice, like *Do The Right Thing* being seen for the thousandth time, like Radio Raheem with a fresh set of d cells, like d motherfucker d!

Sound like the Oscar goes to the kid who played in Fruitvale and Black Panther,
like call him dead boy in Oakland or Killmonger of Wakanda.
A poem should have a creed, a steelo, a grip, a gat, a sawed off,
a poem should be in your lap at all times,
filed down to a pistol grip pump,
should taste like Houston in your mouth
with no water to wash it down,
should gulp like a gulf more Mississippi than Mexico.

A poem should be a vacation from your nightmares
to someone else's nightmares.
Should sound like big Luther slapping little Luther.
A poem should only wear prison tats.
A poem can only have nicknames it has earned.
Cannot be pomp but must always be circumstance.
A poem should look like a nooses smile
or taste like the last slice of bean pie Malcolm left
in the fridge.

Sound like *Nowhere To Run To Baby Nowhere To Hide*.
A poem should know who wrote that song.