III THE SYMBOLIST POEM
Chapter 8: Organic Form

Eloquence is heard, poetry is overheard. — J.S. Mill.

There foamed rebellious logic, gagged and bound,
There, stripped, fair Rhetoric languished on the ground.
— Pope: The Dunciad.

Art is ... a revelation, not a criticism. — W.B. Yeats.

Certain aspects of poetry assume a new value and significance in Symbolist poetry. The inter-related problems of Organic Form, Tension and Meaning have been given particular attention by many modern critics, who have tried to apply their findings to all poetry. This is not surprising as the broad aspects of symbolist poetry would have a universal validity; but the symbolist would have a special attitude toward these, and would use them for special purposes. The experiments and achievements of the French Symbolist poets in poetic theory and practice have been helpful in the development of this special attitude. Modern English Symbolists like Yeats and Eliot have followed and strengthened many of the attitudes and principles that the French poets found useful. Because of this, a discussion of these aspects of symbolism may prove useful at this stage in preparing us for a more meaningful approach to the poetry of the three great modern symbolists, Yeats, Eliot and Dylan Thomas.

The Symbolists are all agreed upon the view that a poem has a life of its own. In a symbolic poem, the form and content are inseparable: form would imply content. The symbol is an organic whole, the structure reflecting the life of the entity. The symbol does not tell us about a reality, but it presents that reality imagistically in its wholeness and roundness. The
poem, a symbol of reality — often, an image made of images — is different from discourse. Discourse conveys or finds out information: the symbols of poetry reveal reality with a certain sense of immediacy. The Symbolists hold that a poem should reveal reality directly. It is not like a mirror reflecting life, or like a lamp helping us to seek the realities of life; it is not a statement about life but, like a plant, an expression of life. A poem is therefore, not to be conceived of as a thing that can be constructed part by part like a machine: it is something which grows by itself.

The French Symbolists, who were rebels against mechanism, insisted on the non-constructive nature of a poem that symbolizes reality. The Symbolist poem is truly creative, and has something of the vitality that we associate with living organisms. The idea of a poem having, as it were, a life of its own, implies, among other things, that the poem is non-constructive in form, autonomous, and having a certain principle of organization of its own. The structure of the symbolic poem is like that of a plant, an organic unit. The different parts are not put together or added to make a whole, as they are in a machine or a logical argument. The parts of a poem, like the parts of a plant are all related to one another and to the whole, in a complex and peculiarly intimate manner: every part affects the whole, and the whole affects every part. No part can be detached, without damage, from the whole: a leaf detached from the plant dies. Like the plant, the poem has an independent existence of its own: it is not entirely a planned subjective act on the part of the poet. The poem must be allowed to develop by itself, without much interference from the poet. The poet, like a good gardener, should watch and help. Eliot had
something like this in mind when he wrote in an early essay:

No artist produces great art by a deliberate attempt to express his personality. He expresses his personality indirectly through concentrating upon a task which is a task in the same sense as the making of an efficient engine or the turning of a jug or a table-leg. The analogy here suggests a mechanical act, but the poem is not something that can be constructed part by part. It requires something more than efficient planning. The poet may have certain ideas in his mind, he may have assembled materials for his poem, and he may be able to make intelligent use of the technical devices at his disposal. But all these are only aids, and a deliberate attempt to build up a poem with these materials may result in nothing better than the 'wit-writing' that Dryden admired. An admirable account of such a method of composing poetry is given by Dryden, when he writes:

The composition of all poems is, or ought to be, of wit; and wit in the Poet, or wit-writing ... is no other than the faculty of imagination in the writer which, like a nimble Spaniel beats over and ranges through the field of Memory, till it springs the quarry it hunted after; or, without metaphor, which searches over all the Memory for the Species or Ideas of those things which it designs to represent. ...

The first happiness of the Poet's Imagination is properly Invention, or finding of the thought; the second is fancy, or the variation, deriving or moulding of that thought as the Judgement represents it proper to the subject; the third is Elocution, or the Art of clothing and adorning that thought so found and varied in apt, significant and sounding words.

This description of what Dryden conceived as the art of composing a poem makes it clear that the poetic process proceeds systematically in three stages: and in all these the poet plays an important personal part. This method may result in verses like the following from the conclusion of Pope's 'Dunciad':

Lol thy dread empire, Chaos! is restor'd;  
Light dies before thy uncreating word;  
Thy hand, great Anarch! lets the curtain fall,  
And universal darkness buries all.

This is a neat, rhetorical statement, with a certain brilliance of thought and

2 John Dryden: Introductory Letter to 'Annus Mirabilis'.
expression; but when we examine the lines further we find that there is not
that power which we expect in great poetry. We do not feel that pulsating
touch of life, that sense of vitality that is present in a passage like:

Light thickens, and the crow
Makes wing to the rooky wood:
Good things of day begin to droop and drowse,
While night's black agents to their preys do rouse.

The sense of vitality comes, according to the Symbolists, from the organic
principle which shapes the poem, which determines for the poet what he should
do. The principle is not something that can be defined or anticipated even
by the poet. The principle holds the poem together and gives it a sense of
individual existence. The nature of this organizing principle or shaping cause
is a problem which has great importance in modern times.

At one extreme are those critics or writers who deny a principle for poetry
which is distinct from that which holds good for prose or for all forms of
expression. Such, for instance, is the opinion of Yvor Winters: he holds
that poetry is as much subject to rational control as prose. For him,

A poem is first of all a statement in words.
But it differs from all such statements of a purely philosophical or theoreti-
cal nature, in that it has by intention a controlled content of feeling. In
this respect, it does not differ from many works written in prose, however.
A poem differs from a work written in prose by virtue of its being composed
in verse. The rhythm of verse permits the expression of more powerful feeling
than is possible in prose when such feeling is needed, and it permits at all
times the expression of finer shades of feeling.
A poem, then, is a statement in words in which special pains are taken with
the expression of feeling.

For Winters, a poem is primarily 'a statement in words' comparable to 'other
kinds of writing'; and, a 'statement' is expression controlled by Reason. This
would also imply that a poem can be analysed into separable parts, as with a
logical argument. This analysis should also be able to give us the complete
'meaning' of the poem: the rational approach to poetry would then not only be

justifiable but adequate. Winters does not accept the Symbolist claim of the poem giving us an intuited reality. He is clear about the purpose of poetry:

A poem is a statement of an understood experience, which it morally evaluates; poetry has in consequence the same kind of meaning as cruder statements of the same sort.

Winters' view of poetry as a form of discourse is not something entirely without parallel. Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren in one of their early books, 'Understanding Poetry', regarded poetry as 'a form of speech, or discourse, written or spoken': it is 'like all discourse ... a communication — the saying of something by one person to another person', but it differs from other types of discourse in being a communication not of objective facts, but of 'attitudes, feelings and interpretations'. There is also the view of Frederic A. Pottle of poetry as 'a kind of speech': it is 'language that expresses the qualities of experience, as distinguished from language that indicates its uses'. Also, in poetry 'the concentration of the expressive element in speech becomes so great that we distinctly feel it to predominate over that other element which we have called the practical or the scientific'.

All these views, however, seem to be variants of Richards' conception of poetry as a sort of pseudo-statement, not directly 'referential' as scientific statements are, but primarily 'emotive', or 'evocative' of feelings and attitudes.

A bold deviation from this position was first made by William Empson, who found that the essence of poetic speech is not clarity but 'ambiguity', the capacity of poetry to present multiple meanings. F.W. Bateson, in his revealing book on English poetry, makes a clearer distinction between poetry and other forms of discourse: the statements of poetry, according to him, aim at 'synthetic unity'.

4 Yvor Winters: 'The Function of Criticism'.
which is achieved by fusing together or reconciling disparate or conflicting elements of meaning, while the statements of prose are 'analytic', closely tied to, and dependent on grammar and logic. A later distinction comes from Cleanth Brooks, who found the distinction of poetic discourse to consist in its use of words whose meanings are not fixed by prior definition (as in science and in prose) but which are determined by the 'contexts' in which they stand.

The distinction between 'prose' and 'poetry' however, seems to be very marked particularly in modern literature. A modern poem is often to be distinguished by its disregard of logical unity or order, the unity in the poem is of some other kind. One view is that the poem has a deep, inner unity; there is an archetypal power in the greatest poems. C.G. Jung initiated this approach to poetry; he felt this could reveal to us the secret of effective art. He wrote,

"The creative process, in so far as we are able to follow it at all consists in an unconscious animation of the archetype, and in a development and shaping of this image till the work is completed."

There was an element more primitive and powerful than reason which could account for the unity and appeal of poetry. One line of thinking which developed from this approach was that the greatest poetry is that which has its roots in myth or other symbolizations which embody the universal meanings of mankind. There is however a tendency to rationalize about these universal meanings and concepts; then these myths, stories or symbols seem to lose their fascination and power:

Later on, all these motifs fall into the hands of the writers of "romances", litterateurs and in the end historians, and are no longer understood. That these formulae have been employed in the same way all over the world in the telling of variants and fragments of the one Urmythos of humanity implies the presence, in certain kinds of literature, of imaginative (iconographic) values far exceeding those of the belle-lettrist's fantasies or the kinds of literature that are based on "observation".

Such discoveries about the universality and power of myths and other symbolizations has encouraged a new approach to the great poetic masterpieces of the world. 'Macbeth' for example is apparently the story of a murder and the murderer; but its true meaning is sought in archetypal depths. 'Macbeth' represents Shakespeare's descent into Hell and is his version of the 'Inferno'; it also symbolizes the spring-myth, the tyranny of Macbeth between the two beneficent reigns of Duncan and Malcolm being but 'winter come back after the promise of spring only to be overcome in turn by spring itself.' Depth-psychology and anthropology have greatly increased our understanding of myth and symbolization, and this understanding can be made use of in dealing with difficult literary problems. The rejection of Falstaff by Henry V is apparently an outcome of power and position, but it takes on a new significance when it is regarded as one of 'the simpler roles of archetypal drama'. A Shakespearean critic can thus give a new interpretation of the play:

Anthropologists ... are always telling us of countries gone waste and barren under the rule of an old, impotent and guilty king, who must be ritually slain and supplanted by his son or another before the spring rains can come bringing purification and regeneration to the land. Is Henry IV in precisely the situation of this king? Perhaps, then, we glimpse here a further reason why the rejection of Falstaff is inevitable — not merely traditionally and morally inevitable, but symbolically inevitable as well. I suggest that Hal, by a displacement common enough in the evolution of ritual kills Falstaff instead of killing the king, his father. In a sense, Falstaff is his father; certainly is a 'father-substitute' in the psychologist's word. And Falstaff, in standing for the old king, symbolizes all the accumulate sin of the reign, all the consequent sterility of the land. But the young king draws his knife at the altar — and the heart of that gray iniquity, that father-ruffian, is as fracted and corroborate as Pistol avers. Falstaff's rejection and death are very sad, but Sir James Frazer would have classed them with the Periodic Expulsion of Evils in a Material Vehicle.

This equating of the realities embodied in poems or plays with archetypal truths becomes sometimes strained (as in the above example). Though perhaps every great

The Romantic poets had a different approach to the problem of poetic structure. The poem was, according to them, an imaginative unity, whose structure was determined by the genius and the imagination of the poet. The poet was distinguished by his powers of imagination. The belief in imagination is one of the fundamental principles of all Romantic poets. Blake, who made a careful distinction between the faculties of Reason and Imagination, considered poetry as a vision of living realities rendered by the poet's imagination or vision. Such realities, according to him, cannot be approached through Reason, which is only 'An Abstract objecting power, that negatives everything'. It can only help us to understand the show or appearance of things, and not the eternal verities. Imagination or the 'Divine Vision' is the power which the poet uses in understanding these verities:

This Vision or Imagination is a Representation of what Eternally Exists, Really and Unchangeably, ... and constitutes ... in that Eternal World of the Permanent Realities of Everything which we see reflected in the Vegetable Glass of Nature.  

The first systematic exposition of the function of Imagination in poetry comes, however, from Coleridge. In various writings of his, he has taken care to distinguish between two faculties of the mind: Fancy and Imagination. He also observed stages in the operation of Imagination. In a well-known passage, he points out:

The IMAGINATION, ... I consider either as primary or secondary. The primary IMAGINATION, I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary Imagination I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in

kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate; or where this process is rendered impossible yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially vital, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead ...

Fancy, on the contrary, has no other counters to play with, but fixities and definites. The Fancy is indeed no other than a mode of Memory emancipated from the order of time and space ...

The Imagination, as Coleridge conceives of it, is a vital power. Elsewhere, Coleridge speaks of Imagination in organic terms: it 'generates and produces a form of its own' and its rules are 'the very powers of growth and production'. A poem, the product of imagination, is 'a self-evolved system constituted by a living interdependence of parts, whose identity cannot survive their removal from the whole'. Coleridge, however, avoids the greatest criticism against the organic theory, namely that it supports total artistic automatism:

The spirit of poetry, like all other living powers, must of necessity circumscribe itself by rules, were it only to unite power with beauty. It must embody in order to reveal itself; but a living body is of necessity an organized one ...

No work of true genius dare want its appropriate form; neither indeed is there any danger of this. As it must not, so neither can it, be lawless! For it is even this that constitutes it genius — the power of acting creatively under laws of its own origination ... Nature, the prime genial artist, inexhaustible in diverse powers, is equally inexhaustible in forms...

The artist's genius however free from prior precept is never free from law. The work of imagination 'must start spontaneously into independent life and by its own energy evolve its final form, in the same way that a tree grows'.

The organic nature of poetry once more received attention in the twentieth century in the hands of the Imagists. They held that the poem, a whole composed of images and metaphors, has a unity which is not of the logical order. Prose is logical and analytic; it makes 'diagrams, and diagrams are essentially things, whose parts are separate, one from another. The intellect always analyzes — where there is synthesis it is baffled!' In poetry there is

12 S.T. Coleridge: 'Biographia Literaria'.
synthesis, which the poet intuites through images; poetry does not deal in abstractions but in concrete realities which it represents in the form of clear images:

Visual meanings can only be transferred by the new bowl of metaphor: prose is an old pot that lets them leak out. Images in verse are not mere decoration, but the very essence of an intuitive language. This comes very close to the Symbolist view of the poem as the embodiment of an intuited reality. The Symbolists, like the Romantics, accept the poem as an organic unit: but for them, it is not an organic structure expressing an emotion or idea, but a whole directly conveying a reality. For them, form and content are therefore one. The poem shapes and develops in the way an organism takes its own shapes and shows development, the form cannot be separated from the life of the organism:

The form of a work of art is inherent in the emotional situation of the artist; it proceeds from his apprehension of that situation (a situation that may involve either external objective phenomena or internal states of mind) and is the creation of a formal equivalence (i.e., a symbol) for that situation. It resists or rejects all attempts to fit the situation to a ready-made formula of expression, believing that to impose such a generalized shape on a unique emotion or intuition results in insincerity of feeling and artificiality of form.

The poem holds together as an intelligibly effective whole, in which a certain form has been realized in a certain matter which never before had this form; our aim is to study how this form has been achieved. We cannot know this directly: for example, we could not take advantage of the fact that T.S. Eliot is still living by writing to him and asking him what the shaping principle of 'The Waste Land' is. We are interested in inferring from the whole and the details of the poem, the internal, artistic causes which have shaped and brought into being the completed product or poem. We try to find out in what way a sense of unity and vitality has been created in the poem: logical analysis would be of little help in this. The question of shaping principle in a poem is not so

much a matter of deductive theory as of empirical fact. Until we have some idea of what actually was, for its poet, the primary intuition of the shape or form of the poem, we cannot proceed to inquire into its consequences in the poet's invention and rendering of details. But we can get at the 'shaping principle' only externally, through the words of the poem. 'We have to approach a poem', as Cleanth Brooks tells us, 'from outside, because every poem is rooted in language'. We have therefore to approach the poem as a linguistic whole.

For example, in a play like 'Macbeth', we find that the poetry has a certain impact on our mind, and this evokes a certain instantaneous and total response to the play. The play can convey to us, by means of words, a certain experience, living and intense, a certain sense of reality. The poem creates its own sense of values. The key-note is struck in the opening scene, which gives us a sense of the struggle of good and evil, of reversal of values, suggestions of disorder and darkness: this whole impression is strengthened by the supernatural figures of the witches proclaiming on the desolate heath, 'Fair is foul, and foul is fair'. Before the first act comes to an end we are made aware of the positive values which Macbeth loses. Banquo's reference to the temple-haunting martlet symbolizes the peace and harmony of good as well as of Macbeth's house before he commits the evil of murder. It ironically suggests the disturbed porter of Macbeth's sleepless house in a later scene. The nature of Macbeth's evil and its effects are all suggested by images which bring out its characteristics: perversion of will, refusal to be guided by reason, a sense of disorder and a pursuit of unreality and false values. The contrast between good (which is natural) and evil (which is unnatural) is suggested powerfully through the recurrent image of the babe. Duncan is meek like a baby, good as a cherubin. Violent use of the same image is made in Lady Macbeth's assertion that she would murder the babe at her breast if she had sworn to do it. The association of
good with truth, and evil with illusion (untruth) is brought out not only by
the conflicting factions (Malcolm versus Macbeth), but also in such ironic
touches as Macbeth's desperate discovery that he is merely receiving 'mouth-honour' from
his followers (V.iii.27) : this reminds us of his wife's advice to 'look like
the innocent flower, but be the serpent under it' (I.v.64-65), and the
hypocritical welcome given to Duncan. This falsity is also to be seen in the
evasive and equivocal assurances given by the witches. The light of truth dawns
once more, when Macbeth's dark rule comes to an end, in Malcolm's command to his
soldiers in Act V:

your leavy screens throw down,
And show like those you are.

But in the play, we have also a rounded sense of reality created by the peculiar
and mixed feelings created in us. For example, we would have natural sympathy
for Duncan and Malcolm because they are good and right; this would mean antipathy
for Macbeth. But actually a subtle kind of sympathy for Macbeth is also
present. Macbeth is sensitive enough to know where he is going wrong : he
could have been better, and so we feel drawn towards him.

The organic structure of 'Macbeth' becomes a vivid reality to us when we try
to examine a part of the play separately. We find that the part cannot be
abstracted from the whole : it has vital connections with other parts and with
the whole. Every scene of the play has in it, as Coleridge observed, 'a
universe of past and possible experiences'. No scene can be
detached, as a logical unit can be, without mutilating the structure of which
it forms a part. A scene like that of Duncan's visit to Macbeth's castle
would illustrate this. The scene begins with Duncan's appreciation of the
natural beauty which surrounds Macbeth's castle:

This castle hath a pleasant seat; the air
Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself
Unto our gentle senses.
This is followed by Banquo's contemplation of the birds that 'build and breed':

This guest of summer,
The temple-haunting martlet, does approve
By his loved mansionary that the heaven's breath
Smells wooingly here: no jutty, frieze,
Buttress, nor coign of vantage, but this bird
Hath made his pendent bed and procreant cradle...

The whole peaceful scene becomes symbolic of all that is lovely and good in life, the life of peace that Duncan's reign represented. It is this peace of nature that Macbeth violates. His evil is represented by images which recall these in contrast:

Come, thick night,
And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes...

That evil is also symbolized by the welcome Lady Macbeth thinks of, when she hears Duncan is to come:

The raven himself is hoarse
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
Under my battlements.

And the images of good and evil are brought together in lines like these:

And pity, like a naked new-born babe,
Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubin horsed
Upon the sightless couriers of the air,
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,
And tears shall drown the wind.

The whole play presents evil in its many aspects: its power of attraction, its equivocal nature, and its destructive power. The sense of what is evil is heightened by the contrast with the positive values of good. 'Macbeth' does not define or say what is evil, but acquaints us with evil: it is the difference between having a picture of a man and knowing him as a flesh-and-blood reality. 'Macbeth' thus becomes a symbol of evil: it poetically embodies a reality.

This does not mean that a poem like this is close to actual, everyday life: it does not reflect the actual day-to-day world, but creates an autonomous world of reality. Viewed by everyday standards, a play like 'Macbeth' is
hard to believe. In real life, the career of a murderer does not have the slick sequence and speed of actions that we find in 'Macbeth'. The play does not tell us many things about Macbeth which we would know in real life under similar circumstances. People also do not speak like any of the characters in the play, not even in the inspired manner of the porter in the play. That is to say, the play does not aim at being a facsimile of life. There is a certain luminosity in the play, a heightened awareness of action and speech: we feel a brighter version of life is presented to us. We have only selected glimpses of the characters, but what we do know seems to be the best we can know about them, and all that we need know. The arrangement of events in the play, and the poetical reverberations all make us feel that here is something satisfying and perfect in its own way.

A poem can bring to birth a new world, a new meaning, even when it deals with an ordinary situation. A poem like Wordsworth's 'The Solitary Reaper' seems to deal with simple, homely stuff. Have we not observed workers in the field 'singing and reaping'? The poem tells us of the joy the poet felt in listening to a reaper's song: logically speaking, the poem says little more than this. The poem does not tell us even what the song was about: the poet did not know this himself. Yet a sensitive reading of the poem makes us aware of a number of concrete details which all grow upon our hearts. There is first of all the evocation of an atmosphere of silence and seriousness appropriate to the contemplation of a great reality. The reader is invited to enter this contemplative stillness; but if he does not wish for that state of grace, it is left to him:

Stop here, or gently pass!

But if he will wait, there is a rich reward for him, for O!

the vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound.
We hear, we see with the poet. The song is a melancholy strain of unpremeditated art making us forget everything else. There is a sense of intense concentration what the poet sees and makes us see is the world for the moment. Then, suddenly, the poet takes us on the wings of imagination to

some shady haunt
Among Arabian sands,
and then again to

the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides.

When we come back to the reaper's song, we bring with us rich associations: the soft, soothing melodies of the nightingale comforting the weary travellers of the desert, the flitting cuckoo brightening up the atmosphere of the snow-bound Hebrides and cheering up its solitary inhabitants. Something of the charm of these songs of nature is to be found in the reaper's song. It is a melancholy song, as we have been told, and as can be judged by the plaintive numbers flowing. What theme could move us thus, but one speaking of 'Some natural sorrow, loss or pain', of some experience that runs through man's annals. The song might be about the past, about 'old, unhappy, far-off things', or about the present,

some more humble lay
Familiar matter of today.
Or, it may be about the future, about something

That has been, and may be again.
Whatever the theme, the song seems to insist on remaining with us for ever,

As if her song could have no ending.
The poet, having heard the song, carries it away with him:

The music in my heart I bore
Long after it was heard no more.
The image of the solitary girl reaping and singing, together with the two bird-images, serve a parallel function in the poem: they bring out the 'abstraction of loneliness, remoteness, and mysterious charm in the singing &
itself'. But there is also something more in these images than the comparison of song:

by an implication cutting across the plane of logic of the metaphor, the girl and the two birds suggest extension in space, universality and world-communion—an effect supported by other details of the poem, such as the overflowing of the vale profound, the mystery of the Ære song, the bearing of the song away in the poet's heart, the past and the future themes which the girl may be singing. Thus a central abstraction is created, of communion, telepathy in solitude, the prophetic soul of the wide world dreaming on things to come—an abstraction which is the effect not solely of the metaphor elaborated logically (in a metaphysical way), but of a working on two axes, by association rather than by logic, by a three-dimensional complexity of structure.

This 'three-dimensional complexity' is one of the qualities that an imaginative work has, and in this quality it differs from the 'statements of prose': It gives a certain concreteness to the poem, and helps to create the feeling of organic life in what the poem presents.

A poem in its various levels and relations of meaning has a kind of rounded being or substance, and a metaphoric relation to reality... A poem, through being supercharged with significance, takes on something like the character of a stone statue or a porcelain vase. Through its meaning or meanings the poem is. It has an iconic solidity. Thus in a sense the poem is a paradox, through the quality of extra significance or hyperverbalism becoming anomalous among verbal expressions. The poem has not an abstractly meant or intended meaning, but a fullness of actually presented meaning.

In the symbolic poem, the living reality which the poem presents is the force which holds the different elements of the poem together, and gives it a certain urgency and status. This reality is truly multi-dimensional in the sense that it brings together and harmonizes heterogeneous elements.

A poem cannot be (as Winters would have it) a statement about something: it is an action or reality rendered in its totality. This action does not prescribe means as Science does; nor can it be an end in itself as religion is. The reader is left to draw his own conclusion. The vision of the whole reality cannot be explained or demonstrated logically; nor can there be external verification. The reader grasps the whole reality by an act of intuition or not at all. The Symbolist poetry, instead of trying to impose a pattern upon

17,18 W.K. Wimsatt: 'The Verbal Icon', pp. 80, 171, 131.
experience, tries to bring out the pattern inherent in experience. This makes the symbolic poem self-sufficient, complete in itself: it does not refer to anything outside itself on which it would depend for its meaning.

The life or vitality in a symbolic poem may come to us through a sense of movement that it conveys to us, a certain dynamic quality about it. The Romantic poets tried to achieve something of this effect—the effect not of pictorial representation but of living reproduction of reality—by means of shifting or associational imagery and by means of personification (which sometimes degenerated into what Ruskin called the 'pathetic fallacy'). In a Symbolist poem the sense of movement may come from its being an 'incipient act', as Kenneth Burke has pointed out in his essay on 'Symbolic Action in a poem by Keats'. The Symbolist poem always implies the creation and resolution of tensions, and this structural characteristic is mainly responsible for the impression of dynamism that is created by the poem.