

Type, Allegory, Symbol: Jonathan Edwards and Literary Traditions

Anna Světlíková

ABSTRACT

This article examines the rhetorical form of Jonathan Edwards' (1703-1758) natural typology. Edwards, one of colonial New England's most prominent thinkers and theologians, apparently believed he was taking a bold step outside the well-established tradition of Calvinist typology, an exegetical principle based on figurative interpretation, when he argued that not only the Scripture but the created world also typologically represents divine truth. Contemporary scholars often see the natural "type" as a kind of proto-symbol, uniting mind and nature in a moment of transcendental perception. However, the rhetorical structure of Edwards' type suggests that it is closer to the emblematic tradition than to symbol or metonymy. While Edwards' theory of typology might have been innovative, the literary form of the type remained traditional. The discrepancy between the content and form of Edwards' natural typology gives us a more complex understanding of his position with respect to the allegorical and symbolist traditions.

KEYWORDS

Jonathan Edwards, type, allegory, symbol, emblem

The purpose of this paper is to consider how Jonathan Edwards' natural typology might be described in literary terms, in other words: what is a natural type from a rhetorical perspective, and to examine what a rhetorical interpretation suggests about the position of Edwards' texts with respect to some of the pertinent literary traditions.

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) was a New England theologian, preacher and philosopher and is considered one of the leading figures in the intellectual history of colonial New England. In his times, Jonathan Edwards was famous and infamous both for his involvement in revivals of religion in New England and for defending traditional Calvinist doctrines such as original sin or predestination. For subsequent generations, Edwards – most notably his famous sermon entitled "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" – has often come to embody all that was negative about America's Puritan heritage. Others have continued to uphold Edwards as a fascinating thinker. Among the issues which literary scholars nowadays find relevant are various aspects of Edwards' homiletic practice (problems of imagery, style, and rhetoric), Edwards' engagement with contemporary polite culture, his influence on subsequent writers as well as feminist and postcolonial issues. Another issue is the problem of typology and figurative expression and, related to this, though not exclusively, the question of subjectivity. This paper focuses on the formal aspects of typology and deliberately leaves the issue of subjectivity looming in the background.

Typology is a method of figurative interpretation of the Bible which has its Christian origins in the New Testament.¹ It was developed by the Church Fathers in

1 For an introduction to the history of typology and to Puritan typology, see for example: *Typology and Early American Literature*, edited by Sacvan Bercovitch (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1972) and in that volume particularly Thomas M. Davis' historical overview in "The Traditions of Puritan Typology" (11-45); Wallace E. Anderson's introduction to "Images of Divine Things" and "Types" and Mason I. Lowance's introduction to "Types of the Messiah," both in *Typological Writings*, edited by Wallace E. Anderson, Mason I. Lowance, Jr., David H. Watters, *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, volume 11 (WJE 11), (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993); and Mason I. Lowance, *The Language of Canaan: Metaphor and Symbol in New*

various versions and used extensively in medieval theology and also by the Protestant Reformers. Still around today, typology is based on the idea that the Old Testament prefigures and foreshadows the New Testament: Moses' leading Israel out of Egyptian bondage, for example, was a prefiguration type of the church's redemption by Christ, the antitype. This is more than a mere parallel or similarity; the antitype is believed to actually fulfill and complete what is only foreshadowed in the type. For example the sacrifices which were part of Jewish religion in Old Testament times prefigured the death of Christ on the cross; once Christ's sacrifice is finished, the other sacrifices are no longer necessary for Christians because they were completed in the sacrifice of Christ. In contrast to allegorical interpretations of Scripture, typology insists that the type and antitype are real, historical events, institutions or people.

The typological tradition, however, existed in close connection to various other methods of figurative exegesis and in many cases became subordinated to allegorical interpretations. Its historical nature was emphasized again by the Protestant Reformers, and the Puritans continued to uphold particularly Calvin's emphasis on the historicity of the type to secure a distinction between type and allegory. Besides typology in the strictest sense as the correspondences between the Old and the New Testaments, typological principles were also extended to postbiblical church and eschatology (hence the tendency of Puritans in New England to see themselves as the "New Israel").

These varieties of the typological tradition can be found also in Jonathan Edwards' writings. Edwards however makes another important step: he extends the idea of typology to nature as well as secular history and institutions. Finding parallels between spiritual things and things of this world was of course quite common among believers. What is different in Edwards' case is his conviction that the correspondences between the material and the spiritual world are real, God-established and ontological: the various parts of the lower material world are, objectively, in their very constitution, images or shadows of the spiritual world. On the one hand, Edwards' natural typology develops from popular allegorizing or spiritualizing of nature (for example John Flavel's *Husbandry Spiritualized: Or, the Heavenly Use of Earthly Things* or Cotton Mather's *Agricola. Or, the Religious Husbandman*). It is also indebted to the medieval and Renaissance habit of thinking in analogies and correspondences and to contemporary Neoplatonism. On the other hand it can be interpreted as a step in the development toward Romanticism and Transcendentalism, as divine revelation can now be found in nature and the mind is given a central role in discovering the transcendental meanings of nature.

Theologically of course Edwards denies that the mind would invent the spiritual meaning of nature; he argues that the spiritual correspondences between the natural and the spiritual world were actually established by God. The concept of harmony of universe, a web of divinely instituted relations between beings and events is fundamental for his thought. It is a telling fact however that Edwards realizes the dangers necessarily attending this theological move. He anticipates being accused of "inventing" rather than "discovering," in other words to be accused that his natural types are nothing but imagined, subjective interpretations which cannot be epistemologically reliable. His defensive stance suggest that Edwards believed his natural typology to be an important new insight which would change the way people understood God's revelation:

England from the Puritans to the Transcendentalists (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1980). For a classical introduction to typology and a general history, see: Erich Auerbach, "Figura," in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature*, translated by Ralph Manheim (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 11-76.

I expect by very ridicule and contempt to be called a man of a very fruitful brain and copious fancy, but they are welcome to it. I am not ashamed to own that I believe that the whole universe, heaven and earth, air and seas, and the divine constitution and history of the holy Scriptures, be full of images of divine things, as full as a language is of words [. . .] there is room for persons to be learning more and more of this language and seeing more of that which is declared in it to the end of the world without discovering all.²

But besides the problem of the subjectivity of religious knowledge, typology is interesting also for its literary form. A brief methodological note is necessary first to explain why a formal literary approach (a rhetorical approach) to the theological category of the type is possible and relevant. First there are historical reasons. As has been mentioned, typology developed in close connection with other figurative, allegorical interpretations of the Bible. It is by definition a figurative method in which one thing represents another. Secondly, if types are considered from a literary point of view, as text, it is obvious that they function as literary images and one might therefore consider what rhetorical category would best describe them. And in the background of this approach is the more general theoretical idea – suggested by Jacques Derrida, Paul de Man and others – that language, no matter how it is used, cannot be stripped of that quality which we find only more ostensibly present in poetry or fiction.

In interpreting the rhetorical structure of Edwards' natural typology, the emphasis will be on understanding the natural type as a category, not on its use in various contexts. To consider natural types in this general manner, the focus will be on an Edwards' text which deals specifically with natural typology, his notebook "Images of Divine Things." The text contains entries of two kinds. Most of them provide a typological explanation of natural objects or events in human history; a smaller number of the entries are theoretical arguments for the very possibility of a typological interpretation of nature. In these entries (for example nos. 7, 8, 45, 57, 95, 156, 169) Edwards argues for natural typology from Scriptural references to the natural world and from the order of creation which, he believes, reflects God's wisdom. The argument of these passages in "Images" is corroborated by a more sustained reasoning in the "Types" notebook in which Edwards focuses exclusively on finding support for his idea of natural typology and refuting objections. The other entries in the "Images" notebook are explanations of the typological meanings of specific phenomena.³ The first type, the argumentative entries, are important for an understanding of Edwards' theory. For the purposes of this section, the second

2 Jonathan Edwards, "Images of Divine Things," *WJE* 11, 152.

3 As an example of the difference between the two kinds of entries, the following two short passages may be contrasted:

That the things of the world are ordered [and] designed to shadow forth spiritual things, appears by the Apostle's arguing spiritual things from them. 1 Corinthians 15:36, "Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die." If the sowing of seed and its springing were not designedly ordered to have an agreeableness to the resurrection, there could be no sort of argument in that which the Apostle alleges; either to argue the resurrection itself or the manner of it, either its certainty, or probability, or possibility. See how the Apostle's argument is thus founded (Hebrews 9:16–17) about the validity of a testament.

type of entries, which might be understood as examples, will be more important. An object in nature, a general human experience, an institution or a situation in human history is mentioned and its spiritual significance is explained.

Neither kind of entries in "Images of Divine Things" can be said to contain types as rhetorical figures. There might be an occasional use of tropes in the text but the type discussed in a particular entry is always described and explained, not used in a figurative manner. The text of "Images" must be understood as a theory of typology – a typological metatext. The entries describe a figure or figures; rhetorically they are not the figures themselves. If "the type is, in literary terms, fundamentally an image," as Wilson Kinnach writes,⁴ in other words if it is a literary figure, and if the text of "Images" is a metatext about typology, then what figure is it that the metatext describes? Connected to this is the question why Edwards does not employ the figure itself. His theorizing suggests that he believes natural typology to be a new mode of understanding God's revelation. In this respect Edwards might lack a figure which would be an adequate representation of his theory. Since he insists that the type is, metaphysically and epistemologically, more than a trope, he cannot use a device which would be, in his view, a mere trope. Some scholars suggest that the trope he is looking for, unaware, is the Romantic symbol. Would that solve Edwards' difficulty, and what other figures come into consideration for an interpretation of the structure of the type?

There exist several competing literary interpretations of the natural type in Edwards studies. Beside the symbolical interpretation, which is the most prominent, it has also been suggested that the type can be understood as metonymy. And thirdly, throughout its development typology in general has had a very close connection to allegory.

Of the several rhetorical interpretations of the type that come into consideration, metonymy is perhaps the one least expected. In her article "In Love with the Image" Jennifer Leader argues that "Edwards' typology functions as far more than a figural device for allegorizing nature: it creates what might be best understood as a metonymical, semiotic relationship between the three positions of perceiver/reader, natural type, and divine antitypes."⁵ Leader proposes a more complex understanding of subjectivity in Edwards' thinking, based on "close attention to the textual level operations of Edwards' types."⁶ To show the metonymical nature of the typological link, she discusses entry no. 3 of "Images of Divine Things":

Roses grow upon briars, which is to signify that all temporal sweets are mixed with bitter. But what seems more especially to be meant by it, is that true happiness, the crown of glory, is to be come at in no other way than by bearing Christ's cross by a life of

In its being so contrived, that the life of man should be continually maintained by breath, respect was had to the continual influence of the Spirit of God that maintains the life of the soul.

(WJE 11, 53, 55; "Images," nos. 7 and 17)

4 Wilson H. Kinnach, introduction to *Sermons and Discourses 1720-1723*, edited by Wilson H. Kinnach, WJE 10 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 230.

5 Jennifer L. Leader, "'In Love with the Image': Transitive Being and Typological Desire in Jonathan Edwards," *Early American Literature* 41, no. 2 (2006): 155, accessed July 2, 2010, *Project MUSE*, doi: 10.1353/eal.2006.0021.

6 Ibid.

mortification, self-denial and labor, and bearing all things for Christ. The rose, the chief of all flowers, is the last thing that comes out. The briery prickly bush grows before, but the end and crown of all is the beautiful and fragrant rose.⁷

Leader continues: "Instead of having an allegorical correspondence with one another based on an implied similarity of individual essence or on a stable, noun-based metaphorical equation of 'this is to that,' type and antitype metonymically signify each other through their shared qualities."⁸

The anti-metaphorical argument is not without grounds and deserves serious consideration. First, in entry no. 45 of "Images," quoted earlier, Edwards ponders the nature of the typological link and claims that the basis for the correlation is not likeness of appearance. Rather, the entry implies that there is a likeness of how we think about the respective constituents of the typological pair: "So the spiritual gospel tabernacle is said to be the true tabernacle, in opposition to the legal typical tabernacle which was literally a tabernacle."⁹ Leader notices that Edwards implies that the typological relationship is not based on the similarity of qualities of different objects.

Secondly, there are entries in which the typological connection might be said to be metonymic. In entry no. 17 quoted above, for instance, the relationship between breath and spirit really could be said to be metonymic. It would be an etymological metonymy, based on the fact that the Hebrew word for "spirit" also means "wind" or "breath." But such entries are exceptional when seen in the context of the entire "Images" notebook and even here the metonymic aspect is rather an extra dimension of the analogy, not its constituting feature.

Other entries also work with metonymy, similarly to no. 3 analyzed by Leader. In one example out of many, "Images," no. 46,¹⁰ Edwards interprets the typological significance of clothing as the righteousness obtained for believers by Christ's, just as clothes are obtained from lamb's wool or silk from the silkworm. It might seem that the type and the antitype are here connected metonymically (fleeces of sheep – lamb; silk – silkworm) by indirect biblical quotations and references to Christ as the Lamb of God and "man, who is a worm." But precisely these references, "lamb" and "worm," are metaphoric. Likewise, in many other entries there is a metonymic relationship between the *constituents of the type* (for example between roses and briars in no. 3 which Leader analyzes) but not between the earthly type and the spiritual antitype. This difference must be kept in view.

A reading which focuses on the text of "Images," no. 3 itself does not support the argument that the relationship between roses growing on briars and "temporal sweets mixed with bitter" or true happiness being the result of bearing one's cross is metonymic. This is not to say that Leader does not have valid arguments. Her interpretation is interesting and acceptable in a certain sense but it does not explain what precisely the typological connection is and if it can be made at all. Leader tacitly accepts Edwards' presuppositions instead of supporting them or questioning them theoretically. The alleged use of "close reading"¹¹ is misleading because she derives her analysis from

7 WJE 11, 52.

8 Leader, "In Love with the Image," 160.

9 WJE 11, 62.

10 WJE 11, 63.

11 Leader, "In Love with the Image," 158.

the broader context of Edwards' theology, and reasons for the metonymic interpretation lie, as she herself notes, outside the text itself. Type and antitype can be considered a metonymic pair in Edwards' system because they are connected in the hierarchy of God's emanations in creation. Stripped of this theological context, however, the metonymic interpretation does not stand. The relationship between the type and the antitype is always an analogy based on some kind of similarity but not of contiguity.

Leader opposes her metonymic interpretation to both an allegorical reading and to the understanding of the type as symbol. Comparing the natural type to the Romantic symbol and interpreting Edwards' thought as an anticipation of Romanticism has a strong tradition in Edwards scholarship. Many scholars have pointed out affinities between Edwards' thought and Romanticism or Transcendentalism and between Edwards' natural type and 19th century symbol.

Perry Miller not only sees "so many startling parallels" between Edwards and Wordsworth and similarities between Edwards' concept of "naked ideas" and Coleridge's or Emerson's "imagination"¹² but he also suggests that Edwards' natural type, like the Romantic symbol, unites mind and nature, subject and object: "As Edwards read the new sensationalism, far from setting up a dualism of subject and object, it fused them in the moment of perception. The thing could then appear as concept and concept as thing. [. . .] the image was no longer a detachable adornment on the surface of truth; it *was* truth."¹³ In a similar manner, Stuart Piggin and Dianne Cook speak of "the anticipation of Coleridge's Romanticism by Edwards"¹⁴ and argue that "for both [Edwards and Coleridge], the symbol or type was a concrete, temporal, physical and lower expression of an immaterial, eternal, metaphysical, and higher truth. These symbols or types were not the product of arbitrary human fabrication but of eternal decree and divine generation."¹⁵ Wilson Kinnach writes of Edwards' typology: "At the heart of those literary-theological studies was an attempt to define a vocabulary that would bridge the apparent gap between the eternal world of spiritual reality and the Lockean world of sensational experience in which men lived."¹⁶ Together these interpretations suggest that symbol is the trope which Edwards is looking for in his typological writings. Conceived as symbol, could the promise of the type be fulfilled?

According to these interpretations, Edwards' natural type is meant to express unity. There are grounds for such view but again, the reasons do not lie in the structure of the type itself. Rather, they are to be found in Edwards' theology and the broader context of his thought. Edwards claims that the regenerate are given a "new sense of things," the "sense of the heart" in conversion; this gives them understanding of divine revelation, both in Scripture and in Nature, and direct access to it. Again, such concord of mind and nature in natural typology is made possible for Edwards by his conception of the organic harmony and essential unity of creation: the universe is created to communicate God's glory and the natural object and the human mind are both partakers

12 Perry Miller, introduction to *Images or Shadows of Divine Things*, edited by Perry Miller (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), 33, 21.

13 Ibid., 19-20.

14 Stuart Piggin and Dianne Cook, "Keeping Alive the Heart in the Head: The Significance of 'Eternal Language' in the Aesthetics of Jonathan Edwards and S. T. Coleridge," *Literature & Theology* 18, no. 4 (2004): 394.

15 Ibid., 387.

16 Kinnach, introduction, 10.

in this system of emanations of God's glory.¹⁷ This is this aspect of Edwards' thought which clearly lends itself to comparisons with the Romantic symbol.

Moreover, there are passages in Edwards' writings where a correspondence between mind and nature is explicitly stated. In "Miscellanies," no. 108 where Edwards in fact lays grounds for his natural typology, he writes: "And there is really likewise an analogy, or consent, between the beauty of the skies, trees, fields, flowers, etc. and spiritual excellencies; though the agreement be more hid and requires a more discerning, feeling mind to perceive it than the other."¹⁸ Similar ideas underlie passages of the "Personal Narrative" and "Beauty of the World."¹⁹ But Edwards speaks of "analogies" and "correspondences;" the natural and the spiritual are always clearly distinguished. In Edwards' metaphysics, they are firmly connected in the divine order. If the type really was a naked idea, as Miller believes is Edwards' goal, it would nevertheless depend on an act of faith. A direct experience or understanding of the divine truth in and through the type is available only to regenerate perception; the unity can only be perceived when immediate communication from the Holy Spirit enables one to apprehend divine revelations in nature.

Setting aside the symbol for the moment, a third interpretation of the type to consider is allegory. Of crucial importance to biblical exegesis has always been the possibility of several meanings of Scripture, and theologians have long attempted to distinguish between typology and a more general allegorical interpretation. To say however that the type is, in rhetorical terms, an allegory would in particular thwart the Puritan project of keeping the two apart by insisting on the historical dimension of the type. On the other hand, it is clear that typology is a kind of figurative discourse and historically developed alongside allegory. The function of the type, too, is close to allegory, which is assumed to be widely intelligible and to contain a limited number of meanings. The same is true of typology: the type must communicate certain knowledge and it must be understood as such by a community of users.

Since allegory can exist in various literary genres and vary from a single figure to an entire work of literature, before focusing on the implications of an allegorical interpretation of typology and its differences from a symbolical reading, a more specific category can be found to describe the type. The emblem, a literary device prominent in the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance, might be an acceptable rhetorical interpretation of the type.²⁰ Essentially allegorical, the emblem is taken from a generally shared stock

17 See for example "Miscellanies," no. 362 (Jonathan Edwards, *The "Miscellanies,"* (Entry Nos. a-z, aa-zz, 1-500), edited by Thomas A. Schafer, *WJE* 13, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994, 434) as one of the many instances in which this argument is made. For Edwards' understanding of God's glory as the purpose of creation and emanations of God's glory, see his dissertation on *The End for Which God Created the World* (Jonathan Edwards, *Ethical Writings*, edited by Paul Ramsey, *WJE* 8, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989, 401-536).

18 *WJE* 13, 278.

19 Jonathan Edwards, "Personal Narrative," in *Letters and Personal Writings*, edited by George S. Claghorn, *WJE* 16 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 790-804. Jonathan Edwards, "Beauty of the World," in *Scientific and Philosophical Writings*, edited by Wallace E. Anderson, *WJE* 6 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 305-307.

20 The emblem has received almost no attention in interpretations of Edwards' typology. Tibor Fabiny has noticed this curious gap in Edwards' scholarship (Tibor Fabiny, "Edwards and Biblical Typology," in *Understanding Jonathan Edwards: An Introduction to America's Theologian*, edited by Gerald R. McDermott, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, 101) but a study on Edwards and the emblematic tradition is yet to appear. To my knowledge, only William Wainwright's article "Jonathan Edwards and the Language of God" argues for an understanding of the type as emblem; writing from a theological perspective, however, Wainwright uses the term to defend Edwards' typological project and argues that

of images, basically "a simple kind of literary symbol with a fixed and relatively clear significance."²¹

If this definition of emblem is considered with respect to Edwards' natural type, certain affinities become apparent. The entries in "Images of Divine Things" tend to be quite general, simple images whose meaning is assumed to be widely intelligible and which often have parallels in literature and tradition. Edwards certainly means a material rose in entry no. 3, a real snake devouring a real mouse, sunlight experienced by the senses and the physical difficulty of climbing up a steep hill, but in most cases the emblem remains at the most basic level of human experience.

It is true that some entries are different and refer to specific historical events or perhaps even to a specific place. These include the Roman polity in entry 91, the triumph of Rome in entry 81 as well as Edwards' famous typological interpretation of the invention of the telescope in entry no. 146.²² But even in these entries the description of the type remains at a very general level. None of them are really specific; even those referring to concrete historical events such as the Olympic Games draw on common knowledge. Most other types described in the notebook, moreover, do not have even this bit of a geographical or historical setting. Although they are based on analogies which themselves are mostly common and traditional rather than free or idiosyncratic. In this sense they are very close to literary emblems. There is no detail which would position these images geographically or historically and many of them are simply commonplaces.

A rhetorical interpretation of the type as an emblem finds further support in a historical argument which, though not central to the present discussion, is strong enough to be noted here. In a rich study of the parallels between the emblem and 16th and 17th century literature, Peter Daly argues that the traditional emblem of the emblem books is reflected in various ways in other kinds of literature. A comparison of his characterization of the "word-emblem" with Edwards' natural types in "Images of Divine Things" makes a strong case for viewing his natural typology in the light of the emblematic tradition. Here are several characteristics Daly mentions:

The meaning of the emblem is unambiguous. It is in fact univalent; that is, the context calls for only one of the several meanings which could be associated with the natural object. [. . .] The *object* and its *meaning*, wherever stated, remain *distinct* and *separate*; there is no rich interaction of vehicle and tenor, picture and meaning, as in the more modern poetic symbol. [. . .] Where the word-emblem does convey a plurality of meanings, these do not interweave, as in the more modern poetic symbol, but rather form a list of distinct and separate meanings, deriving from different qualities of the pictured object. [. . .] Essentially the word-emblem is a visual image

"because emblems are consciously invented, their occurrence implies theism" (William Wainwright, "Jonathan Edwards and the Language of God," *The Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 48, 1980, 519).

21 Chris Baldick, *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (London, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 106.

22 Other entries include no. 101 on the Olympic Games or 147 on America supplying the world with spiritual treasures. No. 152 regarding spring contains one of the few implicit references to local conditions and Perry Miller eagerly seizes this opportunity to assert that "it is a more accurate image of that season in New England than all the poetry of Whittier and Longfellow" (Miller, introduction, 41).

conveying an intellectual meaning; any emotional reverberations are secondary.²³

These characteristics have much in common with those of the type. In the type, too, the object and the meaning remain separate and where one image might have multiple typological meanings (as for example in the case of water, which Edwards associates both with misery and with God's grace)²⁴ these are not perceived as influencing or contradicting one another – in fact they do not interact at all, but are always distinct. Of course there are differences, the most important being the notion of the antitypical fulfilling or completing of the type. This dynamic is absent in the emblem. But again, it is a dynamic which exists only in the theology of typology; the literary, textual nature of the typical pair does not reflect it.

Edwards was familiar with the popular emblem to some degree; he lists the most popular emblem book published in England, Francis Quarles' *Emblemes*, in his "Catalogue" which means that he certainly knew about it, though he might not have actually read this collection of prints accompanied by texts.²⁵ A preface found in that emblem book is fascinating in connection to Edwards; though its quotation here does not, most emphatically, pretend to argue for any historical evidence of the influence of Quarles on Edwards, it does show how pervasive was the habit of interpreting nature spiritually as another Book of God's revelation. Consider Quarles' words "To the Reader":

An *Emblem* is but a silent Parable: Let not the tender Eye check, to see the allusion to our blessed Saviour figured in these types. In Holy Scripture he is sometimes called a Sower; sometimes a Fisher; sometimes a Physician: And why not presented so, as well to the eye as to the ear? Before the knowledge of Letters, God was known by *Hieroglyphicks*. And indeed what are the Heavens, the Earth, nay, every Creature, but *Hieroglyphicks* and *Emblems* of his Glory?²⁶

23 Peter M. Daly, *Literature in the Light of the Emblem: Structural Parallels between the Emblem and Literature in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 72, 87, 89. Daly's emphasis.

24 For example in "Images," no. 15 and 27. See Wallace E. Anderson's comment in his introduction to "Images of Divine Things" and "Types" in *WJE* 11, 30.

25 Peter J. Thuesen explains: "Edwards' 'Catalogue' appears to have been an ongoing record of his reading priorities and interests rather than a tally of books he actually read. Though he did in fact read many of the books listed, the mere inclusion of a title in the 'Catalogue' proves only that he was aware of a particular book, not that he owned it or had read it. Only when Edwards cites information from a book can we be sure he had obtained it." (Peter J. Thuesen, introduction to *Catalogues of Books*, edited by Peter J. Thuesen, *WJE* 26, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008, 9)

Here is Thuesen's note on Quarles' presence in the "Catalogue": "Another religious poet named twice in the 'Catalogue' (nos. 52 and 466) is Francis Quarles, whose oft-reprinted *Emblemes* (1635) was a series of verse meditations on engravings derived from a Jesuit devotional manual. More than any other figure, Quarles (1592–1644), who worked briefly as a Royalist pamphleteer during the Civil War, popularized the emblem book as a genre." (ibid., 86)

26 Francis Quarles, *Emblems, divine and moral, together with Hieroglyphicks of the life of man*, accessed July 2, 2010, *English Emblem Books Project* at Pennsylvania State University, <http://emblem.libraries.psu.edu/home.htm>. N. pag.

Again, these historical affinities are not mentioned here to argue for specific influences of emblem writers on Edwards but the historical perspective concurs with the proposed rhetorical reading.²⁷

Interpretations which argue for a view of the natural type as symbol rely on his metaphysics, in the broader context of Edwards' thought as argued for above. The same is true for the metonymic reading of the type. In fact, both interpretations derive from the same arguments, specifically from Edwards' view of cosmos as essentially united by harmonious relationships instituted by God himself. Paul de Man's essay "The Rhetoric of Temporality" helps to explain the reasons for this similarity. De Man argues that symbol is essentially metonymic, or specifically, as he says, its nature is that of the synecdoche, because it postulates the totality of unity. Discussing Coleridge's symbol he notes that "its structure is that of the synecdoche, for the symbol is always a part of the totality that it represents. Consequently, in the symbolic imagination, no disjunction of the constitutive faculties takes place, since the material perception and the symbolical imagination are continuous, as the part is continuous with the whole."²⁸

Although de Man discusses the nature of symbol and allegory in the context of later literature, his interpretation is interesting when applied to Edwards. De Man refers to a change of thought in the pre-Romantic period which is only beginning to appear in Edwards: "The secularized thought of the pre-romantic period no longer allows a transcendence of the antinomies between the created world and the act of creation by means of a positive recourse to the notion of divine will."²⁹ Edwards, of course, attempts to explain by divine will; the secularization which de Man speaks of is present only as an implicit possibility. This issue is central to the historical interpretations of Edwards; it is one of the crucial perspectives from which to consider the question of Edwards' modernity, and it is used in the interpretations mentioned here. If the pre-Romantic period could no longer trust allegory, the tradition which Edwards inherited still assumed a unity between representation in language and the thing represented. But he did not accept the assumption unquestioningly. While Edwards argued confidently for the possibility of typological interpretation of nature, he also admitted the dangers and difficulties inherent in it and tried to defend his claims against possible objections. *Because* he can no longer see the recourse to the divine will and its connection to language as straightforward and unproblematic, Edwards anticipates that his theory of natural types will be accused of being subjective: "I expect by very ridicule and contempt to be called a man of a very fruitful brain and copious fancy, but they are welcome to it."³⁰

27 That Edwards' typology has connections to a generally shared emblematic tradition is further supported by another short example from Daly's study. Although the purpose of this argument is not to trace individual natural types to their emblematic counterparts, Daly's comment on a poem by Martin Opitz, "Glück und Unglück," is worth mentioning in this context. Opitz uses the images of bees and sting, rose and thorns—compare to Edwards' "Images," no. 3—and Daly explains their emblematic character thus: "It is a fact that the bee makes sweet honey, but stings sharply, and that the rose is inseparable from the thorn. These two things of nature, presented concretely and visually, are real, and at the same time they point to a general idea or embody a general meaning, and these meanings embody the truth of Opitz's general and literal statement about fortune and misfortune. Needless to say, the emblem-books have many examples of the 'bee' and 'rose' used in this way and carrying these meanings." (Daly, *Literature in the Light of Emblem*, 74)

28 Paul de Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," in *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 191.

29 *Ibid.*, 206-207.

30 *WJE* 11, 152.

The objections of his contemporaries which Edwards anticipated extend into modern scholarship. Already at the beginning of the modern era of Edwards studies, Perry Miller wondered "whether Edwards recognized that in reverting to typology he was actually furthering the revolution, that while professing to be a Calvinist he was reaching out for a method of interpreting both revelation and providence in which the governing principle would be not the will of God but the insight of Jonathan Edwards."³¹ Edwards attempted to refute this objection by his arguments in "Images of Divine Things" and in "Types." Jennifer Leader attempts to refute it too when she disagrees with Miller and claims that Edwards' natural type has the structure of metonymy and not of the subjective symbol. She argues that "the discursive, mutually signifying 'consent of being to being' inherent to the typological structure protects the types from being converted into symbol and so subsumed into the ego of the perceiver."³² De Man's understanding of symbol as metonymy casts an ironic light on the debate. It does not matter much if the type is metonymic or symbolic, for underlying the symbol is the metonymic contiguity of the unity of being. In a paradoxical sense, Leader argues against Miller's subjectivist interpretation – if the type is truly a symbol, it does not depend on the "insight of Jonathan Edwards" but supposes an objective unity of mind and nature, precisely that kind which Leader seeks to ensure by interpreting the type as metonymy.

If the type really was a symbol/metonymy as understood by de Man, Edwards' argument would be valid, that is to say in keeping with the metaphor of the organic unity of the cosmos. The rhetorical analysis of the natural type has suggested that the type is closer to the emblem than to the symbol. This means that the rhetorical structure of the type does not follow Edwards' typological theory, that there is a discrepancy between the content and the medium of Edwards' typology. In this perspective, the rhetorical figure which Edwards is attempting to describe in "Images of Divine Things" is essentially allegorical; in themselves the entries cannot be said to represent an organic unity of creation and cannot be interpreted as symbols. This means that Edwards does not manage to find a rhetorical form which would reflect his theory, and that the rhetorical structure of the text subverts his proclaimed argument.

Further, this rhetorical reading might be linked to the historical perspective: if the type is an allegorical figure, our understanding of Edwards' position with respect to the typological and the symbolic tradition needs to be more carefully balanced. In the context of intellectual history it is true that he is changing the tradition of Puritan typology by claiming that typological correspondences also actually exist in creation. It is even true that his theory of natural typology anticipates some aspects of Transcendentalism or Romanticism. At the same time if we pay attention to the rhetorical aspects we see that the form of the natural type does not follow the theory. If Edwards really believed that his natural typology was a bold development, that belief was only partly justified. Edwards might have added some new insights into typology which eventually helped facilitate the emergence of symbolism, but he failed to provide a new rhetorical medium for the new content. If however the relationship between content and its medium is so contradictory, which should be given priority?

And thirdly, the different interpretations of Edwards' natural typology might point to some difficulties with the idea of literary tradition as such. Obviously we need categorization and periodization. On the other hand, such classifications are to a great degree dependent on the methods we use. The case of Edwards' natural typology suggests

31 Miller, introduction, 40.

32 Leader, "In Love with the Image," 161.

that instead of “a typological tradition” there rather are versions of tradition, and versions might always already be subversions, the difference between them being but a matter of convention.

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Anna Světlíková is a PhD candidate at the Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures at Charles University in Prague. Her doctoral research focuses on literary issues of the writings of Jonathan Edwards. She spent a year researching at the Jonathan Edwards Center at Yale University as a Fulbright student. She has presented papers on Edwards at several academic events in Europe and in the United States.