

The Rose is Obsolete

William Carlos Williams
(1923)

The rose is obsolete — outdated/no use
but each petal ends in
an edge, the double facet
cementing the grooved
columns of air — The edge
cuts without cutting

harsh

meets — nothing — renews
itself in metal or porcelain —
whither? It ends —

But if it ends
the start is begun

so that to engage roses
becomes a geometry —
Sharper, neater, more cutting

figured in majolica —
the broken plate

glazed with a rose
Somewhere the sense

makes copper roses
steel roses —

The rose carried weight of love
but love is at an end — of roses

It is at the edge of the
petal that love waits

Crisp, worked to defeat
laboredness — fragile

plucked, moist, half-raised
cold, precise, touching

What

The place between the petal's
edge and the

From the petal's edge a line starts
that being of steel.

infinitely fine, infinitely

rigid penetrates
the Milky Way —

without contact — lifting
from it — neither hanging
nor pushing —

The fragility of the flower allit.
unbruised — perfect

penetrates space

emptiness

center of nothingness

Italian earthenware covered w/ tin glaze

paradox

paradox

harsh

* wants a new rose; non-symbolic; infinite, endless rose

* failure to escape crude symbolism; iconic symbol

* obsessive usage thr. holidays, funerals, wedding
rose has been exploited by man for centuries

* descript. of flower
conflict of lang. used; abrasive,
heavy words; multi-layered
harsh + soft = diffic. read

* constant referenc. to materials differ.
qualities than rose "metal"/copper/broken
plate/steel; "serve to indicate flower is seen
thr. a set of eyes hardened by the
capacity of /for love

* pt. minutiae — small, precise/trivial detail
of something

> speaker makes most
important aspect of a rose
its most minor aspect

* ekphrasis — use of detailed description
of a work of visual art as a lit. device

* ekphrastic poetry = vivid descript. of
a scene (or art) in which poet expands
its meaning; finding poetic meaning in
the artistic aspect of a minor detail

* focus shifts away from the
abstract rose toward the edge of
each rose petal; shift effects not an
escape from or annihilation of symbolism;
but a mere relocation of it, reforging a
space in which symbol. can be
effective

* bring new life to old concepts

* Modernist = approach to art; to reinvent
the world; reexamine the world — the rose
can represent art