

On "The Red Wheelbarrow" by William Carlos Williams

so much depends / upon / a red wheel / barrow /
glazed with rain / water / beside the white /
chickens.

the line termini cut the words "wheelbarrow" and "rainwater" into their constituents, without the use of hyphenation to warn that the first noun is to be part of a compound... things seem to lose their compounded properties.

In the last stanza, another loop is closed when the sounds "ch" and "enz" in the last word of the poem echo the sounds in the initial line, "so much depends."

"he has cunningly not said *what* depends"

the contour of a forgotten Latin root, "depends upon" ignores the etymology of "depend" (*de + pendere* = to hang from)

"Wheelbarrow" and "rainwater," dissociated into their molecules, seem nearly kennings: not adjective plus noun but yoked nouns, as though new-linked.

the structural pattern of dividing the poem into four equal compositional units, with only one verb. The position of the verb is occupied, in the succeeding stanzas, by three adjectival functions, each literally depending, for its complete grammatical and semantic functioning, on the single words that complete the stanza. The effect is to have the completion of meaning constantly delayed, and to make the delay a means of slowing us down or defamiliarizing the process of conferring meanings

Williams can sustain what amounts to a religious appropriation of Cezanne's aesthetics: "A life that is here and now is timeless. That is the universal I am seeking: to embody that in a work of art, a new world that is always real"

the "red wheelbarrow"? From an imaginary translation from the Spanish. In Spanish, to know things by heart or to do something by rote can be described by the phrase *de carretilla: hacer de carretilla* or *saber de carretilla*. The image evokes carrying around the knowledge using a small cart. Colloquially, one can refer to someone's habitually prattling on about some- thing as bringing back one's *carretilla*. And *carretilla* also literally denotes "wheelbarrow."

Syllable to syllable the ear rolls (wheels) iamb upon trochee, the eye composes (glazes) red with white, as the mind centers (depends) on a barrow beside the chickens. It's elemental—a figure / ground design scanned in twenty-two slim syllables.