

USING SOME WORDS THAT SHOWED UP RECENTLY

1. Homage to Stravinsky

Stravinsky charges into the crowd, cape flying,
stepping on the black notes only. In dark shoes
he has come to see the corpse of modern music.
All the usual scales are shot. The sandy look is gone
from the bowls of his cheeks—that so gave them
their resonance, and his lips are as cracked as
a drumhead in the rear of the band closet.
If the crow's-feet of his smile still lead us into
a vision, they are now the claws of an old order.
Revolution must follow revolution. In the bowl
of the mouthpiece of a trumpet, a cracked lip
claws the high registers, until black notes drop
like clothespins from a straight shot of old line.

2. To Be Placed in a Clay Bowl in Managua

Under low clouds, an eagle's fists
free the branch beneath, open claws
for the usual. It's time for all small things to
pray—with cracked lips, and the forest, oh,
on both sides. The eagle—oh, coolly!—charts a
flight from empty to full. It stretches a shadow
that brings night into the open. It wraps
its dinner in its flag. It sees the camouflaged
when it moves, and then *it* moves. The eagle was
a cold weather hunter, but there are unexplained
spottings: bones, martyrs—that sort of thing.
And one was shot from the sky, one day when
the background was right for seeing what it was.

3. Our Clawfooted Bathtub

Over the lip went Archimedes, displacing
all the water he was not. His “Eureka!”
echoes in history, restating
dry volumes, from Athens to Topeka.

Some days, you feel a part of something
so wholly, all else is a tiny crack
in a porcelain bowl. Then, just by bathing,
you shape a law, so Greek it’s a fact.

4. Homage to Edward Weston

His heart shot through by the sun, underneath
the black bowl of his photographer’s
hood, he would purse and unpurse
the lips of a shutter. He lived in a closet,
where he sealed the cracks around the door
and measured time by light
and now by before.

His nudes that could be fruit,
the torsos, arches, posters, the bidet!
“How young I was,” he said. “That
covers everything.” Later, he knew that
photography had been young too.
His earliest picture was of snow. Said Master
Stieglitz, “You feel . . . , you have the beginning.

Will you go on? —I do not know.”

5. The Steinheim: Students Saying Goodnight

A castle that wasn't a castle but looked like it
had those towers that heavy stone shot toward
the sky, and some churchly pope's-hat windows
(some cracked by happy rocks) and forward-
looking battlements, but its army was outside
in the collegiate cold, cracking wise and clawing
the late night for last words and friendly mouths.
The world for them was a bowl of good luck.

Then the war, the war that didn't look like it
but had the shots, the cracked maps, the bowls
of warm rice where the enemy dematerialized.
And few could tell a claw from an open hand
in the streets of Saigon, where business curved,
with friendly lips cracking wise, in and around
the trouble. After, our castles lay in ruins,
the castles that had been castles but didn't look it.