a broken syntax, nonlogical and nonchronological order, dreamlike and nightmarish sequences, and the juxtaposition of bizarre, shocking, or seemingly unrelated images. In England and America such effects can be found in a wide range of writings, from the poetry of Dylan Thomas to the flights of fantasy, hallucinative writing, startling inconsequences, and *black humor* in the novels of Henry Miller, William Burroughs, and Thomas Pynchon.

For a precursor of some aspects of surrealism, see *decadence;* for later developments that continued some of the surrealist innovations, see literature of the *absurd, antinovel, magic realism,* and *postmodernism.* Refer to David Gascoyne, *A Short Survey of Surrealism* (1935); A. E. Balakian, *Literary Origins of Surrealism* (1947); Maurice Nadeau, *History of Surrealism* (trans., 1967); Mary Ann Caws, *The Poetry of Dada and Surrealism* (1970); Paul C. Ray, *The Surrealist Movement in England* (1971). In *Automatic Woman: The Representation of Women in Surrealism* (1996), Katharine Conley analyzes the obsessive and complex concern of male surrealists with the female body, which was often represented in a distorted or dissected form; she also discusses the work of two female surrealists, Unica Zürn and Leonora Carrington.

Symbol. In the broadest sense a symbol is anything which signifies something; in this sense all words are symbols. In discussing literature, however, the term "symbol" is applied only to a word or phrase that signifies an object or event which in its turn signifies something, or has a range of reference, beyond itself. Some symbols are "conventional" or "public": thus "the Cross," "the Red, White, and Blue," and "the Good Shepherd" are terms that refer to symbolic objects of which the further significance is determinate within a particular culture. Poets, like all of us, use such conventional symbols; many poets, however, also use "private" or "personal symbols." Often they do so by exploiting widely shared associations between an object or event or action and a particular concept; for example, the general association of a peacock with pride and of an eagle with heroic endeavor, or the rising sun with birth and the setting sun with death, or climbing with effort or progress and descent with surrender or failure. Some poets, however, repeatedly use symbols whose significance they largely generate themselves, and these pose a more difficult problem in interpretation.

Take as an example the word "rose," which in its literal use signifies a kind of flower. In Robert Burns' line "O my love's like a red, red rose," the word "rose" is used as a *simile;* and in the lines by Winthrop Mackworth Praed,

> She was our queen, our rose, our star;
> And then she danced—O Heaven, her dancing!

the word "rose" is used as a *metaphor.* In *The Romance of the Rose,* a long medieval *dream vision,* we read about a half-opened rose to which the dreamer's access is aided by a character called "Fair Welcome," but impeded or forbidden by other characters called "Reason," "Shame," and "Jealousy." We readily recognize that the whole narrative is a sustained *allegory* about an elaborate

courtship, in which most of the agents are personified abstractions and the rose itself functions as an allegorical **emblem** (that is, an object whose significance is made determinate by its qualities and by the role it plays in the narrative) which represents both the lady's love and her lovely body. Then we read William Blake's poem "The Sick Rose."

> O Rose, thou art sick.
> The invisible worm
> That flies in the night
> In the howling storm
> Has found out thy bed
> Of crimson joy,
> And his dark secret love
> Does thy life destroy.

This rose is not the *vehicle* for a simile or metaphor, because it lacks the paired subject—"my love," or the girl referred to as "she," in the examples just cited—which is an identifying feature of these figures. And it is not an allegorical rose, since, unlike the flower in *The Romance of the Rose,* it is not part of an obvious double order of correlated references, one literal and the second allegorical, in which the allegorical or emblematic reference of the rose is made determinate by its role within the literal narrative. Blake's rose *is* a rose—yet it is patently also something more than a rose: words such as "bed," "joy," "love," which do not comport literally with an actual flower, together with the sinister tone, and the intensity of the lyric speaker's feeling, press the reader to infer that the described object has a further range of suggested but unspecified reference which makes it a symbol. But Blake's rose is a personal symbol and not—like the symbolic rose in the closing cantos of Dante's fourteenth-century *Paradiso* and other Christian poems—an element in a set of conventional and widely known (hence "public") religious symbols, in which concrete objects of this passing world are used to signify, in a relatively determinate way, the objects and truths of a higher eternal realm. (See Barbara Seward, *The Symbolic Rose,* 1960.) Only from the implicit suggestions in Blake's poem itself—the sexual connotations, in the realm of human experience, of "bed" and "love," especially in conjunction with "joy" and "worm"—supplemented by our knowledge of similar elements and topics in his other poems, are we led to infer that Blake's lament for a crimson rose which has been entered and sickened unto death by a dark and secret worm symbolizes, in the human realm, the destruction wrought by furtiveness, deceit, and hypocrisy in what should be a frank and joyous relationship of physical love. Various critics of the poem, however, have proposed alternative interpretations of its symbolic significance. It is an attribute of many private symbols—the White Whale in Melville's *Moby-Dick* (1851) is another famed example—as well as a reason why they are an irreplaceable literary device, that they suggest a direction or a broad area of significance rather than, like an emblem in an allegorical narrative, a relatively determinate reference.

In the copious modern literature on the nature of the literary symbol, reference is often made to two seminal passages, written early in the nineteenth

century by Coleridge in England and Goethe in Germany, concerning the difference between an allegory and a symbol. Coleridge is in fact describing what he believes to be the uniquely symbolic nature of the Bible as a sacred text, but later commentators have assumed (probably mistakenly) that he intended his comment to apply also to the symbol in secular literature:

> Now an allegory is but a translation of abstract notions into a picture-language, which is itself nothing but an abstraction from objects of the senses. . . . On the other hand a symbol . . . is characterized by a translucence of the special [i.e., of the species] in the individual, or of the general [i.e., of the genus] in the special, or of the universal in the general; above all by the translucence of the eternal through and in the temporal. It always partakes of the reality which it renders intelligible; and while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part in that unity of which it is the representative. [Allegories] are but empty echoes which the fancy arbitrarily associates with apparitions of matter. . . .
>
> (Coleridge, *The Statesman's Manual,* 1816)

Goethe had been meditating about the nature of the literary symbol in secular writings since the 1790s, but gave his concept its clearest formulations in 1824:

> There is a great difference, whether the poet seeks the particular for the sake of the general or sees the general in the particular. From the former procedure there ensues allegory, in which the particular serves only as illustration, as example of the general. The latter procedure, however, is genuinely the nature of poetry; it expresses something particular, without thinking of the general or pointing to it.
>
> Allegory transforms the phenomenon into a concept, the concept into an image, but in such a way that the concept always remains bounded in the image, and is entirely to be kept and held in it, and to be expressed by it.
>
> Symbolism [however] transforms the phenomenon into idea, the idea into an image, and in such a way that the idea remains always infinitely active and unapproachable in the image, and even if expressed in all languages, still would remain inexpressible.
>
> (Goethe, *Maxims and Reflections,* Nos. 279, 1112, 1113)

It will be noted that, whatever the differences between these cryptic passages, both Coleridge and Goethe stress that an allegory presents a pair of subjects (an image and a concept) and a symbol only one (the image alone); that the allegory is relatively specific in its reference, while the symbol remains indefinite, but richly—even infinitely—suggestive in its significance; and also that for this very reason, a symbol is the higher mode of expression. To these claims, characteristic in the Romantic Period, critics until the recent past have for the most part agreed. In express opposition to romantic theory, however, Paul de Man has elevated allegory over symbol because, he claims, it is less "mystified" about its status as a purely rhetorical device. See de Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," in *Interpretation: Theory and Practice,* ed. C. S. Singleton (1969), and *Allegories of Reading* (1979).

See W. B. Yeats, "The Symbolism of Poetry" (1900), in *Essays and Introductions* (1961); H. Flanders Dunbar, *Symbolism in Medieval Thought* (1929); C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition* (1936); Elder Olson, "A Dialogue on Symbolism," in R. S. Crane, ed., *Critics and Criticism* (1952); W. Y. Tindall, *The Literary Symbol* (1955); Harry Levin, "Symbolism and Fiction," in *Contexts of Criticism* (1957); Isabel C. Hungerland, *Poetic Discourse* (1958), chapter 5; Maurice Beebe, ed., *Literary Symbolism* (1960).

Symbolist Movement. Various poets of the *Romantic Period,* including Novalis and Hölderlin in Germany and Shelley in England, often used private symbols in their poetry (see *symbol*). Shelley, for example, repeatedly made symbolic use of objects such as the morning and evening star, a boat moving upstream, winding caves, and the conflict between a serpent and an eagle. William Blake, however, exceeded all his romantic contemporaries in his recourse to a persistent and sustained **symbolism**—that is, a coherent system composed of a number of symbolic elements—both in his lyric poems and his long prophetic, or epic poems. In nineteenth-century America, a symbolist procedure was prominent in the novels of Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville, the prose of Emerson and Thoreau, and the poetic theory and practice of Poe. (See Charles Feidelson, Jr., *Symbolism and American Literature,* 1953.) These writers derived the mode in large part from the native Puritan tradition of typology (see *interpretation: typological and allegorical*), and also from the theory of "correspondences" of the Swedish theologian Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772).

In the usage of literary historians, however, **Symbolist Movement** designates specifically a group of French writers beginning with Charles Baudelaire (*Fleurs du mal,* 1857) and including such later poets as Arthur Rimbaud, Paul Verlaine, Stéphane Mallarmé, and Paul Valéry. Baudelaire based the symbolic mode of his poems in part on the example of the American Edgar Allan Poe, but especially on the ancient belief in **correspondences**—the doctrine that there exist inherent and systematic analogies between the human mind and the outer world, and also between the natural and the spiritual worlds. As Baudelaire put this doctrine: "Everything, form, movement, number, color, perfume, in the *spiritual* as in the *natural* world, is significative, reciprocal, converse, *correspondent.*" The techniques of the French **Symbolists,** who exploited an order of private symbols in a poetry of rich suggestiveness rather than explicit signification, had an immense influence throughout Europe, and (especially in the 1890s and later) in England and America on poets such as Arthur Symons and Ernest Dowson (see *Decadence*) as well as W. B. Yeats, Ezra Pound, Dylan Thomas, Hart Crane, e. e. cummings, and Wallace Stevens. Major symbolist poets in Germany are Stefan George and Rainer Maria Rilke.

The *Modern Period,* in the decades after World War I, was a notable era of symbolism in literature. Many of the major writers of the period exploit symbols which are in part drawn from religious and esoteric traditions and in part invented. Some of the works of the age are symbolist in their settings, their agents, and their actions, as well as in the objects they refer to. Instances of a