

Autographs

This is blood: close with your lover and bite down
Bear in mind: this is a duet
I'll drive: shift your excellent body under mine
Ideal environment: lush, well-lubricated
Neighborhood of origin: sells cigarettes, schnapps, lotto tickets
Weather: late Ozark spring
Soft entry: it can be done
Strangest device: cock rings
Preferred intervention: human hand
Source of common terror: retina
Wish: to never know unhappiness again
State flower: beaded iris

Site of their desire: against a long high wall under vapor light
Most likely to succeed: the perpetual starting over
Inside his mouth: night after night after night
Directive: by any means necessary
Song: "Anarchy in the U.K."
Sign: hibiscus falls off the ledge
Nightmare: actual horse seated on your ribs
Sonic relations: silent, breathy, ululant

Recurrent fantasy: trickling between his legs
Cutest ass: bend, cleave
Religion: against my fire
Kismet: I feel very fortunate
Abstraction: leaves out too much
Biggest flirt: some people have roman noses, some have roman hands
Secondary concern: depilation

Eau de toilette: white shoulders
Rambone: I need it I need it now
Back of her throat: slit light
Second wish: compassion
Depth: valley's proper
Other sites: corridor, phone booth, shower, elevator, locker,

filling station, boat dock, drive-in, cafeteria line

Most unlikely position: autumn dog

Regrets: all the dumb things I've done

Saving grace: clear out of own accord

Goal: revanchism

Plans for the future: to be a great success socially and in some
artistic calling

Third wish: that his fingers remain agile

Future: went kind of nuts when still a relatively young man

Last date: when he stopped touching her, jan 4

Best dancer: hands down

Mantra: no one has been hurt, no one has been killed

P.S.: have a wonderful summer and a wonderful life

Flame

the breath	the trees	the bridge
the road	the rainthe sheen	
the breath	the line the skin	
the vineyard	the fences	the leg
the water	the breath	the shift
the hairthe wheels	the shoulder	
the breath	the lane	the streak
the lining	the hour	the reasons
the name	the distance	the breath
the scent	the dogs	the blear
the lungs	the breath	the glove
the signal	the turn	the need
the steps	the lights	the door
the mouth	the tongue	the eyes
the burn	the burned	the burning

C. D. Wright

Statement: Composition in Black and White

It is fair to say that I am interested in the formally anomalous poem, not the representatively formal poem—that is, when it comes to discrete poems. When it comes to extended poems or booklength poems, I am interested in a structure that is supportable to the whole, as well as structures within the larger one, that will animate the whole. Since individual poems are the more practical for the purpose of this discussion, I'll provide two poems which pleased me to compose.

Both of these came from a collection titled *Tremble*, a work printed in its entirety in *Steal Away: Selected and New Poems* (2002 Copper Canyon Press).

The first is “Autographs.” Clearly the source is a yearbook. It plays off of the anachronistic feature of high school yearbooks which were basically popularity contests: forecasters since a mighty number of us could barely distinguish our head from our tail in high school. The poem subverts the feature into an erotic relationship gone sour—reviewing single word or phrase set off by a colon introduces the commentary, i.e., “Plans for the future: to be a great success socially and in some artistic calling.” This I got from a fortune cookie. Or, “State flower: bearded iris,” I used because it was the flower of my native state, and because the name alone sounded to me sexually tinged. Or, “Biggest flirt: some people have yearbooks—and especially of the banalities of the comments written in them by classmates—promoted the poem and offered opportunities to get down and wicked with my imagination. It ended with a *P.S.* that could be read naively or caustically, because I wanted it to be both buoyant and bitter.

The other is “Flame.” It runs off the human inclination toward narrative. I imagined a narrative scene, and reduced it to its nouns, and arranged them in columns intended to maximize—by their sequencing, the repetition of *breath*, and by the reckless movement of a vehicle—a build-up of intensity. I aimed to leave it at a pitch of passionate breathlessness. That is, I wanted it to be dramatic, but not conclusive.

I thought both of these poems worked. Neither needed repeating. Taking a template from another source, and reducing a narrative to an evocative part of speech. It is not difficult. Most formal procedures are not difficult—unless like Georges Perec you want to write a several-hundred page novel in French without using the letter *e*. I have no such aspiration, though I can certainly admire the achievement. “Autographs” and “Flame” are what they are, and second usage would degrade the first. However, the long poem, does take a larger reservoir of devices. And that’s another discussion. Content is neither separate from nor utterly soluble in form. Form is where the art enters in.