

TYPECAST VICTORIANS

- Uses of Biblical Typology in Late Nineteenth-century Literature -

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by

Benedikte Torkelsdatter Ranum
University of Stirling

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the literary uses of biblical typology in the last three decades of the nineteenth century. It aims to show how late Victorian writers, having opted out of the orthodox Christian beliefs of the age, were still writing from within a cultural discourse shaped by, and based upon, such faith.

Covering works as diverse as Sartor Resartus, De Profundis, and The Island of Doctor Moreau, and discussing writers who range from Mary Augusta Ward via Hardy to Strindberg and Dostoevsky, my contention is that these writers not only used the structure, terminology, and imagery of biblical typology to express their religious doubts, but that they ‘reclaimed’ what was strictly seen as a mode of exegesis and transformed it into a richly suggestive signifying system. Through this reconstructed mode of expression, they could offer to their readers ideas of a new ‘religion’ or, at least, a possible way out of the despair caused by the ultimate failure of Christian faith.

The thesis is presented in three parts, the first of which briefly details the various available definitions of biblical typology itself. Following this, each sub-section of Part One traces a different aspect of late Victorian typology usage. Parts Two and Three deal with what I claim to be the two major strains of the late nineteenth century’s secular use of typology - those concerned, respectively, with the ‘imitation of’ or ‘association with’ biblical types in their relation to literary characters. The changes made to the traditional biblical typology by late Victorian writers, as examined in this thesis, brought the biblical anti-type closer to the Jungian archetype, just as it brought the Nineteenth Century closer to our twentieth-century view of our religious and textual inheritance.

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INTRODUCTION

The Late Victorian period was a time which it has become a commonplace to describe as an age of doubt and unbelief - of religious certainty retreating as quickly as new and more 'modern' views on the conditions of human existence were advancing. Universal faith, if ever such a thing existed, was most certainly drawing its last breath. And yet, this was an age in which the **discourse** of faith showed signs of being very much alive and inextricably present in the whole of the signifying system. Ideas of faith and doubt alike were, and could only be, expressed through a language shaped by its religious past. As Lance St. John Butler put it; "The avowedly religious discourse of the Victorians is shot through with the lexicon, the syntax and the imagery of doubt while the avowedly un-religious or anti-religious discourse of the period is shot through with metaphysical assumptions, and with vocabulary and imagery that betray the cultural pervasion of religion."(1) The developing language of religious doubt and unbelief had to control a register wide enough, and with enough possibilities of meaning, to accommodate ideas which were - although united in their distrust of orthodox Christian dogma - as widely differing as those of Matthew Arnold, who in his Preface to the 1875 God and the Bible calls Christianity "the greatest and happiest stroke ever yet made for human perfection"(2), and of the late Victorian mathematician Professor Clifford, who is quoted in that same Preface as seeing the Christian faith as an "awful plague which has destroyed two civilizations and but barely failed to slay such promise of good as is now struggling to live amongst men."(3) The discourse of doubt and unbelief had to possess the flexibility to produce texts as dissimilar as, for example, Carlyle's Sartor Resartus, Hardy's Jude the Obscure, and Wells' Island of Doctor Moreau. In addition to providing the necessary literary 'space' for such texts to co-habit, the language of unbelief was required to construct a **new** 'faith' as well as to subvert or destroy the old: it is the

general consensus amongst the majority of writers discussed in this thesis that to break down the structure of religious faith, without being able to offer something better and 'more true' in its stead, would be both undesirable and irresponsible. It is my contention that these writers not only used but **transformed** the system of Christian typology in order to express their unbelief, and to make such new offerings to their readers.

Typology is, in its original sense, a mode of biblical exegesis which connects, by divine intention and human association, certain biblical persons and events to each-other. As an explanation of sacred history, Christian typology claims that God placed **types** in the Old Testament to prefigure the **anti-types** of the New Testament, as a means of progressive revelation: the type signifies simultaneously itself and its anti-type, whereas the anti-type is the ideal fulfilment of the purpose and promise foreshadowed in the type.(4) Jesus and the Christian Church are most commonly perceived as anti-types, heralded and signified by the various figures and situations which preceded them. (The movement from type to anti-type does not necessarily cross the boundary between the Old and the New Testaments, although this is usually the case - John the Baptist, for example, is seen as a type fulfilled and explained by Christ, despite his being an actual contemporary of Jesus.) The anti-type is the ultimate typological reference point, the *terminus ad quem*; it can be seen as the biblical equivalent of the Jungian archetype, that is as a mould or model pervading biblical history as the archetype pervades myth and literature; and the lesser types, which normally precede it, pivot around it as mirror or shadow images - revelatory truth as seen "through a glass darkly".(5)

Orthodox Christian typology is a highly specialised form of analogy, with its own set of strict conventions and rules of application, which for centuries was used as a means of biblical exegesis only. As such, it seems a paradoxical choice to make use of this language for the literary expression of

secular and anti-theological ideas. But take away the notion of a 'transcendental signified'; remove from the equation the belief in an unchangeable, given, moral and linguistic truth; and the choice seems at once less of a paradox. As the nineteenth century wore on, the Bible texts were increasingly seen as a collection of **literary** texts, and to make use of the rich source of biblical imagery was to reclaim its value as literature rather than dogma. As Arnold says, "the moment one perceives that the religious language of the human race is in truth poetry, which it mistakes for science, one cannot make it an objection to this language that it is concrete. That it has long moved and deeply engaged the affections of men, that the Christian generations before us have all passed that way, adds immensely to its worth as poetry." He speaks for all the writers included in these pages when he says

We can use their language because it is thrown out at an admirable truth; only it is not, as they suppose, their sense for their own language which is real while our sense is figurative, but it is our sense which is real, and theirs is merely figurative.(6)

The process involved in thus making 'their' language 'ours' is what I am here concerned with. I mean to show that many authors picked up on themes which traditionally possessed a special significance within the structures of Christian typology - such as suffering and sacrifice - and used them to describe the conditions of life and thought as experienced by late Victorian unbelievers. By replacing ancient and familiar biblical types with contemporary and secular characters, these types themselves were being re-interpreted, and the very idea of casting ourselves and our fellow beings in certain **roles** was re-assessed. In several of the texts here discussed, far from rejecting such an assignment of roles, the necessity of doing so, and of 'being true' to one's role as type, is insisted upon. In some works, this following or re-interpreting of figural patterns can be seen as attempts made at bridging the perceived gap between the human and the divine: by imitating Christ in a 'modern' context, the characters are brought closer to a

divine 'spirit' which had been lost behind a dead 'letter'. In others, the authors found literary value in a use of biblical types which has nothing to do with divine intention and everything to do with human association and imagination.

In order to successfully employ Christian typology in the expression of doubt and unbelief, the very structure of typological imagery had to undergo a reversal or inversion. Whereas traditional typology exists within a linear, directional time-frame, its beginning a promise and its end the fulfillment of that promise, the late Victorian versions of typology were increasingly conceived of in terms of a complex fabric of recurrences, a cyclical repeating of types and events - with variations of those themes and topoi. Such a typological 'cycle' was seen by some writers (and their characters) as purposeless and void of promise and hope, and by others as a possibility for creativity and **play** which was not afforded by a linear and divinely intended typological structure. These differences in the perception and use of typological language do not necessarily follow a chronological order: the absence of divine sanction for the typological roles within which a literary character is cast is clearly cause for despair in Hardy's Tess of the d'Urbervilles of 1891, whereas for Carlyle, in the 1833 Sartor Resartus, this absence could be turned into a cause for positive moral activity. Nevertheless, there is a marked change, towards the end of the nineteenth century, from an Arnoldean call for 'intellectual seriousness' in religious matters, to the typological playfulness of such writers as H.G.Wells and August Strindberg.

Typology, in the hands of late Victorian writers, also changed in terms of its available range of types: whereas traditional typological exegesis involved a whole host of types, characters, and situations, these become (with few exceptions) gradually ignored in favour of the central, antitypical figure of Christ. There are several reasons for this centering upon Jesus as an individual rather than as part of the Trinity, part of God's promise of salvation for mankind. Obviously, with the basic premises of Christian faith lost or rejected, the resurrected Christ -

Son of God - is no longer present as an available, possible character-type. The earthly, individual Jesus - Son of Man - however, is. Also, the New Testament presented a guide to moral conduct which was much more acceptable to late Victorian sensibilities than that of the Old Testament, and the teachings of the New Testament texts are, of course, epitomised in the life and character of Jesus. Where the older Bible texts are concerned with society, the newer are to do with the individual. Finally, the nineteenth century is well known for its transition out of the world of objective myth and into the world of the subjective human consciousness. This objectifying and close scrutiny of 'self' found, perhaps, a perfect medium in the language and imagery of Christian typology as transformed by the late Victorian unbeliever.

In Part One of this thesis (after a brief discussion of the various definitions and most common themes of orthodox Christian typology), the above claims are developed, with each sub-section tracing a different aspect of late Victorian typology usage - and the differences and similarities between each writer's response to the possibilities afforded by a language, shaped by faith, in a climate pervaded by doubt. Parts Two and Three take a closer look at individual texts which form, or fall into, the two major strains of late Victorian literary use of typology. The works included in the first of these are, in their various ways, late Victorian answers to Thomas à Kempis' Imitation of Christ. They seek to establish characters which follow the typological path set down by the Jesus of the New Testament, and to let these characters reflect - often self-consciously aware of their demanding roles as re-interpreted Christ-types - on the changes which must necessarily be wrought to the society in which they find themselves. Typology usage in these texts is generally of an overt and structured kind, often designed to be unmissable, and striving to obey the above-mentioned call to 'intellectual seriousness' and Carlylean ardency. In the second of these strains, however, the typological images encountered strike a more self-contradictory,

covert, or playful note. They deal less with the **direction** which each character must take as type, and more with the **compulsion** we seem to have to read ourselves as types. The 'obvious' nature of the 'imitation' Christ-type is countered here by a vagueness, and therefore a greater freedom, of typological association. These shadowy suggestions of the archetypal Christ-motif, together with the many other changes made to biblical typology usage by late Victorian writers, brought nineteenth century literature a large step closer to a distinctly twentieth century view of our inherited religious discourse - a discourse out of which we are still writing.

Part 1 : Christian Typology and the Death of God

...

How came it we were tempted to create
One whom we can no longer keep alive

.....

Thomas Hardy, from 'God's Funeral'

DEFINITIONS

Vladimir: But you can't go barefoot!

Estragon: Christ did.

Vladimir: Christ! What's Christ got to do with it? You're not going to compare yourself to Christ!

Estragon: All my life I've compared myself to him.

Vladimir: But where he lived it was warm, it was dry!

Estragon: Yes. And they crucified quick.

Silence.

This exchange in Beckett's Waiting for Godot (1953) is, among other things, an obvious illustration of the 'death' of orthodox typology. As an example of figural comparison, it seems to demonstrate what has been claimed by typologically minded critics (1) - that all typology in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has become so secularised as to either turn into a parody of itself, or to vanish altogether. Vladimir's objections to Estragon's seeing himself as a shadow of Jesus, biblical typology's greatest anti-type, are based not on the perceived incongruence of inner value between the two, but on the difference in outer, physical circumstance - the climate. Estragon even implies that his own suffering is, in fact, worse than that of Christ on the Cross (one of the events most popularly signified in typological exegesis) because more drawn out; where Jesus lived, at least, "they crucified quick". Again, physical and not spiritual concerns decide whether the assignation of a Christ-type role is an appropriate one. No exceptional critical perception is needed to notice the fundamental change which has taken place somewhere along the line between, for example, Carlyle and Beckett - between the spiritual pilgrimage of Sartor Resartus' Diogenes Teufelsdröckh in the eighteen thirties, and the frustrated non-comings and non-goings of Vladimir and Estragon. This cannot be explained by some flaw in the latter's character: purpose and progression are simply not made available to him, they do not exist in his

world. (A possible half-way house between the two typological states may be found in George Moore's Esther Waters of 1894 - chronologically, too, placed half way between Carlyle and Beckett's works - with Esther as an unhappy pilgrim very much hampered by the importance of physical circumstance, but granted at least **some** chance of potential spiritual reward.) We find the typological image treated in much a similar way, its appropriateness being determined by circumstance and coincidence rather than by divine intention, in Bernard Shaw's 1895 play Candida, in a passage where the poet Marchbanks is using a biblical scene to ridicule the vicar who happens to be married to the woman Marchbanks loves: "Oh, it's an old story: you'll find it in the Bible. I imagine King David, in his fits of enthusiasm, was very like you. [*Stabbing him with the words*] 'But his wife despised him in her heart'." (2) Later, when challenged upon his use of this image, he defends himself, cutting the ties of figuralism by emphasising the difference in **physical** circumstance between his victim and the original biblical character: "No, no; I - I - [*Desperately*] it was David's wife. And it wasn't at home: it was when she saw him dancing before all the people."

The examples above imply that the language of typology has, indeed, lost most or all traces of its theologically orthodox significance with the progress of time. Nevertheless one would be misled to suppose that the orthodox application of figuralism, typological allegory, and other biblical topoi, was entirely impossible in late nineteenth century "post-loss-of-faith" literature, and that it can only be found in its strict sense in older texts. The assumption that the orthodoxy and 'genuineness' of religious language necessarily increase as we go back in time (and that the use of such language necessarily becomes weakened, corrupted, and desacralised as we approach the literature of our own century) is an easy one to make, and may have some usefulness as a generalisation, but a few examples will show the desirability of caution here.

The terminology used in connection with biblical typology has often been employed in texts where no such connotation is intended. As far back as in 1480, Robert Henryson wrote in The Moral Fabillis of Esope "Suppose this be ane fabill,/ And overheilte with typis figurall"(3). Clearly, this use of the words 'type' and 'figure' have to do with other kinds of allegory than biblical typology, and means simply that the fables should be interpreted as we would a parable; they exist on two parallel levels of meaning, literal and allegorical. In 1795, John W. Fletcher explained how he saw marriage as "the most perfect type of our Lord's union with His Church" - a typological image, perhaps, and one commonly used, but nevertheless one with a retrospective time-scheme and no theological basis in the Old Testament(4). And then, far advanced into the times of widespread religious doubt, we find Oscar Wilde, in 1898, thoroughly and faithfully adhering to a traditional understanding of the complex typological image of the Smitten Rock, which he develops in The Ballad of Reading Gaol: "But God's eternal laws are kind/ And break the heart of stone ... How else but through a broken heart/ May Lord Christ enter in?"(5) Intertwined with an image from Psalms 51:17 ("God, my sacrifice is a broken spirit; you, God, will not despise a chastened heart") this type originates from the event in the Old Testament (Exodus 17:6) where Moses is leading the Israelites through the desert, receiving in their desperation this instruction from God: "Behold, I will stand before thee there on the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shalt come water out of it, that the people may drink." The stricken rock is seen as a prefiguration of the crucified Christ bringing salvation to mankind through his own suffering - the new laws replace the old. Also, according to St. Paul, the water extracted from the rock "was Christ" (1. Cor. 10:4). An additional and relatively common interpretation sees Moses smiting the Rock as an adumbration of Christ bringing forth tears of repentance from the stony heart of the individual sinner (6); this is, of course, also part of the image evoked in Wilde's poem. A third, seldom

encountered, understanding of this type is that which connects it to the practice of baptism in the Christian Church. Another late Victorian, Christina Rossetti, develops the allegory even further in her 'Good Friday' of 1862:

'Am I a stone and not a sheep
That I can stand, O Christ, beneath Thy Cross,
To number drop by drop Thy Blood's slow loss,
And yet not weep?

...

Yet give not o'er,
But seek Thy sheep, true Shepherd of the flock;
Greater than Moses, turn and look once more
And smite a rock. (7)

The two biblical events of the Rock of Horeb and the Crucifixion, type and anti-type, combine to illustrate how God sanctions crushing and bruising to bring forth true value and redemption - and, added to this image of duality, Rossetti takes the flawed believer as a postfigurative type of the rock which craves smiting. (Incidentally, for an even more recent example of traditional yet experimental usage of this typological image - proving that typological thinking is **still** present in our cultural discourse - we need look to no more obscure a source than Nina Simone's 'Sinnerman'.)

These examples show that not only is it unwise exclusively to expect certain uses of figural language from certain periods of time, but also that such language itself can appear misleading - or, to put it more positively, that the interpretational possibilities inherent in the typological register are many and varied.

The first use of the word 'typology' seems to have occurred in 1845, in Patrick Fairbairn's Typology of Scripture, a popular work with the Victorians. As G.B. Tennyson notes;

That the word *typology* does not appear to have been used in earlier times is but a reflection of how much the practice we designate by the word was

previously simply a part of the furniture of the mind. It was not necessary to coin the word until the practice it denotes was no longer something to be taken for granted. (8)

Hugh Witemeyer, in George Eliot and the Visual Arts, suggests that 'type' to the Victorians signified "any exemplary moral or religious norm which finds successive incarnations in history."(9) Earl Miner observes that 'type' and 'figure' "may often be translated "symbol", "metaphor", or "allegory"."(10) Seeing that typological imagery also has a tendency to occur in conjunction with a wide range of other biblical topoi, in the shape of tropology, scriptural reference, and parable (evidence of which will follow), some confusion seems inevitable. As Robert Hollander muses while attempting to distinguish between Dante's 'allegory of the poets' and 'allegory of the theologians': "If we find a lady tempting us in a garden in a medieval poem, when is she to be considered an anti-type of Eve, and when are we merely to perceive that she should remind us of the moral significance of the Fall?"(11)

In the Literary Uses of Typology (12), modern scholars of biblical typology have voiced two major concerns - namely that literary critics have ignored the importance of typological symbolism, or even been unaware of its existence altogether, thus missing out on significant possibilities of meaning and failing to recognise the true value of individual works (George P. Landow, with his writings on Ruskin, is one among many to express this concern). Their second concern, it seems, is the exact opposite, that literary critics perceive typological symbolism behind every bush, as it were, thus failing to recognise the full value of this mode of exegesis itself. In the light of these paradoxical observations it seems that striking the right chord while writing about typology requires either careful discrimination, and obedience to the orthodox restrictions as to what is typology usage and what is not, or a decision to move beyond these limits in the way the authors themselves have done. In order to break the rules, however, one must

know the rules; and arriving at a reasonably exhaustive definition of the term 'typology' itself, moreover one which will be of help in the search for late Victorian literary uses of the same, is an essential although not quite straightforward task.

The definition offered in a conventional work such as the 1959 Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics concentrates on typology in its strict sense of biblical exegesis. Typological analysis is described as "the science, or rather, only too often, the curious art of discovering and expounding in the records of persons and events in the Old Testament prophetic adumbrations of the Person of Christ or of the doctrines and practices of the Christian Church."(13) Although this definition is exclusive and specific in its reference to the relationship between the two testaments, we also get the sense that the process of typological thinking is, to the author's partial regret, rather vague and romantic, based on personal experience and individual suggestion - a "curious art" more than a scientific exegetical practice limited by specific rules and regulations. The encyclopaedist admits that typological suggestions "are not without value and helpfulness if they are received gratefully, much as one might derive illuminating thoughts from the contemplation of a sacred picture, rather than as revelations possessing dogmatic authority", but adds that Christian typology has "flourished in times of ignorance and decay of learning". This combines to create an image of religious figuralism as, at best, a divine inspiration for the benefit of the humble, and not as an interpretational aid for the exegete, let alone the literary critic.

The idea of typological 'instinct' replacing 'intellect' is also found in Gerhard von Rad's Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament, in which he states that "what we are accustomed to understand under the heading of typology is, in a broad sense, by no means a specifically theological concern, or, indeed, a peculiarity of ancient Oriental thought. Rather, typological thinking is an elementary function of all human thought and interpretation."(14) Here, we find

typology extracted from within the boundaries not only of the Bible but of religion itself, and defined as a basic characteristic of the workings of the collective human consciousness (clearly a definition which erases most of the differentiation between anti-type and archetype). As an example of this universal function, von Rad offers in those same pages an image of the poet who, in the passing of the seasons, in his relationships with his fellow beings, and in everything in which "regularity reveals itself", sees the "often insignificant, obvious things and recognises in them ultimate value". His view of a typological pattern of repetition as an inevitable 'force of nature' is related to Oscar Wilde's claim, so typical of eighteenth eighties Aestheticism, that "Life imitates Art far more than Art imitates Life. This results not merely from **Life's imitative instinct** but from the fact that the self-conscious aim of Life is to find expression, and that Art offers it certain beautiful forms through which it may realise this energy."(15) Von Rad's version of typology represents in such a way a form through which life's (or literature's) repetitive energy can be expressed. This 'natural' understanding of typological allegory has, however, been discredited by traditional typologists as being altogether **too** inclusive and broad (16).

Unlike the examples above, most attempts at defining typology emphasise its dogmatic rather than its aesthetic value. Strictly considered, the structure of typological symbolism grants a way of interpreting the Bible and finding a meaningful relationship between the often disparate and self-contradictory texts included in the Bible canon. The assumption upon which orthodox typology rests is that God purposefully placed types (shadows, figures) in the Old Testament to be fulfilled by the anti-types - Christ and the Christian Church - in the New Testament, as a means of preparation and revelation. Types and anti-types - or as we might call them, signifiers and signifieds - are connected both by this divine intention and by the Christian's faith in them as historically, spiritually, and literally real. This ideal belief in both prefiguration and fulfilment as reality

separates typology from other forms of allegory, where what is symbolised may be an abstract quality or idea (as in The Pilgrim's Progress, for example). In this sense, typology is, in the words of George P. Landow, "the crucial fact that God arranged sacred history as a semiotic or signifying system which the spiritual eye can read."(17) Landow's words, from Victorian Types, Victorian Shadows, suggest that we see religious figuralism as something approaching a linguistic, textual, or even literary device - but one that was provided by God for man's interpretation and instruction. In a more general context, Erich Auerbach's Scenes From the Drama of European Literature offers this definition: "Figural interpretation establishes a connection between two events or persons, the first of which signifies not only itself but also the second, while the second encompasses and fulfils the first."(18) In other words, in general figuralism, the qualities of signification, connection, and fulfilment are still present, but they are abstracted from the requirements of Scripture. As a further aid to discrimination, Robert Hollander in his essay 'Typology and Secular Literature: Some Mediaeval Problems and Examples'(19), has added to the already lengthy list some instances of what he terms "improper" typological symbolism, among which are 'historical recurrence' - "attempts to create artificial and elaborate correspondences between a past person or event and a present one" - and 'decorative typology' - typological language and images used for effect or illustration only. Regarding the latter, Hollander argues that it is "merely a trope, one that may or may not indicate a larger typological interest in a given work, but that in itself confers no typological status on anything outside itself."(20)

As the list of possible and available definitions grows longer, it becomes obvious that no single definition could possibly cover all the varied instances of typological suggestion and usage in literature. Like all modes of criticism, the understanding of figuralism is constantly being defined and re-defined, and parallel to the change in understanding there must always be a change in usage.

All the definitions available are, naturally, tinted by the writer's own preferences, and as Earl Miner says; "Anyone seeking in literature for a single typological entity has a mind that would insist that all flowers be roses."(21) No such unity of typological message will be insisted upon in the following. The interest in late Victorian typological usage lies precisely in the authors' **departure** from such strict definitions, their rejection of certain aspects of religious language, and their creative employment of what remains available as literary devices. I use the word 'type' broadly but not loosely; it is intended in what follows to cover any biblical type, figure, image or situation which has traditionally been connected with the theory and practice of typological exegesis, and which is employed more or less consciously by the late Victorian writer to explore the many literary possibilities granted by such a connection.

However, although literature has, throughout the centuries, made extensive use of Christian typology as a rich source of symbolism, the examples of typology usage in secular texts greatly exceed the examples of typologically-minded, or even typologically aware, literary criticism of the same. The symbolic potential of a typological image - an image, say, which concerns sacrifice, or wine, or a marriage ceremony - may be recognised even today, but we are not very likely to be aware of the formal typological structure to which these symbols belong. In order to recognise and fully understand the various evidence of figuralism in the late nineteenth century texts with which this thesis is concerned, we must first become familiar with the basic terminology and most frequently recurring themes and topoi of traditional Christian typology. In other words; in order to see how these authors diverted from the orthodox norm, we must be acquainted with that norm itself. It is a case of being able to read, as it were, between the typological lines, at a time when biblical images are considerably less integral to our common imagination and discourse than they were towards the end of the last century. With this end in view, I shall offer a short list of some of the most common

christological types provided by the Old Testament, together with their counterparts in the New, and their orthodox theological explanations. These examples will also serve to show, more clearly than could be seen from the variety of definitions listed above, how the traditional typological image 'works'.

The Smitten Rock of Exodus 17:6 and its interpretations have already been mentioned; others include:

- God saying to the Serpent at the moment of the Fall; "I shall put enmity between you and the woman,/ between your brood and hers./ They will strike at your head,/ and you will strike at their heel." (Genesis 3:15) To bring about victory over Evil there must be a sacrifice - the bruising of the human heel as men and women battle the Serpent signifies the suffering of Christ, crucified as he conquers Death. Thus, this passage from Genesis represents a type of the Crucifixion.
- The Old Testament Eve, in this sense, finds herself in a similar position to that of the New Testament Mary: their offspring will bring them the greatest pain and sorrow, but also the greatest glory in their fight against, and eventual victory over, Evil. This repeated pattern of sacrifice and ultimate gain has meant that Eve is seen as a prefiguration of Mary; images of Mary crushing the Serpent beneath her feet are, for instance, frequently seen in the fine art of the Catholic Church.
- For similar reasons of comparative association, Adam, Moses, and John the Baptist (Jokanaan) are seen as prefigurative shadows of Christ; each type presenting a step in God's revelatory design.
- The slaying of the innocent Abel by his brother Cain is interpreted as prefiguratively corresponding to the slaying of the innocent Jesus by his fellow men.
- Joseph being sold by his brothers in the Old Testament is seen as a type of Jesus' betrayal by Judas in the New.
- David confessing his sin to the prophet Nathan (2 Samuel 12:13) is fulfilled by the Christian's act of confession and God's subsequent forgiveness.

- The Pisgah Sight (Deuteronomy 34:1-4), where God simultaneously rewards and punishes Moses by showing him the land of Canaan but denying him access to it ("I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither") has many and complex interpretations, but is most commonly seen as a prefiguration of how the Christian must die in God to gain salvation; Canaan, the Promised Land, being a type of Heaven.
- The persecution of the people of Israel is read as a type of the persecution of the early Christians by unbelievers. Likewise, the history of the Jews in the Old Testament has been accepted by typologists as a type of the history of mankind in later eras.
- In a broader sense, Jesus is seen as a fulfilment of **all** human history, and thus, pre- and post-figurations of his character and life are variously seen in the persons and events of classical myth and ancient history - and, increasingly, in secular literature.

According to Theodore Ziolkowsky, "This characteristically Christian mode of interpretation, which reached three pinnacles of popularity and influence - in the Alexandrine period, again in the twelfth century, and finally in the seventeenth century - maintained its authority until it was finally undermined by eighteenth-century rationalism and wholly discredited by the scientific criticism of the nineteenth century."(22) But, despite typology's loss of theological authority, how far can we say that this form of symbolism **was**, in fact, "wholly discredited", and what happened to its potential uses as a literary device after these fundamental changes in our intellectual history had taken place?

The area of time on which I have chosen to concentrate - 1875 to 1901 - is largely left out of the major studies on the literary uses of biblical topoi. Barry Qualls' Secular Pilgrims of Victorian Fiction analyses texts written between 1837 and 1880. (23) Landow, too, limits himself mainly to the early- and mid-Victorians. Paul J. Korshin has studied Typologies in England 1650 - 1820, and

Ziolkowsky, writing about modern literary uses of figuralism, takes the beginning of this century as his starting point. In general, the last quarter of the last century seems awkwardly stuck between the still mainly Christian (if doubting) discourse of the mid-Victorians and the wider, self-consciously mythological/parodic twentieth-century use of religious metaphors. Thus precariously balanced, the late Victorian discourse is frequently characterised by a general unease and even despair, as might be expected when a textual register full of the secure implications of Christian Promise is employed in texts whence all traces of such hope and belief have vanished. This is, after all, the period of time summed up in John Gross' much-quoted passage stating how, towards the end of the nineteenth century, "it is undoubtedly possible to detect ... a widespread faltering of Victorian self-confidence, a new edginess and uncertainty about the future." (24)

I am not arguing that the various examples of typological usage provided by the texts discussed in these chapters should be regarded as properly belonging to the main body of traditional typology - clearly, most of them do not; in most cases, the writers who made use of such imagery did not adhere to all the structural rules of biblical typology, nor did they want to accept the full implications of Christian belief inherent in the typological signifying system. But the examples' obvious abstraction and distance from orthodoxy do not render them invalid, invisible, or somehow 'wrong'. Nor does the fact that these examples of typology usage often coexist, in the relevant texts, with **other** forms of allegory make them less worthy of our attention. G.B.Tennyson, in an essay intended to "broaden the subject [*of literary uses of typology*] by taking it out of its present narrow home in Evangelical sectarianism", says;

The Tractarians ... did not suffer from the Evangelical mistake of trying to keep the bathwater of typology while casting out the baby of symbolism and allegory, an approach that also characterises much modern commentary on Victorian biblical typology, bound as such commentary is in its Evangelical fetters. We, too, need to see biblical typology in the Victorian

age as part of a larger, wider, and more varied continuation and reinvigoration of an enduring legacy of Christianity to art. (25)

There is something to be learnt from the way in which late Victorian writers and readers treated this kind of religious imagery as a 'common ground' for meaning and interpretation of meaning - even after the foundations of such language were found by many to be at best shaky, at worst non-existent. Moreover, viewing this usage against the background of its orthodox theological history, and noting the changes it has undergone, is more useful than simply dismissing it as "a sometimes lively and mocking, if hollow, form of what had once been religious vitality"(26). The very fact that the biblical register was so widely used in the last decades of the nineteenth century shows that, even beyond the exacting limits of orthodox Christianity, this language retained its communicative and imaginative power. Surviving into a time when 'genuine' biblical typology could be seen - and, indeed, increasingly **was** seen - as literary convention rather than literal truth, and as a form of symbolism which might inspire the secular writer as much as it had awe-inspired the faithful believer, typology's 'new' uses are well worth exploring.

It would be unrealistic, to say the least, to assume that the multiple attempts made by secular literature at defining religious truth (or lack of the same) through the medium of religious symbolism were matters of concern or interest to everybody towards the end of the century. Nevertheless, the extent of such concern can be glimpsed through the words of one Thomas G. Selby, from a lecture delivered in Liverpool in 1896 on "The Theology of Modern Fiction":

In the early centuries religious teaching was formulated in Church councils, and dispensed amongst the half-taught races of Christendom, without scowl of protest [*sic*] from the docile patient. It is a far cry thence to the present hour, when a large section of the public picks up its religious ideas outside the Church. The daily press coins the commercial and political creeds of our fellow countrymen, and the successful novel-writer coins the religious creeds of equally large numbers. It may be a question how long the currency will wear; but for the time being a dozen story-writers, whom it would be easy to name,

have influenced multitudes of people to an extent that may well be the despair of an equal number of trained divines or famous preachers.

Can any theology come out of fiction, and of fiction which is in no sense ecclesiastical in its basis? Is it not enough to make our dead novelists turn in their graves, to propose enrolling them into an assembly of divines who shall define for us articles of faith, and settle in any way the great questions of God, character, and human destiny?(27)

It appears, from the typological traces found in the literature of the time, not only that many members of the reading public picked up their religious ideas "outside the church" - which is obviously much to Selby's regret - but that these ideas were occasionally being placed outside their context of religious faith altogether. The question in those cases is no longer "Can any theology come out of fiction?", but "Is theology itself anything other than fiction?" Once this basis of faith was lost, typological language represented to many writers vast fields of both pitfalls and possibilities. The lack of an unchangeable signified centre could be cause for despair, **or** result in unexpected freedom of linguistic choice. As Holbrook Jackson suggests in his 1913 study, the late nineteenth century's awakening spirit "does not appear to be the realisation of a purpose, but the realisation of a possibility."(28)

MULTIPLICITY OF MEANING

Typological imagery has the peculiar quality of existing on, or moving between, at least two levels of meaning. Simultaneously, it embraces the context of the type and that of the anti-type; it embodies both meaning and the interpretation of meaning. In this, typology is the form of symbolism most readily generating multiplicity. Type and anti-type do not transform one into the other, but find their existence and interpretation **within** each other: the prefiguring image signifies not only itself but also its prefigured embodiment - it is, as we have seen in Erich Auerbach's definition, 'encompassed' and 'fulfilled', and these are words suggesting 'inside-ness'. As Landow describes this duality; "A typological image always has the potential to thrust the reader into another context, demonstrating in the process how everything and every man exist simultaneously in two realms of meaning."(1) An example of such coexisting levels of meaning might be that which is signified by the Holy Communion of the Catholic Church. At this sacramental event, the bread and wine postfigure the Last Supper and the sacrifice of Christ's body for man's salvation. What makes this an essentially more complex relationship than that which exists between the tenor and vehicle of an ordinary symbolic image, is that through transubstantiation the bread and wine are ideally believed to **be** the flesh and blood of Christ as well as to symbolise it. In secular literature, this symbolical complexity is not found quite so frequently, but a classic example would be Spenser's creation in The Faerie Queene (1590, 1596) who is, simultaneously, both a 'fairy queen', the embodied ideal of Glory, and Elizabeth 1. of England.

In reference to this multiplicity of symbolic meaning, it may be objected that after poststructuralism, this particular distinction between typological and other allegory loses some of its validity. As Paul De Man and J. Hillis Miller,

among others, have convincingly argued, **all** images have a free-floating multiplicity of meaning, an uncontrollable polysemy which is present in every text. The difference, perhaps, lies in typology's **conscious** and deliberate use of such multiplicity as a literary device. Multiplicity of meaning in poststructuralist readings shows how a text can "contradict" itself by saying 'both/and' instead of 'either/or', and these "contradictions" are often found **despite** what the text seems to express. In typological imagery, however, the multiplicity of meaning is present explicitly, overtly, as part of the design (whether one takes this 'design' to be of divine or human origin).

I have mentioned above how religious figuralism tends to occur in connection with several other types of biblical metaphor - for instance; the passage in the Old Testament where David's confession to Nathan is narrated contains not only this particular type (which, at the same time is its anti-type of Christian Confession), but also a **parable**, told by Nathan who happens to be a **prophet**. With a basic source of reference so rich in varied symbolical suggestion as practically to be a textbook in literary possibilities of allegory, the literature which borrows freely from such a typological source must necessarily reflect some of its complexity - a complexity which arises not only from the fact that several modes of symbolism may be applied simultaneously, but also that many typological images contain, refer to, or are intertwined with, **other** typological images.

In 1863, Roundell Palmer compiled his Book of Praise, consisting mainly of religious verse and hymns written a whole century earlier. One of these, A.M. Toplady's 'Rock of Ages', was popular throughout the nineteenth century (and is still very well known). Its first verse shows clearly the typical interwovenness of religious figuralism:

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee!
Let the water and the blood,

From Thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power! (2)

The verse is in fact a conglomerate of at least three figural images from the Bible: that of Moses striking the Rock of Horeb; that of Exodus 33:23 where Moses is allowed to catch a glimpse of God (and is placed by him in a cleft rock for protection from the overpowering glory of this sight); and that of the Crucifixion - we are reminded of the wound in Jesus' side gushing blood and, according to John 19:34, water - the Crucifixion being also "of sin the double cure". The three images combine to illustrate the Christian believer's need of help and a double, or even triple, alleviation of his iniquity. In addition, as we have already noted from 1.Cor.10:4, the water extracted from Horeb's Rock was, in a typological sense, Jesus, and the mention of the cleansing powers of water recalls the practice of baptism. Another hymn contained in the Book of Praise, John Newton's 'When Israel, by Divine Command' of 1799, adds yet another image to the ones above: "We drink a wondrous stream from Heaven/ 'Tis water, wine and blood". The wine, obviously, derives its typological significance from the Last Supper, as well as from several other biblical symbols connected with wine - like the changing of water into wine, and the various parabolic mentions of vineyards. The words of the hymn, thus, draw from the same symbolical source as the Song of Solomon, despite the obvious differences between the two songs in every other respect. It seems that the associative **meanings** of these symbols and types are as freely flowing as is the supposed "wondrous stream from Heaven" itself. I believe it is not too far-fetched to assume that the late Victorian readers' imagination and discourse were so steeped in biblical imagery as to invest with a certain spiritual significance words such as 'blood' and 'wine', even when they are used in a literary image which does not contain any specific biblical reference. These words' presence in the opening verse of the Ballad of Reading Gaol - "He did not wear

his scarlet coat,/ For blood and wine are red,/ And blood and wine were on his hands/ When they found him with the dead" - have the potential to "forewarn" its readers of the poem's christocentric context.(3)

This plurality of suggestion arises partly out of the fact that each traditional type is seen as a synecdoche, a part belonging to and signifying the whole of God's gospel scheme of revelation. So when Christina Rossetti asks "Am I a stone and not a sheep", the words 'stone' and 'sheep' take on a symbolic potential highly charged with their typological associations. The words put her readers in mind, consciously or subconsciously, of Moses striking the Rock, as well as Christ the Shepherd, the Lamb of God, the slaughtered scapegoat, and possibly also the throwing of the 'first stone'. Moreover, by the end of the nineteenth century, whenever a typological image is encountered, it inevitably opens a perceptual gate leading to the question that was, perhaps, foremost in the discourse at that time - that of religious faith versus doubt.

When drawing upon this multiplicity of meaning there is, however, no guarantee that all the implications of such complex forms of symbolism will reach the consciousness of those for whose appreciation and instruction it is intended. George Eliot, in "The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton" of 1858, is aware of this potential exegetical difficulty, as Barton is preaching "of Israel and its sins, of the Paschal lamb, of blood as a medium of reconciliation" to the inmates of a workhouse:

This very morning, the first lesson was the twelfth chapter of Exodus, and Mr.Barton's exposition turned on unleavened bread. Nothing in the world more suited to the simple understanding than instruction through types and symbols! But there is always this danger attending it, that the interest or comprehension of your hearers may stop precisely at the point where your spiritual interpretation begins. And Mr.Barton this morning succeeded in carrying the pauper imagination to the dough-tub, but unfortunately was not able to carry it upwards from that well-known object to the unknown truths which it was intended to shadow forth. (4)

It is significant that Eliot-the-narrator's mildly sarcastic distrust of typological exegesis as a mediator of truth stems from the inefficacy of the speaker and his poor audience, and not from the inadequacy of the typological images themselves. Still, it was George Eliot who translated into English David Friedrich Strauss' controversial work of 1835, Das Leben Jesu, which in its search for the 'real', historical, de-mystified Jesus saw typological interpretation of the Bible texts as a **literary device** used by early Christians eager to fulfil in new scripture the prophecies of the old, not, in other words, as a divinely intended pattern. Strauss' work proved an influential contribution to the secularisation of orthodox Christian faith, and showed to an increasingly defensive Church that typological imagery was far more endangered in the hands of a German critic than it would be in the clumsy sermons of a Reverend Barton. In 1890, James Frazer added force to the new strain of thought, by showing in The Golden Bough - a study in mythology - the many likenesses in motif and structure between the story of Christ and those, for instance, of Osiris and Adonis. Frazer's writings certainly contributed to bringing the 'anti-type' of Christian typology close (perilously close, in the eyes of orthodox believers) to the 'archetype' of secular myth. Here was material for an even further expansion of what figuralism might signify - and at the same time, typology's traditional core of religiously transcendent truth was gradually being eaten away in many quarters.

Because it was available for multiple application, for polysemy or plurisignation, typological allegory achieved a new appropriateness in many late Victorian texts: it corresponded to the budding suspicion that more than one interpretation of ultimate truth was possible - indeed, that the alternatives might be innumerable. (I do not, incidentally, mean to imply that typological language is multiple in a Derridean sense - in his sense, it is clearly 'unitary'). It is hard to overestimate the de-centering effects latent in the loss or rejection of religious security - one of the effects, certainly, was a growing understanding of what we,

post-Saussure, might call the relational arbitrariness of signifier and signified. Our experience or interpretation of reality are dependent on factors that are constantly changing, constantly multiplying. The beginnings of this sense of non-connection between the symbol and what it symbolises - other than the temporary connection which we bestow upon it ourselves - can be seen in the faith-crises of the late Victorians as the disappearance of a Christian **one**, although gradually and partially, made room for a secular **many**.

In 1891, at the publication of Tess of the d'Urbervilles, it was apparent that Hardy, for one, was withholding any "authorised" version of meaning and moral judgment. Tess is not a pastoral romance, or a novel about sexual politics or people's alienation from their agricultural environment, or an account of a progress-less pilgrimage - it is **all** of these things simultaneously, or any of them according to an individual interpretation: "The world is only a psychological phenomenon", as the author warns us early in the novel (5) discouraging the search for a definitive reading. This impression is further strengthened when, in a preface to Jude the Obscure written in 1895, he claims that "Like former productions of this pen", his last novel "is simply an endeavour to give shape and coherence to a series of seemings, or personal impressions, the questions of their consistency or their discordance, of their permanence or their transitoriness, being regarded as not of the first moment."(6) The reading and understanding of these novels, then, must be, as was the writing of them, personal, flexible, and with a multiplicity of possibilities in mind.

In terms of allegory, we have arrived here, in the eighteen nineties, from the fairly straight-forward context of the Pilgrim's Progress - where the character Hopeful is quite simply a personification of hope - via the Romantics and the mid-Victorians, and their shared fascination with the Doppelgänger and the double plot, enabling them better to understand a Frankenstein in terms of his Monster, or a Dorothea Brooke in terms of an analogous Rosamond Lydgate. Bulwer Lytton

described this duality as "a striking characteristic of the art of our century" and saw in it the combining of "an interior symbolical signification with an obvious popular interest in character and incident."(7) Qualls, in Secular Pilgrims, convincingly demonstrates how "Victorian novelists wrote and readers read with the "double plot" a part of their spiritual heritage."(8) But by the time of Tess, this interior symbolical signification had become so internalised in the minds of writer, character, and reader, as to be entirely relative to the individual character - a character which is, moreover, in flux: Tess, after her confession to Angel Clare on their wedding day, is met with his "You were one person; now you are another." She herself feels that after marrying Clare she is a different person from the one she was with Alec. Likewise, Alec is recognisable as a demon-figure, pitchfork in hand, but nevertheless one who turns to religion with fervour. Angel is, correspondingly, and as his name signifies, an angel-figure, but one who causes as much suffering as any Alec d'Urberville might do, if not more. There are no static and absolute poles to which interpretation can be fixed, and Hardy's use of biblical types allows for this basic uncertainty. If Tess can be seen as a postfigurative type of Christ, it is a sadly ironic, twisted, and disappointed type - a reflection in a cracked mirror.

This problem of identification is noticeable not only to the reader but to the characters themselves. Sergius in George Bernard Shaw's play Arms and the Man (1894) shows how a character can be baffled and troubled by the multiplicity of 'types' and 'figures' he is harbouring within himself, be they typological or archetypal: pondering over the "half dozen Sergiuses that keep popping in and out of this handsome figure of mine", he tries to establish which one is his actual, 'true' role to play -

SERGIUS [*speaking to himself*] Which of the six is the real man? That's the question that torments me. One of them is a hero, another a buffoon, another a humbug, another perhaps a bit of a blackguard.

[*he pauses and looks furtively at Louka as he adds, with deep bitterness*]

And one, at least, is a coward: jealous, like all cowards. (9)

Cut loose from their anchor of orthodox figural patterns, characterisation and identification, like meaning, are potentially free-flowing, and what would have been perceived by the characters as 'different sides of themselves' now appear as 'different selves' altogether. This problem of identification also appears in a play, written two years previous to Arms and the Man, which holds obvious typological concerns: Oscar Wilde's Salomé. True to traditional typological assumption, we find John the Baptist, or Jokanaan, prefiguring Christ, and we are given various clues to this figural relationship - for instance, Salomé saying to Jokanaan "thy hair is horrible. It is covered with mire and dust. It is like a crown of thorns which they have placed upon thy forehead. It is like a knot of black serpents writhing round thy neck."(10) But we also encounter disputing amongst the Jews whether Jokanaan is not also postfigurative, a reincarnation of sorts, of the prophet Elias. The validity of typology itself is being discussed by characters who exist within a setting which is traditionally one belonging to the typological framework:

HEROD: But I have heard it said that Jokanaan himself is
your prophet Elias.

THE JEW: That cannot be. It is more than three hundred years
since the days of the prophet Elias.

HEROD: There be some who say that this man is the prophet Elias.

A NAZARENE: I am sure that he is the prophet Elias.

THE JEW: Nay, but he is not the prophet Elias. (11)

...And so on. Multiplicity of choice concerning the role a figural character is expected to play can clearly make classification a more complex matter than it was in the context of a mere 'double plot'.

The late Victorian non-believer might be excused for thinking that the diversity of biblical reference and the variety of possible typological meaning bore no relation to the actual amount of 'truth' that lay beneath. It was, after all, this view of the contemporary world as all "external varnish" and no "inner truth" - all

signifiers and no signified - which so concerned Carlyle, especially from the time of Sartor Resartus onwards, and so embittered his later writings. Still, he could find potential refuge and meaning in religious emblematic language and the possibility that there was something worth salvaging from underneath the masses of "old clothing". Not so for Hardy's Jocelyn Pierston in The Well-Beloved: his search for successive anti-types to fulfil his ideal fails, because only within the temporary reality of his own mind does the Well-Beloved actually exist. Meaning, for him also, is migratory - it can be glimpsed, but never held down by any permanent means of interpretation. Pierston's search for ultimate value is, of course, a search for the ultimate **woman** in whose figural links with the past he can invest his future; it is a love-story more than it is an account of a search for intellectual certainty and unity of symbols. But then, we know that in Hardy's novels, showing how men and women fare in love, specifically, is also a way of showing how well or badly they fill their roles in life generally - as well as defining what those roles are perceived to be: love itself takes on an allegorical meaning in its quality of being "the strongest passion known to humanity". (12)

Reading George Gissing's New Grub Street (1891), we find this fear of *multiplicity and confusion on the surface* coupled with *emptiness within* mirrored in relation to secular as well as religious literature. The disillusioned Alfred Yule holds that "the evil of the time is the multiplication of ephemerides. Hence a demand for essays, descriptive articles, fragments of criticisms, out of all proportion to the supply of even tolerable work."(13) We are presented with a picture of the intellectual life of the eighteen eighties as one of great, even frenzied, activity - innumerable attempts made at describing, criticising, evaluating, interpreting - but the fact that there is very little real value to be discovered behind these fragments renders the work meaningless, and more than a little ridiculous. It is the 'market' and the self-delusion of the people who live by the literary 'trade' that lends meaning to all this critical activity, not the end result

of their research into texts; and 'men of letters' run around in circles of endless self-reference, since there really is little else to refer to. The world which Gissing describes is that which so concerned Matthew Arnold in 'Rugby Chapel' (ll. 60-66):

Most men eddy about
Here and there - eat and drink,
Chatter and love and hate,
Gather and squander, are raised
Aloft, are hurled in the dust,
Striving blindly, achieving
Nothing ...

The only possible *ascension*, here, is the confusing hurling about in the dust, and any latent *understanding* is drowned in chattering. (We will see this image of being hurled about in confusion, signifying an earthbound life without religious faith, running through many late Victorian texts - it is repeated, for example, by The Elements in Strindberg's A Dream Play, complaining of men's fate as "Sons of dust in dust they walk"...(14))

If it takes no great leap of the imagination to transfer this image to the late twentieth century, it is an image which is also easily applied to the context of biblical exegesis as perceived by many late Victorians. Jasper Milvain, persuading his sisters to turn to literary work for a solution to their economic problems, tells them how "There's a tremendous sale for religious stories; why not patch one together? I am quite serious."(15) Having to 'patch together' a religious 'story' from multiple scraps and fragments does not bode well for the actual truth-value of that story's contents - we are, of course, in the symbolical territory of Sartor Resartus, here, and are put in mind of the six infernal paper bags full of Teufelsdröckh's notes. Gissing adds subtle irony by Milvain's assurance that he is "quite serious" - the word 'serious' carrying, even to the late Victorian mind, connotations of 'religiously devout'. This understanding of the word had survived from Law's Serious Call in the eighteenth century via the language, for example,

of George Eliot, whose use of the word almost invariably seems to denote 'morally righteous' and 'emotionally earnest'. New Grub Street, it appears, is a world where the 'letter killeth' quite unrelieved by the 'spirit that giveth life'.

There were of course many late Victorians to whom this multiplicity of images and meanings was a source of inspiration rather than intimidation, and in whom it generated renewed energy rather than confused stagnation. Gerard Manley Hopkins, for one, managed successfully to interweave complex typological references into poems based on firm christocentrism, as Landow has shown in his aforementioned study. William Sharp (or 'Fiona MacLeod'), sole contributor to 'The Pagan Review' of 1892, wrote enthusiastically in the preface to his Vistas: "A great creative period is at hand, probably a great dramatic epoch. But what will for one thing differentiate it from any predecessor is the new complexity, the new subtlety, in apprehension, in formative conception, in imaginative rendering."(16) Indeed, as we have seen in Holbrook Jackson's Eighteen Nineties, the 'new' multiplicity meant for several of the *aesthetes* of the 'eighties and the *decadents* of the 'nineties a regeneration rather than a degeneration. The great number of possible meanings latent in typological allegory certainly suited the "decade of a thousand movements", and multiplicity of contents naturally had to bring about some change in form: "Literature was drawn into the firing line of the times. Novels and plays not only became more outspoken, but sentences became more epigrammatic and thoughts more paradoxical. No one could say how the most innocent of sentences might explode in the last word, any more than one could prophesy what somersault one's favourite belief might take in its latest incarnation."(17) The abruptness of epigram and unexpectedness of paradox (as expressed, notoriously, by Wilde and James McNeill Whistler) and the exacting nuance and fineness of phrase (as typified by Pater and Swinburne) were favoured aids to the expression and interpretation of the complexities of an age which acutely **felt** itself to be complex.

But the fact nevertheless remained that multiplicity of meaning could be problematic - and very much so when placed in conjunction with the question of religious faith, doubt, and the assessment of truth. As the biblical figure of Queen Herodias comments in Wilde's censored play: "Ho! ho! miracles! I do not believe in miracles. I have seen too many."(18)

SACRIFICE

Famine, pestilence and war are no longer essential for the advancement of the human race. But a season of mental anguish is at hand, and through this we must pass in order that our posterity may rise. The soul must be sacrificed; the hope in immortality must die. A sweet and charming illusion must be taken from the human race, as youth and beauty vanish never to return.(1)

The passage above is taken from Winwood Reade's Martyrdom of Man of 1872, which achieved great popularity towards the end of the century. Reade interestingly turns the biblical notion of sacrifice on its head; it is the **reward** of religious sacrifice - the hope and promise inherent in the Christian doctrine - which must itself be sacrificed. We understand by the word sacrifice that something valuable must be renounced in order that something of greater value may be obtained: in orthodox typology the Rock must be smitten, the heel of man must be bruised by the serpent, and Christ must be crucified, to obtain the salvation and immortality of human beings. To Reade, however, the only possibility of our advancement as a race lies in a painful abandoning of these images of hope, and the acknowledgment of something less 'sweet', more 'real'.

Typologically, suffering and bruising are given for a purpose, and the effects and rewards of the ordeal come in shapes of cleansing, spiritualisation, and completion: the supreme sacrifice of the Crucifixion is the divinely sanctioned

fulfilment of all previous prefigurations as well as the mould set for all types to come. There is "DIVINITY ABOVE IT", as the popular Victorian preacher Henry Melvill emphatically stated.(2) The sacrifice is also a visible sign of man's unbroken or restored relationship with his God. But an absence of religious faith meant the loss of any such **meaning** behind the sacrifice; suffering, therefore, is increasingly seen in the late nineteenth century as something which is permanently with us and brings no compensation; it bears no justifying relation to what we morally deserve: "Once victim, always victim - that's the law!" as Hardy's Tess interprets it.(3)

The message of one influential author of the age - Mrs. Humphry Ward - is that mental anguish like that of which Winwood Reade prophesied in the passage above is necessary and desirable, and that there are moral, intellectual, and emotional prizes to be won as one emerges on the other side: a Christian view of sacrifice, although abstracted from its orthodox religious context. In Ward's most widely read novel, *Catherine Elsmere* radically alters her deeply embedded way of religious thinking to suit her husband Robert's (unorthodox but still distinctly religious) 'agnosticism'. She eventually recognises "the saint in the unbeliever"; in an immense effort of compromise she interprets his new ideas as simply another branch of "God's many languages", and concludes: "That is what has been hidden from me; that is what my trouble has taught me; the powerlessness, the worthlessness of words. *It is the spirit that quickeneth*. I should never have felt it so, but for this fiery furnace of pain."(4) We see that Catherine's new wisdom is, for all its compromise, still expressed almost entirely through the language of the Bible (and as a twentieth-century reader will be reminded, the first part of her hidden biblical quotation - 'The Letter Killeth' - was to be used as an epigraph in an 1896 novel of a very different outlook: *Jude the Obscure*). Ward, however, is subtly but radically changing the traditional typological idea by presenting Elsmere himself as a Christ-figure - going in amongst the poor to provide

piritual relief, conquering personal suffering and sacrifice for a 'greater good', hocking the sensibilities of the 'society' that surrounds him, and reaching spiritual fulfillment through death - but here, the emphasis is placed firmly on Jesus as **man**, not Son of God. Ward's antitypal figure shares his characteristics with that created by Ernest Renan in his Vie de Jesus, more than with the Christ of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Robert Elsmere is one of several novels much read in the decades following their publication (the Martyrdom of Man had gone through twenty-four editions by 1926) to see the painful rejection of orthodox religion as a prerequisite clearing of the ground to make room for new and better philosophies; others which made use of de-mystified Christ-types with this purpose in mind were E.L.Linton's True History of Joshua Davidson of 1872, and Hall Caine's The Christian of 1897.

Tess Durbeyfield, however, although believing in "the spirit of the Sermon of the Mount", does not reach the same conclusions as Catherine Elsmere about the spiritual significance of sacrifice. Alexandrian typological exegetes described sacrifice as "the soul's progression towards God"(5), but Hardy bestows on Tess no such progression as a result of her suffering. He sees her as she sees herself, "an unhappy pilgrim" fully aware of the "long and stony highway which she had to tread, without aid, and with little sympathy."(6) In her perception of reality an Old Testament sense of guilt abides (she symbolises to herself "a figure of Guilt intruding into the haunts of Innocence"), but this guilt is unrelieved by New Testament redemption - what Tess **does** inherit from the New Testament is far from typical of its pervading message of forgiveness, and is captured in the words "THY. DAMNATION. SLUMBERETH. NOT." The events of Tess' life are always consistent with the typological 'bruising' theme of Genesis 3:15-17, and so her experience of motherhood is closely obedient to the command of these verses: "In sorrow thou shalt bring forth thy children". It is the vague but pervasive memory of this Old Testament passage that makes her choose 'Sorrow' as a fitting

ame for her newly-born son. In her mirroring of the biblical story, internalising the words of the Bible into her own life's events, Tess is half-consciously contributing to the casting of herself and her child as tragically postfigurative types.

As Tess' life echoes familiar typological situations, our traditional interpretations of these situations are rendered inapplicable or impossible by the absence of any redemptive quality which could give sanction to, or justification of, the suffering, and eventual "sacrificial" execution, of Tess. As Lance Butler points out in his Thomas Hardy, "It is almost as if Hardy has accepted, for his poetic purposes, the claim that Christ stood for all humanity when he suffered, and now turns that equation about to claim that any suffering human is Christ."(7) And so Tess, Jude, Sue, and 'Father Time', in their various ways, stand for Christ, but without his chance of fulfilment of the redemptive promise originally facilitated by suffering within the realm of biblical figuralism.(8)

Another form which this Christian promise takes, is the assurance of forgiveness following the act of confession. The Old Testament type of David's confession to Nathan, and its reading as being prefigurative of the Christian doctrine of confession, has already been mentioned. Confession and the acknowledgment of sin, like the act of sacrifice, is an event which within the context of the biblical tradition symbolises ultimate value. The two acts are closely related, in religion and in literature, by their mutual offering up of past sins or present lives in search of some justifying reward: this is ascension by virtue of degradation, a familiar religious concept. Allegorically, confession as well as sacrifice carry connotations of man's close relationship with God, and the affirmation of Grace. Oscar Wilde follows this tradition in De Profundis, in stating how "A man's very highest moment is, I have no doubt at all, when he kneels in the dust, and beats his breast, and tells all the sins of his life."(9) In Chapter 35 of Tess, however, we are given a very different scene of confession, as

ess tells the story of her past to Angel just after their wedding. This scene is rted with a "Last Day luridness" rather than with the scriptural light of grace and rginence. In the biblical type, David is spared and forgiven, but the prophet athan tells him that "the LORD has laid on another the consequences of your sin: ou will not die, but, since by this deed [*David's having a child by Uriah's wife athsheba*] you have shown contempt for the LORD, the child who will be born to ou shall die." The sins of the parent are visited upon the child - Sorrow, the uit of Tess' 'sin', is already dead, and Angel reminds her of the "wretches of our esh and blood growing up under a taunt which they will gradually get to feel the ull force of with their expanding years." (10) The figural link between these two vents of confession - one with the reconciliation of forgiveness, one without - ontra-distinguishes Tess-as-antitype from her biblical past, a distinction which is einforced when Angel, after his return from Brazil, remembers with regret how he ad "thought of the woman taken and set in the midst as one deserving to be stoned, and the wife of Uriah being made a queen." (11) The characters' own naming of their specific biblical backdrop, their awareness of their places as repetitions in a pre-set biblical pattern, makes certain that the reader will not miss the intended parallels.

In the last Phase of the novel, ironically entitled 'Fulfilment', we find Tess and Angel at last at the ultimate setting for an act of sacrifice - Stonehenge - shortly before the apprehension and execution of Tess. Angel's "Sleepy are you, dear? I think you are lying on an altar" (12) contributes to making obvious the fact that Tess is about to be 'sacrificed', and his keeping watch over her, as she sleeps in the open air, does not fail to bring to mind the biblically equivalent scene of Jesus and the Disciples in Gethsemane on the night of the apprehension. When the police arrive at dawn, Angel springs to his feet, looking around him for "a weapon, loose stone, means of escape, anything", in much the same way as Simon Peter drew the sword to protect his Master. Tess, however, fulfils the requirements of

er Christ-type role by stepping forward and offering herself, saying "It is as it could be." But for Tess, there is no hope of resurrection; in his use of typological symbolism in this novel, Hardy effectively exposes the **contrast** between the image in its Christian context and its shadow in a context of unbelief. In childbirth, Tess is postfiguring Eve and Mary - but in dying, Sorrow does not conquer Death. In confession, Tess is postfiguring David - but finds no forgiveness in Angel-as-Nathan. And in being sacrificed, Tess is mirroring Christ but is deprived of the promised resurrection. The message driven home by Hardy's brand of late nineteenth-century figuralism seems to be that there is a dimension missing; that although the biblical types and figures are still very much present in our ways of thinking and writing about ourselves, the promise and fulfillment they used to represent are beyond our reach.

NOSTALGIA

Since several of the present-day typologically-minded critics mentioned earlier have expressed a certain nostalgia for the traditional and orthodox use of figuralism - we recall, for example, Ziolkowsky's complaint that 'modern' typology usage has become a "hollow form of what had once been religious vitality" (1) - it is perhaps ironic that the late Victorian types here looked at almost invariably exist within an environment of distinct nostalgia, expressed either by those types themselves, or by the writers who evoke them. If biblical typology consists of 'lesser' types anticipating and being encompassed by a 'greater' anti-type, its secular version seems rather to be the lesser looking back wistfully at the greater - or at the past hope, faith, and certainty being generated by that greater, which is now partially or completely lost. Roundell Palmer and his 1863 Book of Praise - the nineteenth-century collection of hymns and religious verse consisting mainly of material from the eighteenth century - has already been mentioned; it seems appropriate to this particular strain of the late Victorian *zeitgeist* that a collector of verse suitable for devout worship should find material from the, by then, quite distant past preferable to what was written by his contemporaries. Strictly devotional poetry was, of course, still being written towards the end of the century - but as we noted in the extract from Thomas Selby's Liverpool lecture, by 1896 a slightly embittered harking back to the "early centuries", when unquestioning faith was (believed to be) universal, and the prescribed dose of Christian doctrine was received without protest from the

"docile patient" by the hands of trained divines rather than poets and novelists, is manifestly present.

Two centuries previous to this, the New England preacher Increase Mather had written in his Mystery of Israel's Salvation that "God hath in former times bestowed more eminent and wonderful salvations upon the Israelitish Nation than upon any Nation in the world ... but because their deliverance was a TYPE of this [*sic*], therefore this will be more eminent and wonderful, for the TYPE must needs come short of the ANTITYPE."(2) But in the literary environment where Tess and Jude serve as postfigurative types, the reverse seems more true: it is reality which comes short of expectations. Hope of fulfilment has become an impossibility, and it is the "Unfulfilled Intention" that makes life what it is. Emphasis lies on the contrast as well as the similarity between type and anti-type still, but no longer in meditation upon how much **better**, how complete and completing the anti-type must necessarily be - rather in despair at how these postfigurations themselves and their environments have failed to meet the standards set down by the hopes and aspirations of the past.

The parallels between Jude and Jesus established in Jude the Obscure (1896) are numerous, but (unlike the christological references in, for example Robert Elsmere) they are not placed there to make the reader consider the protagonist a man of superior morality, or greater strength of character, or possessed of healing power: "Weary and mud-bespattered, but quite possessed of his ordinary clearness of brain, he sat down by the well, thinking as he did so what a poor Christ he made."(3) Jude-as-Christ is rather a pathetic type - more like the 'Christ' we met at the beginning of the chapter in the shape of Beckett's Estragon than the original biblical anti-type. His painful shortcomings as a type are as clear to him as they are to the reader. Angel Clare as type is also explained in terms of his failure to fulfil: "Like a greater than himself, to the critical question at the critical time he did not answer."(4) When Jesus, the 'greater', was questioned by

his accusers (Matthew 26:62), his silence is a sign of his complete assurance of the truth that lies in the promise of resurrection. When Angel, the 'lesser', is silent, however, it is because of his reluctance to express his **unbelief** in immortality, at a time when hope of this kind is so eagerly sought by Tess. So in pointing out the likenesses between the behaviour of Jesus and that of Angel at these highly pressurised moments, Hardy is, in fact, stressing the essential **difference** and incongruity of context between type and anti-type - existing, as they do, one in the dimension of faith and hope, the other in that of unbelief and despair. Familiar motifs are used to illustrate alienation; similarities make explicit the disturbing gap between promise and fulfillment. These late nineteenth-century characters frequently seem to cast themselves in roles of typological importance by their way of internalising the language and figures of the Bible, but this casting of roles, in its turn, serves only to start a deconstruction of themselves-as-types. They dwell in disillusion on the dissimilarities they reveal. It follows that when a late Victorian type (or, strictly, anti-type), with its literary roots inextricably planted in first-century biblical history, is denying Christian faith, it is inevitably denying **itself** at the same time. The 'post-loss' type is, in a sense, breaking the mirror which holds his or her own reflection - "I'd have myself unbe." It is not uncommon in these texts to find characters musing, to various effects, on their own place in history. Dorian Gray, for example, experiences times when it appears to him "that the whole of history was merely the record of his own life, not as he had lived it in act and circumstance, but as his imagination had created it for him." (5) Dorian's solipsistic imagination has the entire human history reduced to fit into his own self - how different for Tess, who feels **herself** reduced at the thought of what has gone before and what is to follow:

‘Because what is the use of learning that I am one of a long row only - finding out that there is set down in some old book somebody just like me, and to know that I shall only act out her part; making me sad, that’s all. The best is not to remember that your nature and your past doings have been just

like thousands' and thousands', and that your coming life and doings'll be like thousands' and thousands'.' (6)

Her words, in reminding the reader that there is "set down in some old book" a figure like Tess, is re-enforcing the typological structure of the narrative - at the same time as it is undermining that very structure by emphasising its meaninglessness. In terms of Tess' reality, of course, her reluctance to study history is part of her nostalgia for her previous innocence of mind as well as body. The lesson taught by insight can be 'unlearnt' as little as her own life can 'unbe'.

We see, then, that a reversal of the figural time-scheme of progression has taken place: typology has, as it were, become 'a shadow of its former self'. Or, if we are to adhere to Bultmann's argument that "typology is distinguished as recurrence in cyclical time and prophecy is fulfilment in linear time"(7), the types we are dealing with here turn back upon their previous incarnations, completing the cycle without being able to transfer onto them a sense of completion or realised purpose. The prevailing mood of late Victorian figuralism is one of looking backwards, not of anticipation. Even the theme in Tess of the Durbeyfield family's former glory (dubious honour though it is) has this feel of a kind of latter-day *ubi sunt* - as John Durbeyfield is reminded by the parson in Chapter 1, and as is later inscribed on his unpaid-for gravestone: "How are the mighty fallen."(8) It is as if these secular types of a religious past have come upon the symbolical positions they occupy by default - **despite** the incongruity between themselves and that which they are metaphorically mirroring, rather than **because of** the figural similarities they possess. We know that as Hardy gradually lost his faith in Christianity and the truth behind most of its discourse, his novels became increasingly pervaded by religious imagery and numerous direct and indirect references to the Bible texts. The presence of Tess as a Christ-figure is, paradoxically, necessitated and explained by her absent faith:

If only she could believe ... How confidently she would leave [*her child and her siblings*] to Providence and their future kingdom! But, in default of that, it behoved her to do something; to be their providence. (9)

There are times when Tess in her role as type is allowed to transcend - temporarily - her 'compared-with-the-past' inadequacy, as in the apprehension scene at Stonehenge as she offers herself for sacrifice with resigned self-assurance, or at the makeshift christening of Sorrow. In her task of delivering the sacrament of baptism, she moves closer to a figural 'grandeur' and to a significance that has some of the qualities of "her" biblical past. But in consequence of this elation, her bonds with the immediate present are weakened; her siblings feel that she has moved completely beyond them and their environment:

The children gazed up at her with more and more reverence, and no longer had a will for questioning. She did not look like Sissy to them now, but as a being large, towering and awful - a divine personage with whom they had nothing in common. (10)

However, as would be the case with her fellow 'progress-less pilgrim' Estragon in the twentieth century, Tess' typological affinities with a biblical literary past are partly due to outer circumstance. Although it is the "ecstasy of faith" that "almost apotheosized her", it also helps the creation of this image that "The kindly dimness of the weak candle abstracted from her form and features the little blemishes which sunlight might have revealed."(11) In full daylight and "clearness of brain", we know that Tess and Jude alike make for 'poor christs'. We recall that in orthodox typology, what connects the type with its anti-type, in addition to the divine intention, is **faith**. It appears that one of the consequences of having lost faith in the reality of this relationship between type and anti-type is that the 'modern' (late Victorian) type has lost its inherent duality - it cannot exist in past and present simultaneously, cannot contain both expectation and reality, although it retains the ability to thrust the reader into two or more separate 'layers' of

textuality, most notably the biblical and the present. The breach that occurred at the alienation from faith has sent type and anti-type into separate and mutually inaccessible spheres, the widening gap between which they are continuously attempting to bridge.

This change is consistent with what Ziolkowsky sees as one of the main features of twentieth century use of typology. He notes that "the modern action is **contrasted** with the prefiguring type; in order to bring out the full effect of the contrast the author permits his antitypal characters to reflect on the differences of time and circumstance."(12) As we have seen, many of the late nineteenth-century antitypal characters are certainly equipped with a disappointed sense of their distance from the 'original', a sense of their being, somehow, mismatched or misnamed. Even when the characters themselves are not being made explicitly aware of their sub-standard quality as types in the way Jude is, when seated by the well in the passage cited above, the reader is given clues to that effect. Angel, during the 'Garden of Eden' spell at Talbothays, enjoys giving Tess playful status as a type of pagan deities: "He called her Artemis, Demeter, and other fanciful names half teasingly, which she did not like because she did not understand them."(13) The reader and the narrator know, however, that these names represent the goddesses, respectively, of chastity and fertility - qualities which would scarcely have made the girl feel more at ease with her glorious nicknames if she **had** understood them.

Clare's father, too, recognises his son as a "misnamed Angel". It is interesting that this hint at the inappropriateness of Angel-as-type occurs alongside an image which actually serves to heighten the tragedy of his figural status: Mr. Clare "in secret mourned over his treatment of him as Abraham might have mourned over the doomed Isaac while they went up the hill together."(14) Hardy has borrowed this image from the notorious passage in Genesis 22 where Abraham, in obedience to God's command, takes his only son up to a mountain in

Moriah to sacrifice him. Isaac has to carry the firewood himself - naturally, this has been regarded as an adumbration of Christ carrying his own cross to the Crucifixion. As well as emphasising Angel's role as sufferer (and, as sufferer in Hardy's writing, receiving at least a partial Christ-type status), this reference to a rather controversial part of the Old Testament places an obvious question-mark over the justice of old Clare's treatment of his sceptical son, and the desirability of such unquestioning adherence to the strict laws of society and religion. (We remember that Kierkegaard had renewed this controversy by his extensive discussion of Abraham's 'near-sacrifice' as a theological suspension of the ethical in his Fear and Trembling written some fifty years before Tess was published.)

It may be that Hardy's emphases on the individual experience of reality, and his and his characters' disillusion with Christianity have, in these examples of literary use of typology, combined to create an atmosphere which even poses the question of whether such a system of comparison is at all a possibility. This scepticism towards a universal code of stereotypes is partially a remnant of Romanticism, and was re-awakened by Walter Pater in his conclusion to The Renaissance: "In a sense it might even be said that our failure is to form habits: for, after all, habit is relative to a stereotyped world, and meantime it is only the roughness of the eye that makes any two persons, things, situations seem alike."(15) The renewal of emphasis on the uniquely individual experience was, as we know, to be invigorated to an even greater extent by Ibsen and Strindberg shortly after this time.

Can we, with any degree of certainty, draw definite comparisons between any two persons or events, and implicitly **believe** in this connection between them - or is it simply our lack of perception and insight which enable us to create such systems of symbolism? These questions are echoed by Oscar Wilde, in De Profundis (1897), this time, significantly, from within a christocentric context: "Christ had no patience with the dull lifeless mechanical systems that treat people

as if they were things, and so treat everybody alike; for him there were no laws: there were exceptions merely, as if anybody, or anything, for that matter, was like aught else in the world!"(16) According to Wilde, then, Christ himself - the very focal point and *sine qua non* of biblical typology - rejected the thought of a system of comparison. Still, the inventive and highly symbolically charged imagery of typology could hardly be called 'dull' and 'lifeless', whether one had stopped believing in its Christian core or not. Both Wilde and Hardy, despite their reservations about such organised parallel-making, availed themselves of typological language and images as a means of expression. In a sense, typology itself offered a compromise in its insistence on the individual type's 'real' existence as a historical entity, despite its quality of being interconnected with its anti-type. Wilde and Hardy did make "persons, things, situations seem alike" from either side of the faith/doubt fence, but with their concentration focused more closely on the word '**seem**' than was usual in traditional, hopeful typology.

VAGUENESS

We can follow Bunyan through all the incidents of his journey; we know the Valley of Humiliation, the Valley of the Shadow, and Doubting Castle, but we are not sure, as he was sure, that the wayfarer will reach a celestial home at last. Upon this subject most of us hesitate to speak. We may hope and we may even believe, but an unmistakable instinct warns us to be silent. Perhaps, however, without disobeying it, we may be permitted to say almost in a whisper, that a man who has passed from youth to old age cannot naturally rest in the sad conviction that what he has learned is to go for nothing, and that in no sense is there any continuance for him. Our faith may have no demonstrable foundation, and yet it may be a refuge for us. Our lives are shaped by so-called dreams. (1)

The words belong to William Hale White (Mark Rutherford), from 1904. White knows, as well as his readers do, that saying that a man "cannot naturally rest in the sad conviction that what he has learnt is to go for nothing" in reality does nothing to reassuringly convince us that this is **not** so - it simply deprives man of his 'natural rest'. Moreover, in his writing about Bunyan and the religious certainty of the literary past, he touches on one of the more prevalent features of the late Victorian mind - that of vagueness: "we are not sure". The hesitation to speak, the speaking "almost in a whisper", the lives "shaped by so-called dreams", the faith "based on no demonstrable foundation", and the many guarded **mays** - these expressions make explicit an obvious but easily neglected point: what is termed 'the Victorian loss of faith', like everything else, was not something that was non-existent one day and omnipresent and indisputable the next; it was rather the increasingly visible body of a development that was rooted as far back in

intellectual history as the discoveries of Copernicus, and that had grown innumerable off-shoots along its way through the centuries. When writing about these three decades steeped in wide-reaching debate concerning faith versus doubt, it is easy to give the impression that the late Victorians had, without exception, all taken a passionate stance with regard to this question and were either fervent believers or self-declared 'infidels'. The following extract from an interview with the chaplain at an Inner London hospital, published in 1902, will serve briefly to show quite how misleading such a picture would be:

In a vague and hazy way most of them [*the patients*] may be described as Christians; that is, there is a general tendency to 'suppose that it is all true', but those who have thought the matter out, or have any definite convictions, are few and far between; they have for the most part put religion deliberately out of their lives and dislike to be reminded of it. (2)

If we look at some of the vocabulary used in typological symbolism, it will become clear why the secularised mode of this form of exegesis should hold a particular affinity with such a "vague and hazy way" of thinking about religion in a climate of such 'undemonstrability'. (As Holbrook Jackson said of Wilde; "I do not believe that Oscar Wilde had any hope of finding anything absolute; he was born far too late in the century for that." (3))

The type is the **umbra** to the anti-type's **veritas**; thus the movement of typology is traditionally one of shadowy types to revelatory truth. The type is an adumbration - it is a foreshadowing, and indicates by definition 'vaguely or briefly' - whereas the anti-type is an affirmation. The 'shadow' and its 'truth' are connected by faith and divine intention, and this is where late nineteenth century figuralism runs into trouble: the connecting faith is slowly dissolving, the truth of the anti-type is put into question - and we are left with the vague shadow, the mirror image, non-affirmed. I have suggested that religious figuralism has been used to show the multiplicity of truth-interpretations available to some writers at the close of the century; and the variety of choice is often followed by an

indefiniteness of decision. The typological image - based as it is on a person or event from a past religious or even mythological pattern, but existing here in an almost completely secularised environment - is a perfect medium for the 'half in, half out' uncertainty of late Victorian discourse which comes from *trying to express doubt through a signifying system shaped by faith*, and feeling alienated from the root from which one sprang because of the contradistinction between the secular 'tenor' and the biblical 'vehicle'. From this paradox stems Tess' difficulty with defining the "vague ethical being whom she could not class definitely as the God of her childhood, and could not comprehend as any other."(4) We see that the problem of classification closely follows the presence of doubt. Allowing for this discrepancy between signifier and signified, Edward Langham in the aforementioned Robert Elsmere of 1888, for one, finds reason to doubt whether **anything** can be said with any assuredness - a question which brings about a paralysing cynicism in him: "the difficulty lies in preaching anything. One might as well preach a respectable mythology as anything else."(5)

The orthodox Christian system of prefiguration, as we saw in relation to the sense of nostalgia, was exploited by late nineteenth-century authors for the purpose of showing the gap between what was promised and what had been realised. For these writers, the typological image has lost some or most of its specific, deliberate nature, and taken on a more vague and shadowy guise; this is, in every sense of the word, **abstracted** typology. In Earl Miner's words; "Writers could continue to use variously conceived types and even typology after losing all or most of their religious faith if they could assume that a sufficient number of readers would at least understand them, regardless of the nature of those readers' own belief."(6) Thus, when Robert Elsmere is described in terms of his moral 'passion' and his 'suffering'; when Father Time is found grotesquely hanging with a younger half-sibling on either side in a crucifixion-like triangle; when Tess is indirectly referred to as "Some impostor who wished to come into town barefoot ...

and so excite our sympathies"(7); it does not necessarily mean that we should construct these characters as clear and definite Christ-types, along with all the traditional symbolic and spiritual significance implied by such a role. It **does** mean, however, that these authors were quite aware of the effects such images would produce, consciously or sub-consciously, in a readership whose imaginations were still shaped by Christian imagery and biblical interpretations, and whose interpretative reading habits included the perceiving of a 'text beneath the text' - as, indeed, do ours today. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, there was a movement towards a more modern understanding of the typological image, like that found in Hermann Hesse's 1919 novel Demian: "Christ is not a person for me but a hero, a myth, an extraordinary shadow image in which humanity has painted itself on the wall of eternity."(8) In other words, Christ is losing his specific quality of anti-type and gaining a vaguer but wider status as archetype.

Using a biblical framework to express extra-biblical sentiments, as these late Victorian writers did, extracting some of its Christian meanings and discarding others, was not altogether popular with their contemporary critics. It seemed to some rather a dangerous practice, which should be smothered in its infancy; Wilde's Salomé was, for instance, refused a license in Great Britain by the Lord Chamberlain in 1892, on the account of the play's *dramatis personae* consisting mainly of rather freely adapted biblical characters. (The play was, however, not to be stopped - it was printed in French in 1893, produced in Paris by Sarah Bernhardt, who starred as Salomé herself, in 1894, and was later translated back into English by Wilde's lover, Lord Alfred Douglas.) Hardy encountered some of the same kind of criticism; as one of his critics remarked, "If we want to find the modern Ixion or Tantalus, every other man in Mr. Hardy's Wessex will be well qualified to personate him. This brilliant novelist seems to have set himself the task of re-writing the book of Ecclesiastes with the cheerful moral, "Fear God, and

keep his commandments", dropped out."(9) He continues, "We are prepared to respond to the call Thomas Hardy makes upon our commiseration ... but we can happily ignore these exaggerated plots as we forget bad dreams." Ignored they were not, but the comparison to 'dreams' of Hardy's particular brand of literary typology is not altogether inappropriate, if the 'dream' is considered in terms of its rich qualities of vagueness and suggestive symbolism, as well as its ingenious use, according to Jung, of archetypes. Some of this characteristic vagueness is implied by Hardy himself, as he speaks, as we have seen, of his writing as a "series of seemings". But perhaps the greatest spokesman, in late Victorian times, against making any unequivocal and sweeping statements about the shadowy subjects of belief and doubt, is Matthew Arnold. Beyond the conviction of the existence of an "eternal not ourselves that makes for righteousness", Arnold holds that the only certainty is **uncertainty** itself, and warns against those who lay any exclusive claim upon truth. Still, the language of the Bible is still very much with him, as he likens the voice of unorthodoxy to that of the "prophet crying in the wilderness";

God exists, and I know it, but I don't know it directly, and I know too that He would be the only support of a true civilization, a civilization built on eternal truths. However, unfortunately, at this particular moment I cannot tell you, and no man can tell you, just what those truths are. Believe no man but he who tells you, like a prophet crying in the wilderness, that the truth is, but not here, not yet. (10)

TIME

'*Fin de siècle*', murmured Lord Henry.

'*Fin du globe*', answered his hostess.

'I wish it were *fin du globe*', said Dorian with a sigh. 'Life is a great disappointment.' (1)

There are countless signs that the late Victorians as a whole were keenly aware of their own place in time. A look at Jackson's The Eighteen Nineties would suffice to point out that the expression '*fin de siècle*' had, by the end of the nineteenth century, become something of a cliché even before the century **had** actually ended, and that 'new' and 'modern' had become popular buzz-words of greatly increased importance and use, favoured by many as inclusive labels stuck onto any movement or idea which they perceived to be of their own invention. The word 'new' has, of course, several connotations - it is a word of freshness and resurgence of energy, but also of rootlessness, something recently emerged and alien to accepted history, as, for instance, in the notion of the "New Woman". Dorian Gray is far from the only character in late nineteenth-century fiction to find life in his time "a great disappointment". To many, the loss of religious faith had cancelled out the possibility of teleology as a means of purpose-finding; the two views of life as either 'standing still', history-less, or moving steadily towards a destination of God's design were no longer seen by them as plausible alternatives. We are, by the 1870's, in a thoroughly Darwinian world. Where does this leave typological allegory, which is, as we have seen, based on a divinely intended progression from prefiguring type to fulfilling anti-type? The removal of faith

from this exegetical picture caused an inevitable and irreparable break in its time-scheme continuance. The literary image of a figural type, torn loose from the linear structure of revelation, presented authors with the opportunity to play with the concept of **time** in relation to figuralism. Orthodox faith having evaporated, it allowed, for instance, August Strindberg to place the biblical anti-type Christ in a scene with a **contemporary** Christ-type, as we shall see in A Dream Play.

Late Victorian writers, when using typological imagery, ironically enough took the place previously supposed to be occupied by God: they wrote using the form of an 'old' signifying system to give shape to 'new' questions about, or versions of, truth. Because of the grip which biblical imagery had on readers' imaginations, a Jude or a Jokanaan could be sure of some recognition for their typological qualities, at the same time as being placed in situations or environments which question the validity of these very qualities. The discord between the 'old' of the Old and New Testament texts and the 'new' of what the late Victorians themselves termed the 'New Fiction' illustrates the opposition between the traditional signifying system and the ideas it is being made to signify. When Hardy states in his preface to the first edition of Tess that "the story is sent out in all sincerity of purpose, as an attempt to give artistic form to a true sequence of things"(2), we know that the "artistic form" is more than likely to borrow many of its images from biblical literary tradition, but that this tradition has to be radically re-written to accommodate what Hardy himself could accept as being a "true sequence of things". This true sequence, needless to say, is no longer the revelatory, teleological sequence of orthodox typology.

Typology, in its theological rather than its poetic form, provided a meaningful structure for human history to rest upon, granting to each person and event a significance as part of a plan in progress: it could even be applied to the new and potentially threatening Darwinian theory of evolution, echoing the ideas and sentiments of Tennyson's *In Memoriam* - sacralising genetic progression by

placing it (alongside spiritual progression) within the time-scheme of divinely intended types and anti-types, and thereby cushioning an otherwise devastating blow to the Christian doctrine. To the early Christians, typology was a way of affirming Christ's role as a fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies, thus proving their present faith's rightful place in a carefully constructed continuity. Victorian evangelical preachers used typological images to demonstrate to their listeners - via those listeners' personal imaginative experience and empathy - the significance of the types and anti-types of the past and future in their own present lives: George P. Landow tells us how the popular preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon "fervently believes that the Old Testament types can permit the prepared worshipper to experience the presence of Christ in both his own life and that of ancient believers."⁽³⁾ In Spurgeon's representation, then, the typological image takes on a three-dimensional quality of existing in the past, the present, and the future simultaneously.

In the late Victorian examples of religious figuralism here looked at, however, the typological image serves to represent (in the sense of 'showing again', calling back into the present) a picture of time as a steady progression towards a goal which is now partially or fully lost to the novel's characters and, possibly, at least, its readers. In this sense, the type is there to remind its interpreters, within the text or outside it, of the past security and faith in which it is rooted, and also to **contrast** its present environment and 'inner qualities' with those of the past. When Angel Clare meets Tess at the Talbothays dairy, he 'interprets' her as a "fresh and virginal daughter of Nature", and seems to "discern in her something that was familiar, something which carried him back into a joyous and unforeseeing past, before the necessity of taking thought had made the heavens gray."⁽⁴⁾ The effect that Tess, as a figure, has on him - and, presumably, the reader - works on several levels: seeing Tess reminds Angel sub-consciously of his half-meeting with her at the Marlott club-walking in Chapter 1; she is also, on

a symbolical level, reminiscent of a real or perceived past, carefree because unsuspecting, before scepticism and doubt had "made the heavens gray" - or perhaps, for Hardy, made the heavens **empty**. Whether these 'reminders' are fully realised or not, they are certainly made present and available in the text. As the tale progresses, we are also warned about misreading types, or even about seeing someone or something as a symbol at all; Tess misreads Alec d'Urberville's assumed name and gentility; and it is, after all, Angel's misreading of Tess as a symbol of purity that leads to their separation: the narrator comments that Angel's nature of love is "ethereal to a fault, imaginative to impracticability. With these natures, corporeal presence is sometimes less appealing than corporeal absence, the latter creating an ideal presence that conveniently drops the defects of the real."(5) And as always in Hardy, the gap between the real and the ideal is too wide to be ignored. Clare fails to respond 'correctly' to Tess as a human being in the present because of his intellectual and abstract preference for her as a symbol of a fictional past. Tess of the d'Urbervilles is, then, both an exploration of the possibilities latent in figural symbolism, and an exposition on its limitations.

Hardy's poetry, too, is rich in examples of this problematic discrepancy between an ideal, or idealised, past and a bleak present. James Persoon, in the 'Victorian Newsletter', comments on how Hardy, in "his echoes and borrowings from his poetic forefathers ... invariably "completes" earlier poems, often reversing them entirely, to reflect the new truths closing out the old beliefs and old poems of a previous age."(6) He goes on to suggest the 1919 poem 'Going and Staying' as a possible 'new' version of Arnold's 'Dover Beach'. In Hardy's poem, the disillusioning movement from "The moving sun-shapes on the spray,/ The sparkles where the brook was flowing" to a post-Great-War "Seasons of blankness as of snow,/ The silent bleed of a world decaying" is one in which the passing of time and the gathering of experience only brings pain. The only possible relief from such pain is offered in the third stanza, added three years later:

Then we looked closelier at Time
And saw his ghostly arms revolving
To sweep off woeful things with prime,
Things sinister with things sublime
Alike dissolving. (7)

In this way, the reader is made to look, paradoxically, “closelier” at the Time which is itself - mercifully though disinterestedly - bringing us further and further away from the immediacy and reality of pain as well as pleasure. For the poet as for Tess, then, the only way to escape the damaging tension between past and present is to be, finally, *out of time* altogether.

The use of typology abstracted from its orthodox context presented late nineteenth-century literature with a link to a textual, intellectual, and emotional past. It allowed for an interpretation of the present by means of an exegetical habit of mind which had survived from that past, despite a loss of the faith that was traditionally essential for the continuity between type and anti-type, both in terms of **time** and **meaning**. The examples of such use here examined represent both a severance with this past (in their unorthodox possibilities of multiple meanings and their deliberate contrasting of the 'new' with the 'old'), and simultaneously, an 'anchoring down' in the past through following its previously set patterns. Contributing both to subject matter, imagery, and form, typology was to some a means of expressing new hope in the fully secular future, and to others a way of understanding and illustrating the transition from a hopeful past to a despairing present. In T.S.Eliot's words from his 1923 essay "Ulysses, Order, and Myth": "using myth, ... manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity, ... is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history."(8)

THE DEATH OF GOD - AND THE CONTINUED LIFE OF THE BIBLE

There is no doubt that the language of biblical typology was still alive and in use during the last three decades of the nineteenth century. It found its expression within the symbolical form and contents of several important texts, some of which have been discussed in this part of the thesis. It made up part of the interpretative habits of the readers of the age, and was still deeply embedded in the imaginations of many - just as it is, although to a much smaller extent, today. But the texts in which the typological image is seen in its original state, true to all its orthodox features and obedient to all its limitations, are very few - if, indeed, there are any. The knife of textual and contextual interwovenness cuts both ways: just as expressions of doubt were impossible other than from within a discourse shaped by faith, so the language of faith must inevitably alter within its new environment of unbelief. As secular prose and poetry availed itself of this Christian system of signification, the rules of the system itself were altered and its boundaries expanded.

The most drastic change to which the basic structure of typology was subjected is exemplified in the **reversal** that occurred and made the words of Browning's Pippa, in 1841, - "God's in his heaven - / All's right with the world", - find its inverse echo fifty years later, in the words of Hardy's Angel Clare: "God's **not** in his heaven: all's **wrong** with the world!" (1). Although Browning surrounded the phrase with heavy irony, Pippa herself utters it in pure faith - something which would have been unthinkable to Angel. Change could hardly be more dramatic, and a system of symbolism which finds its existence within both these opposing realms, as typology does in late Victorian literature, must needs find itself rather 'stretched'. The loss of Christian faith meant to typological

imagery the subsequent loss of some of its most characteristic features - it even posed the threat of turning typology into an obsolete literary impossibility. This threat was, however, met by a surge of inventiveness and flexibility apparent in so much of this period's writing. The **specificity** of typological comparisons was sacrificed in favour of a wider range of possible application: in the Bible, only a handful of worthy figures, selected by a purposeful God, could traditionally fill the roles as adumbrations of Christ. In Hardy's world, every suffering and inadequate human being could, to a certain extent, find the status of Christ-type conferred upon itself. We are looking, perhaps, at a move from Typology to typology. It lost the vital connection between the coexisting-existing, interdependent type and anti-type - although the two could still only be understood fully in terms of each other. It lost, too, its teleological time-scheme, its carefully constructed continuance, and its 'divinely intended' direction towards a fulfilling and ultimate goal. In short, through its adaptation to the late Victorian *zeitgeist*, the typological image was stripped of its typological **hope** - although in many instances, this was replaced, as we shall see, by the new hope invested by some authors in a society freed from the bonds of a worn-out and restrictive religion. (Naturally, the generalisation of typological imagery having lost its Christian hope does not apply to the few examples of figuralism which found relatively safe havens in the texts of those writers who remained within the narrowing circle of Christian faith - although even when being used by Francis Thompson or Gerard Manley Hopkins, the typological image could not remain entirely untouched by the changes imposed upon it by growing doubt.)

Via the loss of these qualities, typological imagery **gained** a new lease of literary life. Already a rich source of symbolic potential, its possibilities of signification and areas of use increased significantly after being liberated from its role in regulated biblical exegesis. As an old and familiar 'vehicle', it could from then on be made to symbolise new and unfamiliar 'tenors', and the results of this

combination were sometimes startling and effective. In a sense, writers like Wilde, Hardy, Wells, and Strindberg found that they had the opportunity to rewrite biblical history, making use of its symbols while altering their implications, to provide explanations, prophecies, or evaluations of that history itself, as well as of their contemporary society.

There are two main strains of typology usage present in the texts which will be looked at in the following, the first of which takes the typological figure - specifically, and most commonly, that of Jesus - and transports it into a context where traditional Christian faith has been, or has got to be, renounced, in order to clear the religious ground for a new and 'more true' moral structure. These novels can be seen, broadly, as late Victorian answers to Thomas à Kempis' Imitation of Christ, they often take a biographical form of narration, and their plots typically revolve around the life and developing beliefs of a young man whose ideas will revolutionise his surroundings. Parallels are drawn, as well as differences pointed out, between these young men and Jesus - their typological predecessor - or, in the case of Wilkie Collins, between a young woman and her biblical counterpart Magdalen. One thing that unites these efforts is the writers' desire to put new life and significance into religious symbols and forms that are perceived dead, along with their emphasis on intellectual and moral ardency and seriousness. This is a legacy that they inherited from an earlier part of the nineteenth century, that of Thomas Carlyle and his enormously influential Sartor Resartus.

Part 2 : The Imitation of Christ

"We don't understand anything about the Lazaruses
and Simeons and Magdalenes of our own City."

...
Eliza Lynn Linton, from
The True History of Joshua Davidson

THE PARTIAL MYSTIFICATION

Here, indeed, at length, must the Editor give utterance to a painful suspicion, which, through late chapters, has begun to haunt him; ... a suspicion, in one word, that these Autobiographical Documents are partly a mystification! What if many a so-called Fact were little better than a Fiction; if here we had no direct Camera-obscura Picture of the Professor's History; but only some more or less fantastic Adumbration, symbolically, perhaps significantly enough, shadowing-forth the same!(1)

Carlyle, behind the voice of his fictional Editor's apparent consternation (and despite the all too obvious impossibility of his saying **anything** "in one word"), is here giving the reader a valuable clue as to how to read Sartor Resartus. Not only is the six chaotic paper-bags' worth of his subject's autobiographical detail a work of at least partial fiction, but the narrator-and-Editor himself exists within the elaborate fictional framework of Carlyle's mystifying text, which first appeared in *Fraser's Magazine* in 1833. By reminding the reader in this way that 'it's just a story', he indirectly reminds us, too, that it should be read as **more** than that. But what, exactly, should Sartor be understood to be? The complicated and involuted form and style of the text has sparked off extensive debate as to what it actually is — a novel, spiritual autobiography, 'philosophic poetry', or rhetorical essay. James Anthony Froude, in his biography of Carlyle, feels that the novel is "a revelation of Carlyle's individuality", and this is echoed by H.D.Trail, who calls Sartor autobiographical from first to last. It is unquestionably a minute and faithful history of Carlyle's intellectual and spiritual experiences". (2) The author's assumed choice of the autobiographical format is explained by W.H.Hudson, who claims that "he wrote about himself because he saw himself as a type of his restless and much-troubled epoch; because he knew that in a broad sense his history was the history of thousands of other young men in the generation to which he belonged." J.Hillis Miller, however, argues that although the text

certainly contains autobiographical elements, they would be impossible to detect unless one already knew the details of Carlyle's own life and, thus, could draw the appropriate parallels between the author and his character. Therefore, the power of Sartor must lie elsewhere. The rhetorical quality of the text, its existence purely as a vehicle for, and expression of, Carlyle's ideas, has been argued by Gerry H. Rookes, who feels that this rhetorical purpose lends to the text a coherence which otherwise lacks.(3) The list of possible interpretations is long, but irrespective of classification, the ideas expressed in this singular and idiosyncratic work were extremely influential, and affected both followers, critics, contemporaries, and successors of the author.

Returning to the passage above, we see how Carlyle deliberately draws attention to this 'problem of form'. By admitting that we are, after all, dealing with a *so-called* Fact", he highlights the danger of "receiving as literally authentic what is as but hieroglyphically so" - a danger, indeed, which is present in the reading of anything. The hieroglyphic nature of all our texts, all our utterances, is unavoidable: "examine Language; ... what is it all but Metaphors, recognised as such, or no longer recognised."(4) This is nowhere more true than in the author's own language - 'Carlylese' - which Hillis Miller describes as "mostly metaphor or other figure which displays itself, which calls attention to itself as figure, by its hyperbolic elaboration."(5) In other words, we must read Sartor with the idea of **parable** in mind. A parable as seen in the Bible texts is, as the Oxford Companion to the Bible explains, an illustration "from daily life", the images of which are familiar to its readers, but in which one nevertheless "encounters both exaggeration and unexpected behaviour."(6) The use of parabolic narrative is never a straight-forward attempt simply to reveal, however: in Mark 4:10-12, for example, we are told that Jesus' extensive use of parable was as much an effort to **conceal** his message. Thus, the illustrative story's inherent meaning is, in fact, seldom self-evident - as we can see from the apostles' various attempts to explain

em, as in Mark 7:17 and Matt.13:36 - and the effect, as often as not, was to rather confuse and perplex his listeners, much as both Victorians and modern critics have been perplexed by Carlyle's method of concealing/revealing his own version of the spiritual message. It has been argued that the complex and "bidirectional" form of Sartor Resartus is, effectively, the **only** medium possible for the transmission of that truth which the author felt he must convey to his readers.(7)

Carlyle's text - the book about editing a book about Diogenes Teufelsdröckh within his book about the origin and effect of *die Kleider* - is an open invitation to read everything as metaphor, as symbol, as hieroglyph. In an immense effort of exegesis, Teufelsdröckh is making sense of **all** symbols, the editor is making sense of Teufelsdröckh's symbols, and the reader is, in turn, making sense of Carlyle's symbols. Carlyle, through his character, is trying to instill in the readers of his time - knowing, as they do, "GOD only by addition"(8) - an ability to

look through the Clothes of a Man (the woolen, and fleshly, and official Bank-paper and State-paper Clothes) into the Man himself; and discern, it may be, in this or the other Dread Potentate, a more or less incompetent Digestive-apparatus; yet also an inscrutable venerable Mystery, in the meanest Tinker that sees with eyes!(9)

'Clothes', then, are "all Forms whereby Spirit manifests itself to sense, whether outwardly or in the imagination", and although these Clothes are an absolute necessity, the only way of naming the unnameable, we must learn to see through them into the essence or spirit of the truth which is concealed beneath. The metaphor of the 'truth beneath' or 'within', and the urge to find and salvage it, permeate, after Carlyle, the work of practically every major Victorian writer, and certainly every single text included in this thesis.

If Carlyle, in the passage quoted at the beginning of this chapter, provides the reader with a direction as to how his text should be read, he simultaneously

uggests how we should go about the process of reading in general, and, perhaps, the reading of the Bible in particular. This view is suggested by the parallels drawn between the Editor's relationship with his material and Carlyle's contemporaries' increasingly difficult relationship with the Bible texts. The Editor uses a biblical image to describe his seemingly impossible task of rendering Teufelsdröckh's thoughts intelligible to the British public - he likens his work to 'building a bridge over chaos'. He is faced with the difficulty of seeing as a coherent, authentic, and meaningful **whole** texts which are disparate, self-contradictory, and confusingly 'read out' in time and space. During Carlyle's lifetime, of course, the Bible itself, under careful scientific scrutiny and 'German criticism', was beginning to be seen as the latter rather than the former. The Editor is also trying to make sense of an 'autobiography', the written evidence of which is either imperfectly handed down to him by a mediator, questionable, or even completely lacking - making the association with the New Testament, the 'biography' of Jesus, a near-certainty in an age where the question of biblical authority was subject to constant debate. Our mistake, then, in Carlyle's mind, has been to misread the Bible - like infants 'pelling letters from a hieroglyphic prophetic Book, the lexicon of which lies in eternity, in Heaven'(10) - and to receive "as literally authentic what was but hieroglyphically so", taking as the single basis for our perception of truth something which is but **one of many** 'garments' of that truth. Within this mistake lies the mystification and negation; within the realisation of this mistake and our duty to rectify it lies **de**-mystification and the 'Everlasting Yea'.

The association with biblical images is present throughout the text, not just in the Professor's interpretation of symbols and the Editor's ordering of chaos, but in various details which serve to keep this agenda ever present in the reader's mind. The idea that the 'autobiography' of Teufelsdröckh can be read as a symbol of the 'biography' of Jesus is reinforced by the Professor's odd name (and, as we have been told, "Names ... are the most important of all Clothings"(11)): the

likeness between the Professor and Jesus is seen in the former's Christian name, Diogenes, or 'God-born'; and the problematic nature of this likeness shows in his surname, 'Devil's-dirt'. Teufelsdröckh's origins are uncertain: he is delivered to his poor foster-parents in a straw basket, Moses-like, by an apparently wealthy stranger who disappears without a trace; it was as though they had witnessed some visit from an authentic Spirit."(12) Andreas and Gretchen Futteral themselves are likened to Adam and Eve, and the 'autobiographer' tells himself that "thy true Beginning and Father is in Heaven."(13) Later we hear him say that he had, once for all, come down from Heaven into the Earth."(14) The Editor introduces the image of John the Baptist, and emphasises Teufelsdröckh's prophetic role, when he detects "In our wild Seer, shaggy, unkempt, like a Baptist living on locusts and wild honey, ... an untutored energy, a silent, as it were unconscious strength."(15) A final detail by which Carlyle subtly reinforces the Teufelsdröckh/Jesus allusion: just before the 'Friendly Farewell', the Editor receives a letter from Hofrath Heuschrecke "announcing that Teufelsdröckh has disappeared from Weissnichtwo. Editor guesses he will appear again."(16)

In the same way as most of the main characters looked at in this thesis, Diogenes Teufelsdröckh is understood in terms of his **uniqueness**. His personality, singled out, provides a clue to the understanding of Carlyle's basic premises, and we may bear in mind that Carlyle and his character exist within what Malcolm Hardman calls "a typically mid-Victorian belief that individual human character was something absolute that could never really be changed."(17) Thus, the importance of the six exasperating paper-bags: the key to the Professor's ideas lies in his personality - "Would to Heaven those same Biographical Documents were come!" sighs the Editor, "For it seems as if the demonstration [*of the idea that "society is founded upon Cloth"*] lay much in the Author's individuality".(18) Teufelsdröckh himself is very aware of his separateness from his fellows, especially from the day when he learns about his obscure background

and uncertain parentage. This knowledge, or rather lack of knowledge, has a profound effect on the young man;

A certain poetic elevation, yet also a corresponding civic depression, it naturally imparted: *I was like no other*; in which fixed-idea, leading sometimes to the highest, and oftener to frightfullest results, may there not lie the first spring of Tendencies, which in my Life have become remarkable enough? As in birth, so in action, speculation, and social position, my fellows are perhaps not numerous.(19)

It is emphasised, too, that despite all Teufelsdröckh's searching, he has not been able (to no great wonder for the reader, maybe) to find anybody who bears that same name. "Singular Teufelsdröckh!", as the Editor exclaims. His unique individuality, however, is tempered by his sense of universality and the spirit that unites all human being. This universality, indeed, forms the primary condition for his 'Clothes-Philosophy': "First, that *Man is a spirit*, and bound by invisible bonds to *All Men*; secondly, that *he wears Clothes*, which are the visible emblems of that fact."(20) This blend in him of 'personality apart' and 'personality connected' - a quality which was to be aspired to, in the years to come, by so many fictional characters searching for the renewal of that hidden 'truth' - makes Teufelsdröckh, to his creator, the perfect point of mediation and interpretation between the human and the divine.

The strong and virtuous man who could represent such a point of contact seemed to Carlyle exactly what was needed in that age where 'real religion' was no longer present and his fellow beings "walk on the bosom of Nothing, blank Time ... behind them and before them."(21) As time went by, Carlyle's call for, and worship of, such 'heroic' figures grew to a cadence strong enough - and, perhaps, unreasonable enough - to alienate several of those Victorian men of letters who had admired him and been greatly influenced by him, notably Ruskin and Mill (22), and to earn him the reputation given by Arnold as a "moral desperado"(23). But at the time of Sartor's publication, the call was still a fresh one. The need was

apparent for a spiritual leader, one such as would later, as we shall see, be found in the fictional figure of the "Ardent Young Man", and who could - ideally through the *act of writing* - slough off the layers of dead Letter and bring about the desired "superannuation of symbols". The distinguishing feature of such a man (for this leader was, almost invariably, a man, perhaps with the exception of George Eliot's Dorothea Brooke in Middlemarch) was his unassailable sincerity. As Carlyle puts it in a letter; "I know no method of such consequence, except that of *believing*, of being *sincere*: from Homer and the Bible down to the poorest Burns's *Song* I find no other *Art* that promises to be perennial."(24) Along with this sincerity there must be action, without which possessing the right brand of conviction could amount to nothing. In a time during which "no Pillar of Cloud by day, and no Pillar of Fire by night, any longer guides the Pilgrim"(25), *die That* - the deed - will bring about the movement from The Everlasting No, via the Centre of Indifference, to The Everlasting Yea. Carlyle's exhortations to "Awake, arise! Speak forth what is in thee" and to "believe, live, be free" are famous, and if the nature of the spiritual reality seems lost amongst the layers of dead 'Clothing', there is always a remedy in doing the duty which is closest to you at the time. Teufelsdröckh himself, in expressing this need of positive action, employs the words of one of the few parables which is found in all four testaments:

'Nay how knowest thou,' cries he, 'but this and the other pregnant Device, now grown to be a world-renowned far-working institution; like a grain of right mustard-seed once cast into the right soil, and now stretching-out strong boughs to the four winds, for the birds of the air to lodge in, - may have been properly my doing?'(26)

Interestingly, we find in Carlyle's writing what we also find in the later novels of Hardy, that at the very point of expressing a form of religious belief which is extremely unorthodox - or even at the point of expressing **unbelief** - the language used is taken directly out of the Bible.

We might think, from this creating of Carlyle's of a strong personality bringing new spiritual teachings and freedom to his fellow beings, and doing so in a setting which strongly alludes to the Bible texts, that Teufelsdröckh is a type of Christ. This is not the case, and as such Sartor Resartus differs essentially from most of the texts which are to follow. This is not to say that Carlyle viewed the Christ-figure as unimportant - quite the contrary; "our divinest symbol", he says, is

Jesus of Nazareth, and his life, and his Biography, and what followed therefrom. Higher has the human thought not yet reached: this is Christianity and Christendom; a symbol of quite perennial, infinite character; whose significance will ever demand to be anew inquired into, and anew made manifest.(27)

But what most interests Carlyle, unlike his fellow Victorians, is not 'Christ the Divine' or 'Jesus the Man'. To Carlyle, the figure of Christ and the writings he inspired, can only find true significance in their roles as **emblems** of the divine spirit. When Christ-the-symbol is "anew made manifest", it is not in the form of a Second Coming fulfilling the Christian Promise, but as part of an entirely new set of symbols which will be rich in significance - for a while. Qualifying men and works of art according to their efficacy as emblems is something Carlyle also does outside the context of Sartor. M.Hardman makes this point in Six Victorian Thinkers:

His first major piece of biography was a 'Life of Schiller', in 1824. In his closing words he begs that his hero 'be transfigured in our thoughts, and shine there without the little blemishes that clung to him in life.' It is not really Schiller the man, or even Schiller the artist, that Carlyle is interested in, but Schiller as a concept 'transfigured in our thoughts' into an emblem of transcendent truth.(28)

It is almost as if Schiller the **type** has turned to **anti-type** in our imaginations. The human qualities of a type are to a certain extent dismissed in favour of emblematic significance; this is the direct reverse of the idea, growing in momentum at the

time, of placing the literary emphasis firmly on "Man - not God!", as E.L.Linton was to phrase it. To Carlyle, Jesus, Goethe, Schiller, Cromwell, Teufelsdröckh, and others, could all be read as types of the divine spirit in man - but not in a typological sense. That was all to follow, in works by writers influenced, in one way or another, by Carlyle.

No symbol, however, whether intrinsic or extrinsic (and as Hillis Miller has shown, the distinction between the two in Sartor is problematical, and, in a sense, rules itself out) (29), is eternal or God-given - thus the constant need for re-invention and re-interpretation. If Carlyle, then, is arguing that no sign or symbol has a fixed and unchangeable transcendent meaning, it sounds as if we, following his argument through, might end up with something approaching deconstructionist thinking. Just remove the underlying or original 'Spirit' - and doing so seems relatively easy when one considers the inadequacy, through sheer impermanence, of its symbolic system - and we're there. Even considering the absence of a divinely ordained set of emblematic meanings in Sartor Resartus, it may seem unthinkable now that Carlyle's work could possibly be seen as amoral, but nevertheless, such was the reaction of some of his contemporaries. "Carlyle was always invoking God;" says one modern critic, "but Victorians were not always sure he believed in Him. They were never sure whether God made Carlyle or Carlyle made God." (30) For Diogenes Teufelsdröckh, however, realising to their full extent the consequences of his Clothes-Philosophy is a liberating experience, and the 'Professor of Things in General' remains a figure of hope, although his creator grew "increasingly pessimistic as the century advanced."(31)

One of Carlyle's former friends, Edward Irving, "claimed that society would soon be abolished by Christ's personal rule on earth."(32) He was, as we know, in a minority - to most Victorians, including those who had kept their Christian faith, the length of time which had elapsed since Jesus proclaimed the immanence of God's Kingdom on Earth was a problem, and words like "soon" and "personal"

in connection with the divine promise had lost a lot of their credibility. Sartor precedes and fore-shadows the many texts which were to attempt a re-establishing of this close and immediate communion with whatever 'Spirit' was still accessible, and Carlyle, too, has his own answer to the problem of the distance felt between man and the divine:

But, on the whole, as time adds much to the sacredness of Symbols, so likewise in his progress he at length defaces or even desecrates them; and Symbols, like all terrestrial Garments, wax old. Homer's Epos has not ceased to be true; yet it is no longer *our* Epos, but shines in the distance, if clearer and clearer, yet also smaller and smaller, like a receding star. It needs a scientific telescope, it needs to be reinterpreted and artificially brought near us, before we can as much as know that it *was* a Sun. So likewise a day comes when the Runic Thor, with his Eddas, must withdraw into dimness; and many an African Mumbo-Jumbo and Indian Pawaw be utterly abolished. For all things, even Celestial Luminaries, much more atmospheric meteors, have their rise, their culmination, their decline.(33)

The problematic distance of God, seen as Carlyle's "receding star", and heard as Arnold's "melancholy, long, withdrawing roar", is for the former simply one stage in a perfectly natural cycle of Palingenesis, of birth, death, and re-birth. Man creates a symbol to name the unnameable, divine Spirit within and around him, this symbol has a limited life-span, and must forever be created anew. In a sense, the more we understand our own symbols, the less power they retain - "if clearer and clearer, yet smaller and smaller" - the extension of which thought means that a renewed symbol means renewed Mystery. Typology has a definite value, but only as long as it is never allowed to remain static.

Teufelsdröckh's theory is ingenious. Nevertheless, the above passage cannot escape its own undermining of itself. In the metaphor of the receding star, its light - its meaningfulness - has to be recaptured - re-invented or re-presented - by means of a "scientific telescope". But if the birth and death of a symbol is natural, its Palingenesis is not: it has to be forced, to be "*artificially* brought near to us". You can only question the lasting validity of a culture's "Garments", and

argue for their constant replacement, for so long, before the existence of a real body beneath the clothes, and a true Spirit contained in the Letter, is itself called into question. Be that as it may; Carlyle's call for a retelling of the old stories was followed by many, and it is their resulting efforts that shall be examined here.

THE STORY OF A LIFE

The Victorian preacher Henry Melvill urged "that many types are as yet unfulfilled, that they await completion, that man, even man in the time of Queen Victoria, lives within a typologically structured universe."(1) To a slightly cynical twentieth-century reader, Melvill's promises may sound like those of an increasingly anxious impressario trying to persuade the disillusioned audience of his show - half of whom have already got up to leave - that there **is** more to come; that their expectations **will** be fulfilled. But while orthodox belief in a "typologically structured universe" was waning, it is certainly true that man in the time of Queen Victoria possessed a typologically structured imagination. The typological aspects of some authors' imaginative powers came to the fore as they set themselves the task of chronicling their own, or their characters', life and beliefs - just as Carlyle's fictional editor chronicled the life of the fictional Teufelsdröckh - and such **life** stories are what I will look at in this part of the thesis.

There is a long tradition for using biblical typology as a reference system and imaginative source when writing an autobiography - and especially one which tells of the protagonist's conversion to Christianity. The Bible stories in general, and the confessions of St.Paul in particular, provided a model for St.Augustine when he recorded the story of his life and thought, and he in his turn helped shape autobiographical style for centuries to come - even of stories in which the conversion motif has to be treated in very unorthodox ways. Heather Henderson shows in The Victorian Self how Newman's Apologia, Ruskin's Praeterita, and Gosse's Father and Son, for example, make use of biblical narrative models and types.(2)

Why did the imaginative use of biblical narrative, and especially typological structures, seem such an attractive option to autobiographers? A passage from

Hale White's Autobiography of Mark Rutherford (1881) may help provide an answer. He describes listening to Mary's singing 'He was despised' from Händel's 'Messiah' (the song is a reflection of the messianic prophecy of Isaiah 53:3 - "He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief"):

The words and tones, which have been used to embody their emotions by those whom we have loved, are doubly expressive when we use them to embody our own. The song is potent too, because with the utmost musical tenderness and strength, it reveals the secret of the influence of the story of Jesus. Nobody would be bold enough to cry, **That too is my case**, and yet the poorest and the humblest soul has a right to the consolation that Jesus was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.(3)

Interestingly, Rutherford finds that the use of handed-down forms not only reflects value onto our own emotions and helps us in the act of expressing them, but that those words themselves become "doubly expressive" through this process of application; they both reflect and receive significance. The use of pre-recorded patterns, for him, does not generate a weaker and secondary mirror image, but a positive further development of those forms, lending potency to the 'imitation' and the 'original' alike. And the bold cry or, at least, the cautious whisper, that '**That too is my case**', is frequently heard in the works looked at in this chapter. Paul Delaney, writing on autobiography in the seventeenth century, says that "To imitate Christ was an undertaking which only the deranged or the mystic could undertake in full literalness."(4) But if we move away from "full literalness" and enter the area of fictional autobiography, the imitation of, or association with, the Christ-figure becomes a far more viable option for the nineteenth-century writer. I have already used words such as 'chronicle' and 'record' in connection with the process of autobiographical writing, suggesting the objective and faithful noting down of actual events - but of course, the writing of an autobiography is as imaginative and subjective as any other writing; it is the shaping of a Jungian 'personal myth', and the creation of a self, the qualities of which depend wholly on the author's conscious or subconscious choices and evaluations.

Since autobiography, then, is at least partially fictional, the choice of structural type need not depend on that type's **historical** reality. As Henderson puts it, "For the purposes of providing later writers with literary models, the figure of the autobiographer may be just as influential as the historical autobiographer: Job and Paul are "types" of the autobiographer as surely as Saint Augustine."(5) This point of view also helps break down the barriers between 'actual' and fictional autobiography, as well as between autobiography, biography, and other stories of 'a life'. Temporarily suspending such generic distinctions - focusing on intertextuality rather than historicity - enables us to look at Linton's Joshua Davidson in relation to Rutherford's Autobiography (incidentally, a text in which Hale White deliberately blurs the lines between autobiography and biography, recollection and fiction) or Lyall's Donovan in relation to The Autobiography of Christopher Kirkland, all of which belong to the substantial body of "life account" texts written during the latter half of the nineteenth century. They share a keen sense of the (auto-)biographical traditions that have filtered through from the Bible texts, via writers like Saint Augustine, Bunyan and Carlyle, and they make use of these traditions in the shaping of their own (characters') "selves".

As personal past and literary past converge in the writing of a 'life', there are certain motifs that keep recurring. Henderson lists them as "Edenic childhoods and lost Edens, fall and exile, journey and pilgrimage, crisis, conversion, renewal and return."(6) The author of those biblical texts attributed to Paul used the autobiographical style to **explain** a sudden conversion which could typically be met with distrust and suspicion. The story of conversion, too, ideally possesses the power to **convert**, being as it is an argument contained in a highly personal, and thus often engaging, narrative. Augustine's story mirror's Paul's, and in the nineteenth century, Newman - who felt that his conversion to Catholicism had been misunderstood, and that the distrust displayed by former friends had damaged his credibility - successfully used autobiography, covertly in his novel

Loss and Gain of 1854 and overtly in the 1864 Apologia Pro Vita Sua, to expose the long and painful process of his conversion and thus convince his readers of its **genuine** nature. The latter text is, as its full title implies, not so much a history of his life as a 'History of His Religious Opinions'. But for the authors with whom this chapter is concerned, the task in hand was not to present their readers with a story of conversion from one type of Christian faith to another - theirs were accounts of 'un-conversion'; journeys made from faith to unbelief, or, at least, to new faiths so stripped of conventional Christian doctrine as to be seen by their contemporaries as unbelief. A novel like Winwood Reade's The Outcast of 1875 is, in effect, a 'doubter's apologia'. There is an evident need among many of the late nineteenth-century's professed doubters to be recognised as "honest doubters", as Basil Willey put it in his 1948 study (7), meaning that their loss of faith, (or that of their fictional counterparts), was reluctant, indeed a 'loss' much more than a rejection, and one which was fought every step of the way: most of these doubters' case histories portray an agonised 'pilgrim's progress' towards scepticism, positivism, pantheism, atheism, or whatever faith-substitute they eventually arrive at. Their life-stories seem to be written in order to act simultaneously as atonement and explanation, apologies, and attempts at the persuasion of others. The authors' claim to authenticity as 'recorders of fact' - as in the "True History" of Joshua Davidson, and even more so, Renan's background to his Life of Jesus of archaeology and Semitic language studies - is intended to add force to this argument: the point of these narratives is that 'un-conversion' is happening; it is happening now, in "real life"; and it is a spiritual journey which every man and woman must make if they are to follow their true morality, logic, and emotion.

Because the motif of conversion has been reversed, the use of typological structure often constitutes a reversal from the norm as well. I intend to show how several novelists invoke figural patterns in order subtly to undermine them, or

rather to create something new out of them. The adoption of new roles and the adaptation of biblical narrative structures become essential as the traditional doctrines begin to seem increasingly inappropriate. In 1855, Benjamin Jowett wrote, "the doctrine of the Atonement has often been explained in a way at which our moral feelings revolt. God is represented as angry with us for what we never did; He is ready to inflict a disproportionate punishment on us for what we are; He is satisfied by the punishment of His Son in our stead. The sin of Adam is first imputed to us; then the righteousness of Christ."(8) In other words, the God of the Scriptures is unreasonable, Christian doctrine is unacceptable - why should we be asked to identify so strongly with Adam and Christ when, manifestly, neither role quite fits? This is why Linton, Reade, Ward and Hale White, among others, saw the need to change these roles; to rewrite scripture; reinventing while representing the past.

Thus altered, typology in late nineteenth-century texts has at times been dismissed on a charge of 'unintentionality' (see, for example, Linda Peterson's analysis of the Apologia in Victorian Autobiography (9) - that is, the author uses typological allegory as a means of illustration, and does not **intend** to invoke the meanings or encourage the associations normally connected with biblical typology. The texts discussed in this chapter provide examples of both kinds - 'merely illustrative' typological images, and images that clearly serve a particular typological and narrative purpose. However, the author's actual intention seems less important than the fact that the structures of biblical narrative and the images of typological allegory are the ones which **spring to mind** - to the minds of the reader, character and writer alike - in this type of writing. Whether or not the author meant it to be so, typology still held a position in the cultural discourse strong enough to ensure that such associations took place: the readily available nature of this mode of symbolism shows quite how integrated it had become in

people's way of thinking; how effectively it had filtered through the centuries to provide narrative possibilities in late Victorian 'life stories'.

RENAN'S LIFE OF JESUS

The biography which perhaps turned out to be the most significant of all those written between 1850 and the turn of the century - it was certainly of immense importance from the Victorian doubter's point of view - is Ernest Renan's Vie de Jesus, first published in 1863. Renan did his extensive research for the controversial volume in Syria, having been commissioned by the Imperial government to "undertake an expedition in quest of ancient Phoenician monuments, sites, and inscriptions." He experienced there the thrill of walking on the roads "which Jesus must often have trod"(1), and the resulting text's background of travel and scientific research lent an air of unquestionable authority to Renan's version of the Gospel story. Nevertheless, his attempt to reacquaint the reader with this biblical key figure, insisting on Jesus' incomparable significance as a real, historical, and de-mystified man, met a violent reaction. As W.G.Hutchison describes it in the introduction to his 1897 translation,

Archbishops, Jesuits, priests, theological professors, and dissenting ministers joined eagerly in a heresy hunt of unprecedented dimensions, the heavens were darkened with a multitude of pamphlets, and reviews, and controversial treatises; pulpits rang with indignant denunciations; Renan's private character was picturesquely defamed; and an anonymous but pious lady, with the best intentions in the world, commenced the monthly despatch to him of a letter containing the brief warning, "There is a hell!" (2)

Having witnessed the publication of Strauss' Leben Jesu some thirty years previously had, it appears, not sufficiently prepared the public for Renan's efforts. Needless to say, there were many who were greatly impressed rather than outraged, and the new Life was an immense inspiration for several late Victorians. It is the reading of Renan's text which leads Donovan, in the eponymous novel by Ada Ellen Bayly (her *nom de plume* was Edna Lyall) of 1882, to take heart while suffering the "agonies of atheism", and its influence - although Donovan does not re-acquire religious faith - makes him **behave** according to the Christ-model. Eliza Lynn Linton, in The Autobiography of Christopher Kirkland (1885), describes a powerful childhood vision which irrevocably altered her/Christopher's beliefs;

Then, as vividly as if I had seen Him in the body and spoken with Him face to face, I saw Christ as a peasant translated into our own time. I realized the minutest circumstances of His humanity; when a loud voice, like the rustling wind, seemed to echo from earth to sky - to fill all space and to command all time, till I was conscious of nothing but these words: "Man - not God; man - not God." (3)

The crucial achievement of Renan's text was exactly this; it is a translation "into our own time" of the character of Jesus, bringing it closer to a late Victorian view of 'acceptable' reality; and it attempts to convey the distinctly **human**, richly detailed aspect of the figure who was called by Matthew Arnold a "wonderful spirit, far above the heads of his reporters, still farther above the head of our popular theology, which has added its own misunderstanding of the reporters to the reporters' misunderstanding of Jesus."(4) In order to bypass these misunderstandings, Renan is more interested in the *Logia*, the sayings, of Jesus, as found in the Gospel attributed to Matthew, than the *acts* as found in that of Mark. This preference is not just based on the fact that Mark's Gospel is one which emphasises mystery, sorcery and miracle-working - concepts that Renan is eager to show as being far removed from the "pure idealism" of Jesus

- but also because Renan shares with the rest of his culture that logocentrism which dictates that the spoken word is closer to the 'spirit' than is the letter. "It is unnecessary", he writes, "to point out

how remote from the ideas of Jesus was the idea of a religious book, containing a code and articles of faith. Not only did he not write, but it was contrary to the spirit of the infant sect to produce sacred books. Its members believed themselves on the eve of the great final catastrophe. The Messiah came to put his seal upon the Law and the Prophets, not to promulgate new Scriptures.(5)

The vast mass of texts, dogma, and religious argument and division, is to Renan a dense fog which prevents us from seeing clearly the truth that it is meant to reveal (we recall the identical sentiments described, for example, by Gissing and Arnold in the 'Multiplicity' section above), and his Life is an attempt to remedy this state of things - "Properly to understand the precise character of the piety of Jesus, we must forget all that has come between the Gospels and ourselves." This ideal piety, as defined by Renan, is "A pure worship, a religion without priests and external observances, resting wholly on the feelings of the heart, on the imitation of God, on the close communion of the conscience with the heavenly Father".(6) The close and constant communion with a perceived divine spirit, present within the human individual, or the lack of such communion; the nostalgia for an imagined past where "the heavens were not shut nor was the earth grown cold"(7); are omnipresent characteristics of late Victorian literature. This is one of the key propositions of Renan's 'Religion of humanity'. Another such is also contained in the definition above, namely the attack on "external observances". Directly opposing the theories of Carlyle, Renan feels that "Man has never, when in possession of a clearly conceived idea, amused himself by clothing it in symbols: most often it is after long reflection that, forced by the impossibility felt by the human mind of resigning itself to the absurd, we seek ideas under ancient mystic images the meaning of which has been lost."(8) No effortless and instinctively

habitual **resting** in symbols here, then; Renan's text contains exhortations not to change our set of religious symbols but to abolish them altogether. His *credo* finds its home in John 4:20-23 - "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth"...

In his effort to see through the external forms surrounding the 'truth' of the figure of Jesus, Renan seems at times so confident about the personality of his biographical subject that he reveals aspects of Jesus' thought and motivation which it is hard to imagine were come by through research alone. When stating that, for example, "it was rather a noble feeling than a settled design that urged him to the sublime work which was achieved by him, though in a very different manner from that which he imagined"(9), the reader cannot avoid feeling that it is the author's imaginative sympathy rather than his analytical skill which is at play - this is, of course, the type of 'spiritual communion' which was to be insisted upon by Wilde in De Profundis. Renan and Jesus, here, move away from their status as biographer and historical subject, and are seen as what they in many ways are - novelist and literary character.

Despite Ernest Renan's preference for spoken word over text, he is still close to unique among the time's 'Life' writers in showing that Jesus *himself* was strongly influenced by various texts which had been written in his immediate past. These texts had entered the discourse of his surroundings, making their ideas available to him despite his relative lack of formal learning. While Renan is eager to emphasise the singular and original character of Jesus, he is nevertheless at pains to show that hardly any of his teachings were actually new. They were, mostly, repetitions of ideas that had been developed in the book of Daniel, the book of Enoch, the Sibylline Oracles, and the Assumption of Moses. Having removed some of the halo of startling originality from the figure of Jesus, Renan even suggests, controversially, that he was in fact - although through no fault of his own - slightly behind his times, in being entirely ignorant of Hellenic ideas

such as the principles of positive science, the negation of miracle, and the exclusion of supernatural forces. As Renan writes,

The reading of the books of the Old Testament made much more impression on him. ... A vast allegorical exegesis was applied to these books, with the purpose of drawing from them something that was not in them, but which answered to the aspirations of the age. ... the popular belief was that almost all the somewhat mysterious traits in [*the Prophets and the Psalms*] referred to the Messiah; and people sought to find in them the type of him who should realise the hopes of the nation. Jesus participated in the taste which everyone possessed for these allegorical interpretations. ... The Law does not appear to have had much charm for him: he believed that he could do better. But the religious poetry of the Psalms was in marvellous accord with his lyrical soul; all his life they were his sustenance and his support.(10)

We shall see Oscar Wilde suggesting the very same thing, that Jesus as it were **invented** or defined himself on the basis of his textual background and his own imagination. The ideas about the coming Messiah which had been stamped upon the popular imagination via the tales and memories of Elias and Moses were the ideas with which Jesus must correspond, if he were to establish himself as Christ-figure: "Whoever aspired to act powerfully upon the people had to imitate Elias" in seeking inspiration through aloneness in nature, he had to imitate Moses in being the man chosen of God to bring his people new laws, and he had to imitate John in his belief in the cleansing powers of baptism. In the minds of Jesus' contemporaries, as in the minds of the readers of the Bible texts, **repetition** vouchsafes reality, and to correspond with the previously imagined image is to inspire faith. In this sense, we interpret the type according to what we have read - "To men specially filled with hopes of the coming of the Messiah, and to ardent readers of the books of Daniel and Enoch, he was the Son of man; to Jews holding the ordinary faith and to readers of Isaiah and Micah, he was the Son of David; to his disciples, he was the Son of God, or simply the Son. Others, without thereby incurring the reproach of the disciples, took him for John the Baptist risen from the dead, for Elias, for Jeremiah."(11) This view of Renan's of the flexibility of

type and its textual basis contains the beginnings of the idea of the Christ-figure which we encounter in so many of those texts written in the decades following the publication of the Life of Jesus.

FOR JOSHUA, READ JESUS

Eliza Lynn Linton's novel Joshua Davidson was published in 1872. Its full title - 'The True History of Joshua Davidson, Communist' - was altered by its publishers, in the second edition, to 'The Life of Joshua Davidson; or the Modern Imitation of Christ, a Theoretical Novel'. With this change, the immediate political blow was softened, a reassuring pointer back to the eminently respectable Thomas à Kempis was added, and the novel's typological connection - already abundantly clear - was further emphasised. Note, also, the cautious change from 'True' to 'Theoretical'. The protagonist's name is, of course, a version of 'Jesus, son/descendant of David', just as Joshua's life story turns out to a version of the Gospel story. The second title's use of the word 'Imitation' rightly implies that the character of Joshua is a **type**, reverently backwards-looking and shadowing, of Christ the **anti-type**. Moreover, as I mean to show, Linton takes the typological allegory one step further as the novel progresses, and attempts to show Joshua as a more perfectly developed anti-type to Jesus' type - a new and improved Saviour,

as it were - and this is where Joshua Davidson radically differs from the many "life-of-the-Christ-type" novels written in the last half of the nineteenth century.

Linton clearly is not shy of the topic of typological allegory. While other authors may veil their figural references in terms that necessitate close and imaginative reading, Linton hardly lets a page of her novel go by without a more or less blatant reminder of the fact that our hero is **the** modern-day Christ, come to redeem sinners and reverse the evils of late Victorian society - and to be violently sacrificed in his attempt to do so. With the impossible-to-miss Christ-reference that makes up Joshua's name, Linton begins as she means to go on throughout the novel: the links and likenesses by which she connects the Nazarene and the man from Trevalga, Cornwall, are numerous. Joshua, like the Jesus of the Gospels, is the descendant of a king - and not only by name. Local legend has it that the Davidsons belong to a decayed branch of King Arthur's family tree. Both men are sons of carpenters, and at one point, Joshua himself is described as "a poor journeyman carpenter".(1) Jesus and Joshua both have a close circle of friends who follow them on their spiritual and geographical wanderings. One of these, for Joshua as for Jesus, is called John, a beloved companion who chronicles the life of his friend and leader after the event of his death. As we shall see, John - the narrator of the novel - consciously casts himself as an apostle, thus following the pre-recorded typological pattern which makes Joshua Davidson a text of testimony, a modern Gospel.

Both characters preach a philosophy which is radical in its insistence on a re-ordering of social structures, but which is nevertheless essentially mild: the biblical Jesus is consistently seen as elevating the meek, as specified in the Sermon of the Mount, and Joshua's recipe for social revolution (despite his self-confessed communism and his controversial participation in the 1871 Paris Commune) is non-aggressive and fairly conventional, even according to 1870's standards. He advocates peaceful strikes and the elevation of the poor rather than the bringing

down of the rich. Joshua confesses, then, to Jesus' message, broadcast by Paul, of universal love as the be-all and end-all of religion. The similarities continue with Joshua's habit of socialising with, and of course attempting to save, those who are shunned by the surrounding self-righteous, pseudo-Christian society - thieves and prostitutes. Joshua's fallen friend is, not surprisingly, called Mary, and her typological affinities with the Bible's Mary Magdalen are made explicit to the reader. Finally, both Jesus of Nazareth and Joshua Davidson are persecuted and eventually killed, while still in their thirties, charged with heresy though having committed no other crime than living and preaching according to their own versions of moral law. Adding to these parallels of life-events and traits of character, Linton has Joshua frequently and fervently exclaim that he is "living the life of Christ", "following the master", simply doing "what Christ would have done", and so on. Supplied with this information, the reader of Joshua Davidson, in this century or the last, cannot possibly fail to interpret the character of Joshua as the Victorian counterpart - and the allegorical type - of Jesus Christ.

There are, however, typological structures at work in the novel that are more complex than this seemingly straight-forward, if not overly simplistic, parallel between the lives of Jesus and Joshua. From the outset we are introduced to Joshua's precocious propensity to see his reality in terms of situations and characters from the Bible texts: as a young boy, he questions the highly orthodox and un-sympathetic local vicar about why he does not live according to Christ's teachings and yet calls himself a Christian. He timidly illustrates his point to the furious clergyman by referring to a parable:

I cannot help thinking, Sir, ... that Michael, being an infidel and such a good man [*Michael is a local atheist known for helping orphans and widows*], is rather like that second son in the parable who said he would not do his Lord's will when he was ordered, but who went all the same - "

"And that your vicar is like the first?" interrupted Mr. Grand angrily.

"Well, yes, sir, if you please", said Joshua quite modestly but very fervently.

(2)

Mr. Grand, obviously, is **not** pleased with the typological role assigned to him by the inquisitive boy. The episode takes place outside the church after a busy Sunday sermon, and this seems to be the beginning of Joshua's extensive career of public speaking - his role as travelling preacher naturally falls in with his role as Christ-type. There are mixed emotions of outrage and admiration for the lad's courage and earnestness among the assembled congregation. The main shock, of course, is that Joshua has found a way, by placing his contemporaries in a biblical setting, of using the vicar's own 'weapon' against him: the language that he uses is most likely the same as that which is being flung from the pulpit during Grand's sermons, but the roles are suddenly reversed, turning the confirmed 'infidel' into a true follower of the Word, and simultaneously exposing the hypocrisy of the supposed 'good guy', the conveyor of that Word. We are reminded of Renan's statement in the Life of Jesus, that "in our own days ... Jesus has no truer followers than those who seem to deny him."(3)

This inversion of traditional biblical roles follows Joshua into his highly symbolical dream-world, and he relates to his faithful young 'disciples' a dream-sequence in which an ornately attired high priest, a figure of "Ecclesiastical Christianity", surrounds the deluded and suffering people with "the most monstrous shapes of demons cast by magic lanterns and in every way unreal, of which they were in continual fear - GOD, whom they labelled "Our Father", and the "God of Love", the most terrible looking demon of all." (4) The dream is Joshua/Linton's allegory of Victorian society, and we find ourselves in a world somewhat like that of Wuthering Heights, where gods can be demons, and angels devils, and the terminology of heaven and hell is oddly flexible and frequently misleading.

We begin to see how Eliza Lynn Linton uses Joshua to show the usefulness and desirability of labels, only to turn around with a warning that labels may be unreliable, prone to misplacement or misreading - just as Hardy does with Tess.

As an example of how this effect is achieved, we may look at the character of Mary Prinsep. Having already been made so aware of the Jesus/Joshua allegory, we are put in mind of the biblical Mary Magdalen at the very first mention of the Victorian Mary's name and previous 'occupation'. This recognition is reinforced by the introduction into the narrative of various subtle images - we see Mary as the repentant sinner, joining the 'apostolic' household, and deepening in admiration for its leader. She cleans and cares for the two men, and sits at Joshua's feet reverently listening, reminiscent of another biblical Mary - sister of Martha and Lazarus, who washed and anointed Jesus' feet in John 12:3. Having thus hinted at Mary Prinsep's scriptural backdrop, Linton confirms the impression beyond doubt by having Joshua himself, characteristically, firmly placing her character in the typological scenery he has created for himself: 'When he was chaffed savagely about "his girl" he answered them mildly enough; "Mates, did our great Master receive Mary Magdalene and all sinners, or did he not? And if he did - as you may find for yourselves - am I too pure to help them?"(5) Mary as a character, and the controversial domestic situation in which she finds herself, are, in other words, evaluated in terms of Joshua's proximity to Jesus as type.

John establishes **his** role as a modern apostle himself, when describing their group of friends as "a handful of enthusiasts set out to realise Christ at one time by faith, and now by works. But we had a soul among us - a leader in whom we believed."(6) (The transition in his words from realising Christ through *faith* to realising Christ through *works* is, incidentally, an interesting one. It gives the impression that when faith is gone, moral activity must take its place as a guide to human conduct, and echoes Carlyle's insistence on the necessity of *doing one's duty*.) Given such unambiguous clues as to where we stand in the novel's allegorical landscape, it is easy to focus on its typological similarities to, rather than its differences from, its biblical pattern. Linton does, however, qualify this view. At one point we have "Mary, looking up into [*Joshua's*] face with a look

that made her like an angel - for indeed she was a pretty girl!"(7) The point is that despite the novel's rigid allegorical set-up, not every biblical allusion is invested with biblical significance. Mary is "like an angel" quite simply because she is good-looking, and typological significance is determined by outer circumstance, as it was in the case of Vladimir and Estragon. Joshua, discussing his sceptical attitude to High-Church doctrine, explains that "their elaborate system of symbolism seemed to him puerile; a playing with spiritual toys that had less reality than ingenuity."(8) It pays to remember that one of the systems of symbolism attacked by him is that of biblical typology, a textual scaffolding by which the character of Joshua himself is upheld and surrounded entirely. The passage reveals some of the interesting Chinese-box layeredness of Joshua Davidson's allegory: using the New Testament - written typologically on the basis of the Old Testament - as her source, Linton writes typologically about John, who writes typologically about Joshua, who in turn places all his fellow characters and the rest of his late Victorian concept of reality into typological scenes. Joshua, at the same time, questions and even undermines the validity of these typological scenes, and uses role-reversal to show how the 'original' Christ-message has been distorted through centuries of faulty transmission. Indeed, we will see how the efficacy of Joshua-as-type is, in fact, determined by his **differing from** the biblical Jesus, rather than on his direct and imitative mirroring of that same figure.

If the danger of misreading labels, names, and roles is exposed here, Joshua focuses, too, on the even greater danger that lies in simply not recognising that there **are** such roles, and that we are in the die-hard habit of applying them to ourselves and each other. Whether the acting out of these roles is a mere "playing with spiritual toys" or not, the fact stands that the biblical precedence is a great contributor to the shaping of characters and events in the novel, and must be seen as such. According to John the 'biographer', our refusal to see ourselves as types

with a pre-recorded figural basis is an important cause of society's ills. He says, "We don't understand anything about the Lazaruses and Simeons and Magdalenes of our own city. When we read of our Lord and Master going about among the bad people of his day, we say it was divine; when Joshua followed suit, he was locked up."(9) We read the old stories, but we fail to pick up on the typological connection between "his day" and ours, and the failure of Christianity is our failure to **apply** and **accept** roles. Trying to persuade a half-hearted benefactor to employ Mary Prinsep in 'honest work', Joshua attempts to make "Mr. C." perceive himself as representing something else, and act accordingly:

See here, Sir, what are you asked to do? - to repair in a very small way, the evil done by society. You represent society at this moment, and you are asked to undo a portion of your own bad work."

"Pshew!" [*sic*] said Mr. C. "I have not made Mary bad!"(10)

Mr. C. fails to make that necessary connection; his response is inappropriate because he does not identify with his role - he does not **internalise** it the way Joshua has done in playing his part as Christ-type.

What exactly does Joshua Davidson perceive to be his role? "I have got it to do", he says, "to find out if practical Christianity is possible in the world, and to learn why, being Christians, we are not of Christ."(11) But to reach some sort of answer to these questions, Joshua needs to do more than follow in the footsteps of his biblical predecessor - for this novel, more than being a typological paralleling of two life-stories, also has a place on the long list of late Victorian literary accounts of journeys from faith to doubt. A breach has taken place somewhere in the figural progression, and whereas the name and form of Christianity remain, the **spirit** has gone; Joshua's contemporaries are, as they profess, Christians, but not "of Christ". An agonising modification of Joshua's complete and unswerving childhood faith has to take place before he can bridge that gap. His literal belief in the Scriptures, while still a child and young boy, is so

solid that he decides to test God's promise of Matthew 17:20; 'Truly I tell you, if you have faith no bigger than a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, "Move from here to there!" and it will move, nothing will be impossible for you.' Joshua takes his young friends out to the local Rockey Valley, confident that he can take God's Word for it. "Not a shadow of doubt chilled or slacked him", and "his countenance slaved [*sic*] as Moses' of old. He seemed inspired, transported beyond himself, beyond humanity."(12) And nevertheless, absolutely nothing happens. As yet undaunted, he proceeds to pick up an adder, 'Quoting the passage, "They shall take up serpents"'. Had Joshua lived up to his biblical role, he should have fulfilled the typological expectation, laid down in Genesis 3:15, of Christ's conquering the serpent. But this is a situation very much of nature rather than Scripture, and while the faithful Joshua does not 'Strike at the serpent's head', that reptile certainly strikes at Joshua's heel, and the boy is ill for days. We are reminded of the young Edmund Gosse, who, as he describes in his autobiography Father and Son of 1907, decides to challenge God's injunction not to worship wood and stone by kneeling down in front of a piece of furniture and praying fervently - "O Chair" - at it: "But nothing happened...I had committed adolatry, flagrantly and deliberately, and God did not care."(13) Edmund and Joshua are both disappointed - the former in his frustrated attempt at defiance, the latter in his frustrated display of faith - as their experiments result in nothing but silence and void. Joshua **could** still have found respite in the Bible text: Matthew 4:6-7 has it that when tempted by the Devil to "Throw yourself down; for scripture says, "He will put angels in charge of you"", Jesus answered, "Scripture also says, "You are not to put the Lord your God to the test"". But Joshua's faith begins to waver, and he ends up abandoning most of his orthodox beliefs. 'Jesus, Son of Man' remains as Joshua's figural example and ideal after 'Christ, Son of God' has been reluctantly left behind. Joshua Davidson does what so many of his fictional and 'real' contemporaries felt obliged to do: de-construct their received religious faith

in order to rebuild their own eclectically-chosen beliefs from the scattered remains: "when one's child-like confidence has received its first shock, it is long before anything like analgous faith is **reconstructed** out of more mature knowledge."(14) (My emphasis.)

Henceforth, Joshua takes the typological structure into his own hands, and goes about shaping his own role as type. We see him in an unconventional, if not unprecedented, manipulation of his typological position as John recounts how "Joshua began to carry out his programme of life with more fixed lines."(15) With the insistence on the character of Jesus as human rather than divine, follows an emphasis on the Human will before God's providence. Joshua becomes a figure of action, "a man working on the Christ-plan".(16) Frequently, we find him stating his own intentions in his self-styled Christ-role: "I shall have done something if I save you both, and I will."(17) Despite his having rid himself of strictly literal faith, it is nevertheless on the Bible texts he finds this will. In fact, the presence of a previously written record, a source of sanction and precedence, takes on a remarkable importance, for Joshua as for other characters.

Joshua refers to the Bible ("forgive us our trespasses") to support his argument that the 'fallen' should receive a second chance in society, but his opponent retorts "As for that, ... there are texts enough against consorting with evil."(18) The acid test of truth seems to be how many texts you can confidently quote as your verification and guarantee. Even the characters are often seen in terms of readability and textuality: "Mary Prinsep was only a text...like others", and Joshua is told that "'Lady X will be charmed to see you, I am sure...You will be a new reading to her"... "I will come and be read", said Joshua, "and I hope to a good end.'" (19) (As it happens, Lady X misreads Joshua dreadfully, and sees in him a potential partner for a bit of 'slum entertainment', rather than as a potential saviour of mankind.)

Joshua's search for, and insistence upon, validating presence in the Bible stories continues after his return from Paris: At the fateful public meeting where Joshua is eventually beaten to death by the outraged mob, "His programme stated the usual thing, that he, Joshua Davidson, would show how Christ and his apostles were Communists, and how they preached the same doctrines which the Commune of Paris strove to embody." (20) Just as the writers of the New Testament texts strove to establish a plausible continuity with the Old Testament, so Linton, via Joshua, seeks to stretch the line of continuity from the New Testament all the way into the late nineteenth century.

If such a line could be successfully established, the firm textual background would serve as an antidote to the fear of fleetingness and de-centering - so typical of the time - which pervades Joshua's life-story. The pre-set pattern of typology does provide an anchor for him - "He was beset with doubts, in which the only thing that kept in shape or place was the character of Christ. For the rest, everything else had failed him." Joshua is worried that "what we call conviction" may only be a state of mind, "a subjective condition owning no absolute without" (21), and "the more he sought for the unerring truth - truth centralised, unified, focused - the less, it seemed to him, he found it." (22) His anxieties are echoed in practically every single 'faith and doubt' novel of the period. Joshua finally arrives at the paradoxical conclusion that the only certain truth is that there is no certain truth - again, a conviction which is not unfamiliar in the late Victorian discourse - and he manages to use this as a positive argument for his politics of social reform;

Christianity according to Christ ... is the confession that society is elastic, and that no social arrangements are final; that morals themselves are only experimental, and that no laws are divine - that is, absolute and unchangeable by circumstance. (23)

But not all of Linton's characters can come to terms with that religious rootlessness and turn it into a state of hopeful change. After Joshua's death, John is left asking

"What does it all mean? Let us have something definite."(24) The typological mainstay of John's existence having disappeared without any mention of the possibility of resurrection, the fictional biographer writes, "My heart burns within me and my mind is unpiloted and unanchored."(25)

The universality of the Joshua/Jesus character, the attainability of its virtues, is often emphasised in the novel (Joshua sees Jesus, for example, as simply doing in his time "just as any earnest democrat, any simple-hearted Communist, might be doing at the present day") alongside with its way of being separate and singled out from the rest of humanity (Joshua says "I must go this way alone" and is "a stranger and an alien"). These qualities can be found cohabiting in the traditional character make-up of Jesus, even if the divine dimension has been subtracted. But as the Joshua Davidson gospel approaches its violent conclusion, Linton has John use terms and images which increasingly paint a picture of Joshua as a sort of 'higher being'. We hear that "if he was not an angel, he was not far off being one"(26), and that he "was as if raised into something more than man - so simple, so earnest as he was - so far above all common weaknesses, so near to God, so like to Christ!"(27) And providing a contrast to this elevation of Joshua, we have a subtle playing down of the role of Jesus:

He was the product of his time; and if He went beyond it in some things, He was only abreast of it in others... He left the social question where he found it - paying tribute even to Caesar without reluctance - His mind not being ripe to accept the idea of a radical revolution, and His hands not strong enough to accomplish it, if even He had imagined it. (28)

In other words, the biblical Jesus has become a bit too dated for 1870's social realities. He was great in his day, and provides a shining example, but he is no longer the central all-embodying anti-type in which all other and lesser types converge and are fulfilled. Typology, to Linton, was **not** completed in the Christ-figure of the Bible, and her own creation, Joshua Davidson, provided the answer to Jesus' shortcomings. When we read that Joshua is "living after Christ". the word

'after' takes on a double meaning: He lives **according to** the guidelines laid down by the biblical Jesus, and acts as his student and imitator - but simultaneously, he lives in a time that has come **after** Jesus lived, in a chronological sense: times have changed, and our spiritual and social requirements with them. The prophecy of John 1:15 - "He comes after me but ranks ahead of me" - is extended to a new link in the typological chain, and Joshua Davidson, in his capacity of Christ-figure, has passed from type to anti-type, from *umbra* to *veritas*.

THE NEW MAGDALEN

Just as Joshua Davidson was not the only 'Christ' in late Victorian novels, Mary Prinsep was not alone in occupying the typological role of Mary Magdalen. In Wilkie Collins' lesser-known novel published in 1873, The New Magdalen, the biblical associations to be made are even more plainly asserted in the title than was the case in Linton's novel. Interestingly, this is **not** a text concerning the loss of Christian faith and the construction of a suitable replacement for such faith. In fact, the protagonist, near the end of the tale, proclaims with total conviction that "It doesn't end with this world, ... there is a better world to come!"(1) Collins' novel is, however, an exploration of our habit as human beings of living according to certain **roles**, and, more specifically, what happens if we try to manipulate or

change the roles into which we have been placed. As the title indicates, we are dealing here primarily with biblical roles, but the narrative structure adds to the Christian background a dimension of theatricality: at the start of each chapter, the author includes what seems rather like 'stage instructions' and a list of the *dramatis personae* presently concerned - such as "The place is France. The time is autumn, in the year eighteen hundred and seventy - the year of the war between France and Germany. The persons are, Captain Arnault, of the French army; ... Mercy Merrick, attached as nurse to the French ambulance; and Grace Roseberry, a travelling lady on her way to England."(2) One of the effects of having information presented in such a way, is, naturally, for the reader to have the question of the assumption or assignation of dramatic roles constantly in mind. In such a setting, **names** must needs be of great importance, and in the novel's first "scene" we find two of the main characters in this exchange;

"My name is Grace Roseberry. What is your name?" The nurse hesitated. "Not a pretty name like yours," she said, and hesitated again. "Call me 'Mercy Merrick'," she added, after a moment's consideration. (3)

Mercy has, in the space of her hesitation, found the opportunity to re-cast her identity; she has re-invented her own 'role', exemplified by her name, to complement that of her fellow character. The names, Grace and Mercy, aside from their obvious Christian connotations and Pilgrim's Progress-like allegorical bluntness, carry further descriptive significance in the sense that the former woman is a highly connected 'lady' full of the grace of polite society, whereas the latter is a nurse who, mercifully, puts the safety of her patients before any concern for herself. As the first chapter progresses, we find, too, that Grace turns out to **lack** mercy, after she has persuaded the reluctant nurse to divulge her identity and her dismal background:

"Shall I tell you what my experience has been?" [*Mercy Merrick*] resumed. "Will you hear the story of Magdalen - in modern times?" Grace drew back a step; Mercy instantly understood her.(4)

At the realisation that Mercy is in fact a reformed prostitute (and it is indicative of the suggestive power of this form of imagery that she needs only the mention of the biblical name, Magdalen, to come to this conclusion) Grace refuses, horrified, to show any sign of friendship or pity. Shortly after she is, seemingly, killed by a German shell, and Mercy - who has not only chosen her own name, but also identified her own typological predecessor by calling her life the story of Magdalen "in modern times" - decides, after some wrestling with her conscience, to impersonate the woman she believes dead. Until this moment, her prospects, at the end of the war, had been to return to the refuge whence she came, irrevocably tainted and hampered by her past, no matter how earnest her repentance. On assuming the identity of Miss Grace Roseberry, however, she gets the chance to present herself to Lady Janet Roy, an elderly relative who has never met the real Grace, and therefore has no reason to suspect the false one. Lady Janet takes Mercy Merrick into her house as well as her affections, and the latter receives all the privileges attached to a flawless reputation and a respected position in London society. The author takes scrupulous care, however, that Mercy should not be seen as an opportunist. The girl is, after all, a Victorian Magdalen, and her motives are as pure as were those of her biblical type.

Mercy's success in exchanging her role in society does not make her happy. The "slow torment of constant self-reproach"(5) inevitably follows the attempt to escape her true typological calling. The nobly borne suffering with which we have come to associate the late Victorian Christ-type is present also in Mercy;

Pale and sad, her expression and manner both eloquently suggestive of suppressed suffering and sorrow, there was an innate nobility in the carriage of this woman's head, an innate grandeur in the gaze of her large gray eyes and in the lines of her finely proportioned face, which made her irresistibly striking and beautiful, seen under any circumstances and clad in any dress. (6)

The protagonist's appearance and power to inspire awe and affection, combined with her quality of being rejected by a 'Philistine' society, surround her with echoes of the Jesus of Isaiah 53:3 - as reflected, also, in passages of 'Mark Rutherford' and Oscar Wilde - who is "despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief." These are familiar signs, in the late nineteenth century novel, which unmistakably point towards a character's spirituality and inner worth.

Nevertheless, the figural position held by Mercy is, as we know, that of a repeated Magdalen, not a new version of Christ. *That* role is filled by another character - Lady Janet's nephew, Julian Gray, (who, incidentally, has little other than his good looks in common with his near-namesake in Oscar Wilde's novel) and whose "liberal views were capable of leading him to dangerous extremes." (7) Already accompanied by several biblical allusions, this is how he is described to Mercy by a condescending family friend;

"Prepare yourself to meet the most unclerical of clergymen," he said. "Julian Gray is a lost sheep among the parsons, and a thorn in the side of his bishop. Preaches, if they ask him, in Dissenters' chapels. Declines to set up any pretensions to priestly authority and priestly power. Goes about doing good on a plan of his own. Is quite resigned never to rise to the high places in his profession. Says it's rising high enough for *him* to be the Archdeacon of the afflicted, the Dean of the hungry, and the Bishop of the poor. With all his oddities, as good a fellow as ever lived." (8)

...which testimony, surely, would be as fitting to describe the biblical Jesus as his Victorian counterpart in the shape of Julian Gray. By a chain of coincidences (varying in degrees of plausibility), not only does the **real** Grace Roseberry turn up in London to challenge the impostor, having been miraculously restored to life by a German surgeon, but Julian Gray turns out to be the very man who had preached at the refuge where Mercy Merrick previously stayed, and thus indirectly persuaded her to change her ways. We have already, at this point, heard the 'new Magdalen' relate how the words of the unorthodox young parson had affected her;

I might have committed suicide; I might even have drifted back into my old life - but for one man! ... he touched my heart as no man has touched it before or since. The hard despair melted in me at the sound of his voice; the weary round of my life showed its nobler side again while he spoke. (9)

Gray, then, possesses that redeeming, healing quality of **persuasion** which was so essential an accessory for the Victorian Christ-figure, and of which we shall see much more in what follows. This is a quality of which, in all his modesty, Julian is aware. At the thought of an *imagined* Victorian Magdalen - imagined, that is, before he suspects Mercy's real identity - he proclaims his intentions of following the moral pattern laid down by his biblical type; "If I saw the Pharisees and the fanatics of this lower earth passing by her in contempt," he says, "I would hold out my hand to her before them all. I would say to her in her solitude and her affliction, 'Rise, poor wounded heart! Beautiful, purified soul, God's angels rejoice over you! Take your place among the noblest of God's creatures!'"(10) These words call to mind Hardy's use of Shakespeare's lines as an epigraph to Tess of the d'Urbervilles; "Poor wounded name! My bosom as a bed/ shall lodge thee" - but whereas Hardy could offer sympathy and understanding in a universe bereft of Providence, Julian Gray has comfort of a more metaphysical nature in mind. His words of command are not those of a common preacher living in an era where the 'bond' between God and his creation has been irrevocably weakened; Collins' character, it seems - unlike so many of his contemporaries - still feels comfortable using syntax and imagery directly taken from the Bible, confident that they have retained their efficacy and 'magic'.

Mercy Merrick, conscience-stricken, ends up confessing all to Julian and the rest of the household, the preacher is magnificently forgiving, and - of course - they fall in love and get married in spite of the outraged relatives and former friends. One of the latter writes to the real Grace Roseberry, emphasising the novel's focus on the 'playing of parts';

Having perfected herself in her part, Mercy Merrick, to do her justice, was not the woman to play it badly. ... The object of this contemptible comedy is plain enough to my mind. (11)

Grace replies, **reversing** Mercy's angelic role, and simultaneously illustrating Matthew Arnold and Ernest Renan's idea that those members of late Victorian society who most emphatically described themselves as "religious" and "devout" were often those who lead the least 'truly Christian' lives;

Do not suppose that I feel the smallest curiosity about this degraded and designing woman. My interest in her is purely religious. To persons of my devout turn of mind she is an awful warning. When I feel Satan near me - it will be *such* a means of grace to think about Mercy Merrick! (12)

The playing of parts is a difficult subject for Mercy herself, and what occupies her and motivates her throughout Collins' novel. Like Tess Durbeyfield was to do in a later text, Mercy casts herself in a typological role - it is when she tries to **escape** this role that her problems become unbearable and her power unsustainable. As she complains while living under her assumed name; "I am suffering this morning; *I am not myself*."(13) (My emphasis). The paradox of her identity lies in the fact that the role to which she feels she should be true - her 'natural' and 'true' self - is in fact the role of a New Magdalen, the assumed shadow of what was itself increasingly perceived to be a man-made type. The Carlylean sense of the relative unimportance and flexibility of the 'Letter' as long as the 'Spirit' is unmistakably present is expressed, surprisingly, by Lady Janet who, at the disclosure of Mercy's deception, exclaims; "What do I care if she has given me her true name or not! She has given me her true heart." (14)

THE ARDENT YOUNG MAN

Speculating upon the name given to Jesus, Renan observes that this was a very common name, among his people, but that Christian believers have later sought for mystical interpretations of it. Renan suggests that "Jesus, like all mystics" may have "exalted himself in this respect". He writes, "Ardent natures never resign themselves to seeing aught of chance in what concerns them. For them, all has been regulated by God; and they perceive a sign of the supreme will in the most insignificant circumstances."(1) The importance of such an 'ardent nature', even - or **especially** - when the faith in God's 'regulation' has vanished, becomes increasingly apparent in the "life" novels of the latter half of the nineteenth century. The essential (but, as Matthew Arnold saw it, practically impossible) thing was, "under the circumstances amidst which we live, to think clearly, to feel nobly, and to delineate firmly". (2) A new species of literary character - whether this character emerged through the media of autobiography or fiction - was being developed, and was soon to be found in large numbers of texts. It is almost as if a personal ad had been placed in a Victorian newspaper, which ran "Earnest, eager, handsome youth - has religious doubts and anxieties - seeks biographer", and was met with surprisingly extensive response. Joshua Davidson, Robert Elsmere, Christopher Kirkland, the 'Donovan' of Edna Lyall's novel, Reade's Edward Mourdant of The Outcast, and William Arnold's Edward Oakenfield, are but a handful picked out from a long list of characters who all fit the above description.

The search was on for a positive leader-figure who could combat late Victorian 'millennialism' - anxieties caused by the gradual move away from orthodox Christianity and the increasing loss of absolute certainties as well as any reliable guidelines to the future. As J.A.Lester put it in his Journey Through

Despair; "The world of 'truth' had become shadowy and fluctuating at best; man's ability to perceive it had diminished toward the vanishing point."(3) Out of this shadowy and fluctuating world came John's call, as heard in Joshua Davidson, to "Let us have something definite!", and the answer to his call was the ardent young man who, though enduring the loss of religious faith, bases his life on the Christ model, and turns the stagnancy of loss into earnest action through sheer force of character. Such honesty and energy did not, of course, necessarily have to emanate from a man: 'ardent' is one of George Eliot's most favoured words when describing Dorothea in Middlemarch (1873), and the word also features strongly in her Daniel Deronda of 1876. William Arnold says of his character Edward Oakenfield, in the novel published as early as 1853; "He was an earnest man, - and he was a Christian man. Alas that the two should so often be severed."(4) Most highly valued in the 'ardent young man' is what R.L.Wolff calls the "Arnoldian earnestness"(5), speaking, that is, of Matthew Arnold. The term can equally be applied to his father Thomas, of course. 'Dr.Arnold' possessed the qualities required, and the ability to **communicate** such ardency to his pupils, according to his former student Bonamy Price:

Dr.Arnold's great power as a private tutor resided in this, that he gave such an intense earnestness to life. Every pupil was made to feel that there was work for him to do - that his happiness as well as his duty lay in doing that work well. Hence an indescribable zest was communicated to a young man's feeling about life; a strange joy came over him on discovering that he had the means of being useful, and thus of being happy; and a deep attachment sprung up towards him who had taught him thus to value life and his own self, and his work and mission in this world. (6)

It is not hard to catch the strongly religious overtones in this enthusiastic report. But then, *Thomas Arnold's* ardency was not tainted by religious uncertainties; as A. Dwight Culler explains in 'Thomas Arnold and the Mirror of History', the schoolmaster "had no doubt that the final advance was to be found in liberal Christianity, and in his faith that the Christian church could solve the problems

that had baffled the classical world he seems peculiarly limited and provincial. His son is more than a generation ahead of him in that respect.” (7)

While the word 'serious' still bore connotations of 'religiously devout', the word 'earnest' seemed, in the last decades of the century, to take on a meaning like 'reluctantly but sincerely doubting' the truth of orthodox religious doctrine. Those who were convinced, like Eliza Lynn Linton in the shape of Christopher Kirkland, that the essence of the New Testament stories was that Jesus was indeed "Man - not God", felt the need to show that virtue, charity, and honesty were qualities that could successfully be separated from religious morality as exemplified in the Ten Commandments, and fictional and autobiographical characters were created to prove this much disputed point.

The paragon of late Victorian Christ-types cast in this mould is, of course, Robert Elsmere. After reading the eponymous 1888 novel, Gladstone wrote of Mary Arnold Ward (Mrs. Humphrey Ward) that she had a "strong sense of mission" and that, above all, she possessed that essential quality of "earnestness and persistency of purpose". (8) In this novel, immensely popular at the time, Ward sets up an opposition between two types of religious doubters; the lifeless and frustrated Edward Langham, whose scepticism kills in him all drive and ambition; and the heroic Robert Elsmere himself, whose fervent will carries him through the difficult but inevitable loss-of-faith process, and enables him to set up his "new Church", his "company of Jesus". Having resigned his living because his conscience cannot countenance the hypocrisy which he would have had to call upon in order to keep preaching within the Church establishment, Elsmere takes his family to live in London - which, in 1874, had earned Thompson's title of the 'City of Dreadful Night' - where he proceeds to preach sermons which revolve around "the earthly life of Jesus." Elsmere's "New Brotherhood of Christ" as an alternative to orthodox Christianity parallels the biblical Jesus' 'new law' as opposed to that of the Pharisees. As they did for Joshua Davidson in the preceding

generation, the figure and life of Christ form the mainstay of Elsmere's re-conceived religion, and, in fact, of his whole existence as he sees it - "We are what we are tonight", Robert Elsmere insists, "... largely because a Galilean peasant was born, and grew to manhood, and preached, and died." Even in the middle of his crisis of faith, he focuses on the force of ideas to come, rather than the loss of those receding, and - paradoxically but typically - uses the words written in the context of devout faith by Saint Augustine to express these feelings:

And still through all the despair, all the revolt, all the pain, ... he felt the irresistible march and pressure of the new instincts, the new forces, which life and thought had been calling into being. The words of St. Augustine which he had read to Catherine, taken in a strange new sense, came back to him - "Commend to the keeping of the Truth whatever truth hath given thee, and thou shalt lose nothing!" Was it the summons of Truth which was rending his whole nature in this way? (9)

Elsmere, before he nobly dies of overwork having sacrificed himself to the 'cause', has become the antithesis to the cold and passive Langham, and nobody could have agreed less than Elsmere with the (ironic) philosophy of Ernest Pontifex, in Butler's The Way of All Flesh, that "We should all be churchmen, but lukewarm churchmen." (10) But then, Robert Elsmere had the advantage of not being **entirely** de-centered by his shedding of the traditional Christian garments: as Stephen Prickett has it,

Behind the bland confidence in the critical soundness of nineteenth-century historical scholarship is a parallel but totally unconscious confidence in the conventions of nineteenth-century literary realism. For Mrs. Ward, 'the science of what is credible' in the criticism of biblical history and the 'science of what is rational' in literature were part of a single continuum. That was how the world was - and must be - portrayed. That this was, in the end, itself a metaphysical position is, of course, easier to recognize with the advantages of hindsight than it was at the time. (11)

The power possessed by Robert Elsmere, as Ward frequently points out, lies in the strength of his conviction and his infectiously **good** nature - as was the case

with the less complex Joshua Davidson. Their ability to convince their surroundings and turn bystanders into followers is based on originality of personality and intensity of feeling, rather than on intellectual rhetoric. They have that energy which is described in a scene from George Gissing's The Nether World (1889), where the protagonist - and, naturally, budding atheist - Sidney is being told by Michael Snowdon of the latter's great plan for London reforms:

The communication of a noble idea has the same effect upon the brains of certain men - of one, let us say, in every hundred thousand - as a wine that exalts and enraptures. As Sidney listened to the old man telling of his wondrous vision, he became possessed with ardour such as he had known but once or twice in his life. ... Subject to the electric influence of a man who was great enough to conceive and direct his life by such a project, who could repose so supreme a faith in those he loved, all the primitive nobleness of his character asserted itself, and he could accept with a throbbing heart the superb challenge addressed to him. (12)

If autobiography, biography, or 'life' story were forms chosen by many late Victorian writers for their powers of argument and persuasion, how much more effective those media are with the characters examined in them so full of "electric influence". Clearly, these men's power to sway opinion by force of an extraordinary personality is a reflection of the power attributed to the character of Jesus in the Gospels.

An 'ardent nature' rather different from those of Joshua Davidson and Robert Elsmere is found in Edward Mordaunt of Winwood Reade's The Outcast (1875). His power to influence manifests itself not in preaching and gathering Victorian 'disciples', but in the act of writing. His 'autobiography' takes the shape of letters written to his daughter Ellen, and is an attempted explanation of his religious philosophy and how this was arrived at - an 'Apologia'. Like Newman, he stresses the inevitability and genuineness of his radical change in attitude by emphasising the 'organic' nature of his de-conversion: "I will not merely expound my religious opinions; I will describe their birth and growth in my mind. I will tell

you the story of my life."(13) This chronicle of faith and unbelief is necessitated by Mordaunt's fear lest his daughter should herself be thrown into a state of religious doubt and confusion - she has, by accident, found and read the notebook of a young man named Arthur Elliott. He has recently committed suicide after being precipitated into despair and madness by the death of his fiancée and his own loss of faith. His notebook, in which he records a peculiar sequence of dreams, makes up a sort of step-by-step account of a cruel and uncaring universe, and Mordaunt had meant to protect Ellen from this discovery just as he protected her from a traditional Christian education during her childhood:

I saved her from that danger [*of "falling into Superstition"*] by teaching her to believe in a God, compared with whom the God of the Bible is a very indifferent character. But I need not say that my God, though a nobler conception, is just as much a creature of fiction as the other. (14)

We see that for Mordaunt, the Bible is not quite sufficient; it must be added to and altered; after all, one 'fiction' can easily be replaced by a (more desirable) other 'fiction' in a young girl's mind. But in reading Elliott's manuscript, Ellen has taken a bitter bite of the fruit of knowledge, and her fiction, as invented by her father, must be replaced by fact, as perceived by her father. Mordaunt provides a most classic example of the expression of unbelief through the medium of Scripture, when he writes "O! Daughter of Eve, an apple from the Tree of Knowledge was hidden in a drawer; then came the serpent of Curiosity; and now, having eaten, you are banished from the Eden of belief."(15) Ignorance is bliss, and attaining **un**belief is the Victorian version of the Fall - but the subsequent memoirs are an earnest attempt by Mordaunt to persuade his daughter that there is, after all, hope. They are also an attempt made by Winwood Reade - who had shocked many of his contemporaries by the publication of the Martyrdom of Man three years earlier - to persuade his readers of the same, despite the Martyrdom's extreme pessimism.

The story of Edward Mordaunt's life is, by now, starting to sound familiar: as an ardent young man fresh out of university, he accepts a living as a country

parson, and falls in love, but is forced to give up his living and part from the object of his affections, Margaret, when he "falls into" doubt. He is advised by his neighbour and friend to stay within the Church - "You need never preach a doctrinal sermon; in the New Testament you will find maxims of the purest morality and precepts of the tenderest love. Let these be your texts. What does it matter, after all, if your parishioners believe in some fabulous legends of the East and some Greek definitions of the Undefinable?"(16) Mordaunt tries to follow this line for a while, but the hypocrisy of it repulses him, as it was to repulse Robert Elsmere. He goes to London and makes a humble living for himself, writing bits and pieces for a publishing firm. He is later rejoined by Margaret, whose love for Mordaunt is stronger than the fear of poverty, and soon after, Ellen is born. After a few years of comparative happiness, however, Mordaunt's eyesight starts to fail; he can no longer keep up with his work; and the family ends up penniless and homeless on the streets of the capital. Extreme poverty proves to be the death of his wife, and we hear vague echoes from the stories of Jesus and Joshua Davidson as "Thieves and prostitutes did the last offices of love for the body of my poor Margaret."(17) Immediately after her death, Mordaunt feels that Margaret has been killed by God, and when urged by a bystander to pray, he is furious - "pray to that monster, that demon, that fiend! Think you that I, like a grovelling hound, will lick the hand that strikes me without mercy and without provocation?"(18) In his despair, he resorts to that same inversion of the roles of biblical language which we have already seen at play in Joshua Davidson. Nevertheless, after a spell of serious illness, the luck changes for Mordaunt and his daughter; he is given the chance to recuperate, and is offered a new job - translating and editing Thucydides - through the charitable intervention of the Bishop under whom Mordaunt had once worked. Edward Mordaunt brings up his child, in the manner already mentioned, and spends the rest of his life in peace, having reconstructed for himself a faith with which he can live: it is an earth-

centered, "pure and sublime Theism." Mordaunt feels that we are here in order to improve an imperfect world, and that we should do so without expectations of future rewards in another life. There is no immortality - but, well, just in case there is, and he is proven wrong, what better way to prepare for it than to work for the 'common good' selflessly and with no ulterior motives? This is a pragmatic view of life, and also a paraphrasing of what is known as 'Pascal's Wager'. As is often the case with these novels, the protagonist ends up with a personal creed that may seem slightly disappointing after the trauma and suffering they have gone through in the shedding of orthodoxy. Edward Mordaunt believes, ultimately, in God the Incomprehensible, whose nature man can never ascertain."(19) There are shades of Hardy in all of this, although Hardy would not have access to even such a limited hope; for Hardy, who 'waits in **un**hope', "Nature, like History, is one of the great forces whose indifference to its own human products is a feeling to us - a feeling of denial - but no more than a fact to it, a fact which denies even the feeling", in the words of Philip Davis. (20) Mordaunt's concept of a divine presence is perhaps more closely related to Matthew Arnold's idea of "the eternal not ourselves that makes for righteousness". The beliefs held by the fictional Mordaunt were seen by some as epitomising the 'true note' of the late nineteenth century. Here is how the late Victorian writer Grant Allen (talking, incidentally, about Burne-Jones' painting) defined it: "deep-questioning, mystic, uncertain, rudderless; faith gone; humanity left; heaven lost; earth realised as man's, the home and sole hope for the future." (21)

Reade is very far from utilising typology in The Outcast in the same way as Linton did in Joshua Davidson, or even Ward in Robert Elsmere. The significance of biblical narrative in this novel lies rather in how it is used as a touchstone for spiritual development and personal events, as well as a structure for self-expression. A short passage - describing the Mourdant family's life in London -

will show how differently the Bible story works in this text, compared to in Linton's novel:

When I gave her the scraps of dry bread which I had begged, she took them joyfully and jestingly, as if it were a feast. She once said that she thought Jesus and his disciples must have lived like ourselves, because it was in the Lord's Prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread"; and this fancy invested for her with a halo of romance our miserable lives. (22)

Margaret is making the comparison between their lives and those of Jesus and the disciples as a joke, focusing really on the discrepancies between scriptural and 'real' existence rather than the similarities. Joshua's approach would have been, "Jesus and his disciples must have lived like ourselves, and indeed we must live like them". Nevertheless, they both choose their biblical role-models because of the measure of relief these can provide in their lives; however light-hearted or sincere the context, the connection has still been established.

It is not just the Bible narratives, but the physical presence of the **text** itself that takes on a peculiar importance in Reade's novel. This sense of textuality has many layers. First of all, we are to imagine the novel as a collection of letters, and furthermore, these are letters which are written because a different, hidden manuscript has been read. Two books were instrumental in Arthur Elliott's loss of faith - Malthus' Essay on Population and Darwin's Origin of Species - and he kept them always on a table in his study, "bound in sombre covers", one titled by himself **The Book of Doubt** and the other **The Book of Despair**. (23) (This ceremonious and ideologically significant process of 'book-binding' brings to mind the libraries of characters like Des Esseintes and Dorian Gray). Mordaunt's own changes of moods and opinions are very closely connected with what he is in the process of reading. After he has taken up his country living (and mistakenly believes that his lover has become engaged to another man) he writes, "now my duty lay clear before me; silence, self-conquest, resignation. ... At this time I read for the first time the Imitation of Jesus Christ, and became enamoured of spiritual

life. ...When her vision forced itself upon me, I took up the Imitation or the Bible." (24) When he realises, however, that his love for Margaret is requited, the 'body' of the text is again very much present: "I dashed Thomas à Kempis on the flames. I knelt down and prayed. I jumped up and danced, exclaiming "she is mine!"...However, I calmed down, and felt rather foolish as I took the Imitation, all charred and smoking, from the fire."(25) (As we shall see, the image of snatching a book from the flames becomes an important image in a later text - that of August Strindberg's Dream Play, published some twenty-five years later.) Whereas Robert Elsmere's faith is undermined by squire Roger Wendover's fictional Idols of the Market-Place and History of Testimony, it is Lyell's Principles of Geology which persuades Mordaunt that his Christian beliefs are without secure foundations. Incidentally, the passages in the two novels describing this process - reading which leads to a serious questioning of one's faith - closely resemble the same experience as related by Newman in the Apologia; in the words of Dwight Culler, Newman was "reading in his favourite subject, the history of the early church. As he began to go more deeply into the matter, however, he became uneasy, and by the end of August he was seriously alarmed." (26) Mordaunt having made **his** discovery, attempts to "read no theological books", and when reading the lessons in church, racked by guilt, he "felt an almost uncontrollable impulse to throw down the Book and proclaim it a lie."(27) (The church he preaches in, and which he now dreads and resents, even has "white-washed walls, with texts in many-coloured letters."(28)) Then a letter from the Bishop forces Mordaunt to admit his religious doubts to Margaret; a letter from his father denies him access to his childhood home; and the villagers' gossip about certain (non-existent) letters supposedly sent from his benefactor Dr.Chalmers to his mother, forces him to leave the scientific safe-haven of Chalmer's house. When in London and alone, he finds reading to be the only cure for despondency - "the servant brought in a copy of Mrs. Carter's Epictetus ... I

opened it at hazard and began to read; and soon, as if by a magic spell, my pains were charmed away."(29)

Texts, then, can be both of benign and malign influence, but in any case they certainly are an integral part of these characters' past and present. Edna Lyall's Donovan, too, of the 1882 novel by the same name, has his spiritual life revolving around texts. A confirmed atheist by the age of twenty, he reads by chance the Gospel according to Matthew, and is struck for the first time by the extraordinary life of Christ. Progressing naturally to Renan's Vie de Jesus, he now starts behaving like a true Christian, despite not regaining his faith. He is, soon after, seen as following "the road of the Cross". Hardy's Jude, too, of course - although in most ways so far removed from characters possessed of such 'healing' qualities as Elsmere and Davidson - lives in a world of **writing**, and is obsessed with what Eleanor McNeese calls his "lifelong search for a master text." (30) Like Eliot's Casaubon, he believes (for a while, at least) in the existence of a 'key' which will unlock all textual secrets,

a rule, prescription, or clue of the nature of a secret cipher, which, once known, would enable him, by merely applying it, to change at will all words of his own speech into those of the foreign one...Thus he assumed that the words of the required language were always to be found somewhere latent in the words of the given language by those who had the art to uncover them... (31)

As in so many instances, however, it is the character of Tess who gives the lie to such optimistic reliance on what can be learnt through the act of reading: she tells Angel that she "shouldn't mind learning why - why the sun do shine on the just and the unjust alike ... But that's what books will not tell me." (32) (Her biblical reference is to Matthew 5:45, an image which we shall see used by Oscar Wilde in, typically, a more hopeful way.) Be that as it may, we perceive that the lives of these ardent young men are profoundly influenced by the reading of texts, their roles are assigned to them on the basis of texts, and they invariably end up writing

(or, obviously, otherwise featuring in) texts - the most important of these being the Bible texts themselves. In these respects, the Victorian 'Imitation' novels follow faithfully the suggestions that came in the shape of Carlyle's Sartor Resartus.

NEW WINE FROM OLD BOTTLES

Nor do people put new wine into old wineskins; if they do, the skins burst, and the wine runs out and the skins are ruined. No, they put new wine into fresh skins; then both are preserved. (Matthew 9:17)

And if in securing the essence of the creed you forget the Founder and call my doctrine under another name, so be it. The world wants the thing, not the label; and Christ-likeness, not Ecclesiastical Christianity, is the best Saviour of men.
(1)

The Victorian 'depth myth' had writers and readers looking for the true meaning of things **beneath** the surface - the idea behind the form, the *spirit* contained in the *letter*. Increasingly, the opinion was being expressed that content was being strangled by form; that they had, somehow, lost sight of 'Truth', but that it was to be salvaged if only the straight-jacket of orthodoxy and narrow-minded Christian ritual could be thrown off. The idea was to break the old wineskins without spilling the precious wine - this is the Carlylean paradox of new wine in old bottles carried through into the end of the century. None of the novels here

examined advocate the complete and unconditional rejection of religion. There is always the insistence that the foundations should be "swept away, and everything must be built up afresh"(2), but not without first carefully picking up and evaluating the pieces that might still be of value. Whereas the question asked may appear to be 'Was there ever a Master?', more often it was actually 'Have we simply been bad students?' As Joshua Davidson's vision of Christ-as-man tells him, the real value of the Christian message had been falsified, clothed by doctrine until it was rendered unrecognisable. Joshua, Elsmere, Rutherford, Donovan, Mordaunt, Kirkland, Angel Clare, *et al*, are all trying to find this "essence of the creed", the "thing" in itself. Invariably, this "thing" worth keeping, when eventually found, turns out to be a combination of morality, ethics, and love, which is extremely similar to the traditional message of the religion from which they have ostensibly broken free. Throughout the ordeal they endure while losing their religion, many of these characters still feel that there is something 'underneath' which would become apparent if only a more appropriate shape could be found for it. Hale White, under the cloak of Mark Rutherford, wrote,

An unshapen thought presents itself to me, I look at it, and I do all in my power to give it body and expression, but I cannot. I am certain that there is something truer and deeper to be said about the existence of God than anything I have said, and what is more, I am certain of the presence of this something in me, but I cannot lift it to the light. (3)

It may seem paradoxical that in the attempt to lift these unshapen thoughts into the light of day, these writers should choose to apply to them forms belonging so firmly to the very signifying systems that they were trying to break away from. The use of scriptural allegory and typology is undeniably a form of repetition, and as such a reinforcement of the old forms, but essentially it is a repetition with change. As we have seen, the meaning of the various typological allegories is found just as much - if not more - in the change, deliberate misapplication, reversal, self-contradiction and self-awareness of the traditional roles, as in the

actual transmission and application of these roles. In the many autobiographies, biographies, and 'life' stories of the period, typology could take on a very **personal** aspect, and the use of the Christ-life motif as a coherent whole was obviously still seen as a literary possibility. We will see in the following chapters that in other texts, typology usage becomes increasingly fragmented, and starts focusing on separate incidents and images rather than the adoption of an entire role. The biblical pattern of the life of Jesus was still useful, because the late nineteenth-century writers we have looked at here were interested in exactly that: the stories of the **life** of Christ, rather than those concerning his death and resurrection. Following the pattern thus laid down, the new Christ-types were able to fulfil the ultimate requirements of an "honest doubter" - to make oneself into that strangely incongruous creature, the Christian Atheist, or, as Winwood Reade puts it in the voice of Edward Mordaunt; "one may cease to believe in a Personal God, and in the Immortality of the Soul, and yet not cease to be a good and even a religious man." (4)

Part 3 : The Shadow of Christ

..."and in Him the prophecy was fulfilled. We must not be afraid of such a phrase."

...

Oscar Wilde, from 'De Profundis'

PRELIMINARY

This part of the thesis looks at the works of writers who were not afraid to use structures and images that have relatively little left in common with the Bible texts and typological traditions from which they sprung, but which strike a deep resonance, no less effective as a literary device, with the not inconsiderable 'typological residue' still present in our cultural discourse and imagination. This is less to do with any direct and deliberate inheritance-line from the written word of the Bible, and more to do with the **effect** this 'Word' has had upon the associative and imaginative powers of readers and writers - of the late nineteenth century, and of today.

In the more orthodox texts (some of which have been examined in the previous chapters), as in the Bible itself, the typological figure had a specific set of meanings attached to it, a previously agreed upon interpretation, and a definite space and time within the exegetical framework. Each type and anti-type had its appropriate response with which it should be met. In the present texts, however, the writers have generally allowed more scope for the readers to bring their own interpretations and associations into play. Freed from many of the limitations of set meanings, the 'biblical personality' in these texts now often comes to metonymically symbolise the whole of Christianity - and often, too, to express the inadequacy or inappropriateness of this religion. The Jesus-figure serves better than any other typological role-filler as metonymic image, since he, as the ultimate anti-type, traditionally embodies and embraces the whole of his religion. The story of the life and Passion of Christ seems, also, to have been the one, out of all the Bible stories, most vividly to have captured our imaginations. There certainly is a marked centering on the Christ-type, at the expense of more peripheral types and minor typological situations and images, in the present texts - and, notably, a

centering on Jesus as **personality**. All of the above leads to the question of how to differentiate between a type and a mere biblical allusion or "illustration", as the links between typological tradition and its literary usage get increasingly tenuous or vague. For our purposes, the answer must be that as long as something is **recognisable** as type, by association or by direct implication, it is type.

A DREAM PLAY

The Swedish playwright August Strindberg was well known, if not infamous, for the iconoclastic and untraditional attitudes expressed in his work, and it may seem odd to include him when discussing such a topic as typology. He wrote plays that ranged in form from the naturalistic to the expressionistic, but all his work featured, as he explained, “modern characters, living in a period of transition more feverishly hysterical than its predecessor”.(1) Strindberg himself had, unfortunately, several times in his life to go through periods of being ‘feverishly hysterical’, and A Dream Play was written after his emergence from one such period of despair. But despite what his contemporaries saw as his ‘madness’, he had great influence on other writers - Henrik Ibsen, to name one, in many ways the complete antithesis to Strindberg, “kept a painting of Strindberg on his study wall, not, he explained, because of any sympathy or friendship with either the painter or Strindberg, but because “I am now not able to write a word without having that madman staring down at me!” “(2)

In 1902, the rather limited audiences of Strindberg’s Dream Play - the play closed after twelve performances (3) - saw a use of typological figures and images which was odd, radical and idiosyncratic, yet at the same time peculiarly conforming to traditional typological convention. Strindberg uses the formula with which we have already become familiar in late Victorian literary use of typology, that of **repetition with change**. In this play, just as in the Gospel story, God the Father sends his child down to Earth in answer to the prayers of struggling mankind, whose “mother tongue / is called Complaint”. Strindberg’s theme is a version of the Second Coming, but this time the god is the Hindu divinity Indra, and the messenger-Messiah is his daughter Agnes. Her role amongst the mortals is that of learner and teacher, ‘doorkeeper’ and confessor, sufferer and saviour: the establishment of her character as Christ-type could not

be clearer. Still, there are conflicting signals, and we find an echo of Wilde's Salome as Agnes' fellow characters are confused by, and start debating the question of, her identity. The problem of type-identification is a significant one, and I will return to it.

If the play's Christ-type exists outside a static identity, so do the rest of the characters: as the author notes, they "are split, double and multiply; they evaporate, crystallise, scatter and converge."⁽⁴⁾ The play is, after all, a **dream**, although it is never quite clear exactly who is doing the dreaming. It follows the bizarre logic and explores the myriad possibilities of the sub-conscious. Strindberg was fascinated by the dream-drama (To Damascus, in which Agnes appears in a different form, is another dream play) and as such was ahead of his time, adumbrating the twentieth-century preoccupation with the workings of a mind submerged in dream or hypnosis, and the fragmentation of the human character which had traditionally been viewed as a coherent whole. Simultaneously, though, in making this work in the shape of a dream, he places himself firmly within past literary tradition: the dreamer-narrator is a figure inextricably linked with its Christian, mediaeval, poetic background; it is related, for example, to Dante as dreamer in the Divina Commedia and to the narrator of Pearl. The dream-frame is one of great liberating potential. Already freed from the strict requirements of waking logic, it also allows the author and characters to move into a sphere which is 'beyond good and evil', without the restrictions of moral judgment. The dreamer "neither condemns nor acquits, but only relates."⁽⁵⁾ This gives a sense at once of great responsibility and great freedom. The narrator is the objective spectator, the one who relates a story to his listeners - but he is also the dreamer, most subjective of all roles, the one who relates (or associates, connects) one aspect of his dream to another and therefore has a direct influence on the outcome; the story originates from him and exists wholly within him.

The absence of moral judgment here associated with the dream-landscape - and, as in so many late Victorian texts, associated with the loss of faith - is as much a problem as a liberation. In a sphere outside that of moral law, confusion is inevitable. As the Poet, traditionally seen as Strindberg's mouthpiece, complains, "Nor do I get any comfort from my conscience when it tells me I did right, for the next moment it assures me I did wrong. That is the way of life."(6) The Mother, similarly, says, "If you do something good, someone else is sure to think it bad; if you are kind to one person you are sure to harm another."(7) (The repetition of the word 'sure' contains some hopeless irony - the only 'sure' thing being, apparently, that there **is** no standard certainty by which to adjust your conduct.) This, of course, is exactly the same desperate observation as that made by another late Victorian character, Hardy's Jude Fawley, after he has fed the birds in the cornfield and been punished for what he assumed was his kindness to his fellow beings. Another suggestion of an echo, once we are put in mind of Jude's episode of disillusion, comes at a later stage as the Lawyer asks of Indra's daughter, "Who has to pay up in the end? Tell me that", and she answers, simply, "He who feeds the birds."(8) More than a vague and associative link with Hardy, this is, of course, a biblical allusion - biblically, God is the one who looks out for the birds, as in Amos 3:5 - underpinning Agnes' status as a Christ-figure whose purpose is to provide answers and explanations.

Yet her status as such is far from straightforwardly stated. We are miles away, in Strindberg's expressionist territory, from a clear-cut Christ-imitation such as that presented, say, in Joshua Davidson. Joshua, as we have seen, was given an example to follow, and subsequently followed it without much scope for hesitation. Agnes, however, receives for every indication of her role as Christ a counter-indication. As soon as she has been placed on Earth - "the darkest and the heaviest / of all the spheres that swing in space" - we are told that she is to re-ascend by the "ladder of suffering", the purpose being, as we would assume from

our memories of the Gospel-stories, to relieve mankind of guilt by her own pain, thereby re-establishing and strengthening the relationship between Creator and Creation. Still, after Agnes has gone through several moments (years or seconds - the concept of time is relative in the dream-world) of pain, confusion and frustration in the company of men, we find her **descending** instead of ascending: her stay on Earth seems to have weakened rather than strengthened her link with her divine parent. Raising her arms to heaven, she cries, "I am sinking, sinking! Help me, Father, God of Heaven! **(Silence)** No longer can I hear His answer. The ether no longer carries the sound of His lips to the shell of my ear...the silver thread has snapped. Alas, I am earth-bound!"(9) Totally in accordance with Strindberg's paradoxical dream-logic, the Poet's response to this is, "Do you mean then soon - to go?" (making, perhaps, the association with the end scene of Waiting for Godot appropriate). Agnes' descent to earth on a cloud in the Prologue, and the stage production difficulties which this entailed, is illustrative of the times: as Pascale Voilley explains, "The function of the Prologue is to dramatize Agnes' descent from heaven to Earth. When Strindberg started to write his play no Stockholm theatre was any longer equipped with the devices required for such a prologue ... Such machinery, an heirloom from the baroque theatre, was still in use in Strindberg's youth", but, after the early eighties, this line of communication between heaven and earth could not be taken for granted - in either spiritual or theatrical terms. (10)

In Wilde's play Salome, several of the characters are engaged in urgent debates about whether or not their prisoner really is the Prophet. In A Dream Play, the characters, although obviously intrigued by the presence of Agnes and puzzled by the question of her identity, seem more reluctant to discuss this topic. Early on in the play, the Mother, on having the girl pointed out to her, says, "Oh, is it Agnes? Do you know what they are saying? That she is the daughter of the God Indra, who begged to come down to Earth so as to know what it is really like for

human beings. But don't say anything.”(11) (Interestingly, despite the partial disclaimer of the dream setting, implying as it does ‘unreality’, we are here given a signal that we are about to find out, with Agnes, what our lives are “really like”.) The Officer replies that “she is a child of the gods”, upon which the Mother, raising her voice, starts talking about something entirely different. Another example of reluctant identity-speculation is the scene in which the Poet, James Frazer-like, draws a parallel between Agnes’ situation and that of another myth, another religion:

POET. The Caliph, Harun the Just, was of the same opinion. Sitting quietly on his exalted throne he could never see how those below were faring. Presently complaints reached his lofty ear, so one fine day he stepped down in disguise and walked unobserved among the crowd to watch the workings of justice.

DAUGHTER. You do not think I am Harun the Just, do you?

POET. Let's change the subject.

The characters inhabiting this dream-world are, manifestly, familiar with the concept of a heaven-sent redeemer. Indra's daughter is certainly a Jesus-figure, but her version of the biblical events is not the only one, nor, indeed, do we get the impression that this is the definitive or the last coming of Christ. Despite Agnes' divine status, the humans she encounters seem to know more about her previous incarnations and their fates than she does herself. Her wish to liberate the world's sufferers is met with skepticism by the Lawyer: “Try! Once a deliverer came, but he was hanged upon a cross.”

DAUGHTER. By whom?

LAWYER. By all the righteous.

DAUGHTER. Who are they?

LAWYER. Don't you know the righteous? Well, you will. (12)

Strangely, the Lawyer's role is to be a prophet and a teacher for Agnes who, in **her** role as Christ, is the anti-type to all prophets and teachers. We are left with the feeling that the present heavenly visitation is but one of many, that she is not as

well-prepared as she might have been, and that the humans are in fact starting to develop a certain cynicism towards their supposed saviours: “all reformers end in prison or the madhouse”, as the Lawyer says. Stranger still, at one point in the play (which will be more closely examined later), Agnes the Christ-type is actually witnessing Jesus himself walking on the water. In Strindberg’s dream-landscape, we may apparently have two versions of Christ occupying the very same space and moment in time. All this is, naturally, very unorthodox from the point of view of biblical typology. Still, theoretically at least, it actually follows the traditional typological recipe: Agnes **is** the Christ-figure, but also comes after it. Though succeeding it, she also exists simultaneously with it, embracing it in a realm independent of space and time - and is this not, as we have seen in previous chapters, exactly what we should expect from an anti-type?

Despite these conflicting signals about typological identity, Strindberg was certainly determined that the play’s audience/readers should be given constant reminders of the Bible stories, or rather, that we should be kept in a frame of mind open to typological suggestion. His more or less explicit playing with biblical images ensures this. The mention of “the ship which will sail before the plague comes”(13) is reminiscent of the Ark. The Quarantine Master tells the doomed young lovers that they must stay in the desert-like limbo of Foulstrand for “Forty days and forty nights”(14), thereby bringing Moses to mind. The story of the Fall is recalled to us by the two Coal Heavers (existing in a place which is called ‘paradise’ by Agnes and ‘hell’ by themselves) who cannot “have a bit of fruit off that tree” because “The police would come.”(15) There is even a crucifixion scene, at the conferring of doctoral degrees, at which Agnes, paradoxically, plays the part of the crucifier rather than the crucified: “Child, come! You shall have a wreath from me... one more fitting. **(She puts a crown of thorns on his head.)**”(16) In a note on the text, we are told that “In Molander’s production as

the Daughter put the crown of thorns on the Lawyers head he knelt, facing the audience, his arms outstretched in the form of a crucifix.”

This apparent inversion of roles characterises, in fact, the whole of Agnes’ stay on Earth. Where Jesus challenged the inadequate laws and ways of man, Agnes is being challenged on the inadequate Word of God. And, as we may indeed expect at this stage, the language used by the Poet to point out divine injustice, is taken directly from a biblical parable. Hearing music from a distance, he tells Agnes that there is “a dance for Lina’s sister, who has come home from town - where she went astray, you understand. Now they are killing the fatted calf, while Lina, who stayed at home, has to carry the swill pail and feed the pigs.” (Incidentally, for an author so infamously misogynistic as Strindberg, it is interesting that he should have chosen to replace several male figures from the Bible with female ones - notably substituting Agnes for Jesus and Lina’s sister for the Prodigal Son.) Despite the change of sex, the reference to the parable in Luke 15:11-32 is obvious. The Daughter’s attempted justification follows an orthodox exegetical line: “There is rejoicing in that home because the wanderer has forsaken the path of evil, not only because she has come home. Remember that.” The Poet, however, is unconvinced: “Then give a ball and a supper every evening for this blameless servant who has never gone astray. Do that for her - they never do. On the contrary, when Lina is free, she has to go to prayer meetings where she’s reprimanded for not being perfect. Is that justice?” At which Indra’s messenger can do nothing but back down, reinforcing the suggestion that we are dealing here with a Christ-type who is not quite as omniscient as faith would require - “Your questions are difficult to answer, because there are so many unknown factors.”(17) The challenge to the religion which Agnes represents is everywhere in the text. Not only the humans, but even the elements complain about its inherent lack of justice. There is an odd scene which takes place between Indra’s daughter and the Poet in

Fingal's Cave on the island of Staffa (near Iona, site of centuries of Christian worship - the cave is here renamed "Indra's Ear", "for here, it is said, the King of Heaven listens to the lamentation of mortals.") Agnes lends an ear and also a voice to the winds and the waves, as she translates their song to the bewildered Poet. The winds sigh about Earth, which is unclean; life, which is unjust; and men, who are neither good nor evil: "They live as best they may/ from one day to another,/ Sons of dust in dust they walk,/ born of the dust,/ dust they become./ Feet they have to trudge,/ no wings./ Dust-soiled they grow./ Is the fault theirs/ or Thine?"(18) The complaint is one of being very much earth-bound - like Agnes finds herself - in an after-the-Fall situation, but without the promise of redemption, ascension, "wings". Compared with Paradise Lost, in which Milton attempts to lay as much of the blame for the Fall as possible at the feet of man, and ascribes none whatsoever to his God, the question in these last two lines is radical. Agnes has no answer - to this, and to the Poet's similar prayer-petition, her response is an unsatisfactory "No more! The work may not condemn the master. Life's riddle still remains unsolved."(19)

The matter of the anti-type being challenged about the basis of faith from which it originates, is complicated further as even the validity of the concept of **analogy** (and therefore, by extension, typology itself) is put into question. The Officer, although being a grown man and having already graduated, finds himself back in the classroom - a classic dream-situation where he has been placed "to mature". Asked what twice two is, he painfully searches his memory, and comes up with "Twice two - is two, and this I will demonstrate by analogy, the highest form of proof. Listen! Once one is one, therefore twice two is two. For that which applies to the one must also apply to the other."(20) His warped logic is received with perfect seriousness and perplexity by the schoolmaster. Comical as this scene is, underlying it is the suggestion that all analogy is a fallacy; that we cannot achieve understanding by constructing comparisons and parallels as if, as Oscar

Wilde put it, “anybody, or anything for that matter, was like aught else in the world!”(21) Thus the play, itself so bound up in the workings of analogy, turns around upon itself as well as upon the role of Agnes as Christ-type.

As analogy fails as an expression of truth, so, frequently, does language itself. Indra’s daughter has come to earth to act in the capacity of a communication-line between man and God; she is meant to be an interpreter of the Word, and a conveyor and translator of the prayers of humans. (This role is of course one she shares with the Jesus we know from the New Testament.) The words, the names we give to things, are of extreme importance, and yet we find that these words so often turn out to be inadequate. The Poet asks Agnes to “translate for me,/ this lamentation into speech/ fit for Immortal ears”(22), and she promises to do so. Yet the hopes of her succeeding in this act of translation are slim: not only have we, at this point, just heard that the “silver thread” connecting her to Heaven has snapped, we also hear Agnes herself, shortly afterwards, proclaim the deceptiveness of words as they contemplate the shipwrecks outside the cave: “Look what the sea has stolen and destroyed! All that remains of those sunken ships is their figureheads...and the names - Justice, Friendship, Golden Peace, and Hope. That’s all that’s left of hope, treacherous hope.”(23) The names of the ships, mostly words with strong Christian connotations, remain as nothing more than an ironic comment on the misfortune and despair that have gone before.

Names, then, like the objective truth they are meant to signify, are dangerously relative: we remember, for example, the place which says ‘hell’ to the Coal Heavers and ‘paradise’ to Agnes. The inappropriateness of language in “this incomprehensible world”, as she repeatedly calls it, makes the play’s characters respond in unexpected ways. Strindberg shows this particularly clearly in a scene of extreme confusion, when the Daughter and the Poet, still in the cave, witness another boat in distress, and Agnes finally comes face to face with her

biblical counterpart. The drowning crew of the boat are singing 'Christ Kyrie' when a figure appears:

DAUGHTER. Who is it coming there?

POET. Walking upon the water! Only One walks upon the water. It is not Peter, the rock, for he sank like a stone.

A white light appears over the sea.

POET. It is He, the crucified...The crew are screaming with horror because they have seen their Saviour...and now...they are throwing themselves overboard in terror of the redeemer. (24)

Note again the possibilities afforded by the dream-world absence of ordered time and space: Jesus, though already known as 'the crucified', is walking on the water, with Agnes, his subsequent anti-type, as contemporary witness. We would expect the words of salvation and redemption to be connected, in the Victorian mind at least, with the language of faith, hope and security. In A Dream Play, however, these words are met with a reaction of "horror" and "terror". The scene carries echoes of James Thomson's 'City of Dreadful Night', in which, nearly thirty years earlier, the poem's 'anti-sermon' reassured the city's inhabitants, "battling in black floods without an ark", that they could end life whenever they wished "Without the *fear* of waking after death." (25) (My italics).

So did these words ever have a fixed significance, and was there ever a channel through which man's voice could be heard by the gods? Agnes' explanation of the workings of "Indra's Ear", meant to reassure, may suggest otherwise -

DAUGHTER. Do you not see that this cave is shaped like a shell? Yes, you see it. Do you not know that your ear is shaped like a shell? You know, but you have given it no thought. **She picks up a shell.** As a child, did you never hold a shell to your ear and listen to the whisper of your heart's blood, to the humming of thoughts in your brain, to the parting of a thousand little worn-out tissues in the fabric of your body? All this you can hear in a small shell. Think then what may be heard in this great one. (26)

Agnes, it seems, is misinterpreting her own analogy, which in fact works against the notion of a listening, understanding, connected God. For, listening to a shell, as she describes so poetically, you may hear a lot, but all you'll ever hear is generated within yourself; it is purely self-reflective, and effectively shuts off all voices from without. Indeed, by the end of the play, Strindberg's Christ-type has realised the futility of her attempts as interpreter: Asked to "Say a parting word", she replies, "No, I cannot. Do you think your language can express our thoughts?"(27)

In practically all the texts examined previously, we have found evidence of despair at the discovery that there is no fixed truth hidden behind the familiar Christian dogma; that the Carlylean 'clothing' conceals emptiness only. A Dream Play is no exception, despite Strindberg's own assurances that it was written during a period of "new productivity, with faith, hope and charity regained - and absolute conviction."(28) Its characters reach the same conclusion as has been reached by the protagonists of Hardy's late fiction, of Conrad's Heart of Darkness, of the wanderer in 'The City of Dreadful Night': "I find no hint throughout the Universe/ of good or ill, of blessing or of curse;/ I find alone Necessity Supreme."(29) Any search for a benevolent God, or even a malevolent Fate, will inevitably end in disillusion. As Agnes repeats, "Det är synd om människorna" - human beings are to be pitied. (Interestingly, although perhaps not very significantly, the Swedish word for 'pity', here, is the same as their word for 'sin'). Throughout the play, attention is centered on a closed stage-door and the characters' attempts to have it opened, in order to reveal the 'truth' they believe is hidden behind it. They, too, meet with disappointment:

CHANCELLOR. What was concealed behind that door?

THEOLOGY. Nothing. That is the solution to the riddle of the universe.
(30)

God's daughter must also admit defeat, at the risk of being stoned to death; "I have no answer."(31) The result of this nothingness is that what was, in biblical typology, a meaningful **line** of revelation ending in final Knowledge and Truth, now becomes an endless **cycle** with the same types and events occurring and recurring over and over, seemingly without significance or logic. The Officer laments how he, in his post at a school, is "teaching the boys the same lessons I learnt myself, all through my childhood, all through my youth. Teach them the same lessons I learnt all through my manhood and finally all through my old age. The same lessons!...until in the end I'm carried out to the crematorium and burnt to ashes."(32) The Lawyer makes the same point, saying to Agnes, "You have seen most things now, but you have not yet experienced the worst thing of all." Asking what that might be, she is told, "Repetitions, reiterations. Going back. Doing one's lessons again. ... I wake in the morning with a headache, and then the repetition begins, but it is a distorted repetition, so that everything which was charming and witty and beautiful the night before appears in memory ugly, stupid, repulsive."(33) The Poet, and naturally enough the Jesus-figure herself, are no less caught up in this climate of endless, meaningless **dejà vu** which, apparently, is reality:

POET. I seem to have lived through all this before.

DAUGHTER. I too.

POET. Perhaps I dreamt it. ...

DAUGHTER. I feel that once before, somewhere else, we said these words.

POET. Then soon you will know what reality is. (34)

This may seem hellish, but Strindberg does not exclude all promise of redemption. One possible solution left open to us comes at the very beginning of the play, when the Officer says to Agnes, "You are a child of heaven" and she replies, "So are you", suggesting as it does that redemption has already taken place - although the rest of the play makes clear that this has not been properly understood. I find

the second possibility more appealing. It is found in one of the last stage directions, after the Doctor of Theology has made his distinguished parting speech: “THEOLOGY. How can I have faith when no one else has faith? How can I defend a God who does not defend his own people? It’s all bosh! **He throws a book on the fire. The POET snatches the book from the flames.**”(35) The book, we are told, is a Book of Martyrs (again suggestive of typological links - each martyr in history traditionally being seen as a shadow of Christ). As the Poet rescues the Word itself from martyrdom among the flames, perhaps to be recycled into literature in an act of re-inventing the Bible stories just as the playwright himself has done, it seems we are given if not a substitute for redemption, then at least a sign of hope.

BREAKING THE HEART OF STONE

“I was a man who stood in symbolic relations to the art and culture of my age” (1), wrote Oscar Wilde in De Profundis. Having turned the notion of ‘art imitating life’ on its head, he was no stranger to self-dramatisation. In this letter written during his imprisonment, Wilde makes moves towards casting himself as a type of Christ, albeit a Christ-type with a difference. Many aspects of Wilde’s life and writing - his challenging attitude towards, and persecution by, the establishment; his role as scapegoat; his apparent determination to participate in his own ‘undoing’ and refusal of chances to escape its consequences; his subsequent suffering and transformation - make these comparisons drawn between the character of Oscar Wilde and that of Jesus not altogether surprising or unreasonable. No more surprising is Wilde’s late acquisition of Christian faith, however uneasy and idiosyncratic. The ‘regression’ into morality, following some personal trauma, is a familiar occurrence in the discourse of the eighteenth seventies, eighties and nineties - it happens, for example, to Jude the Obscure’s Sue Bridehead, to both the author and the protagonist of A Rebus, and to the dying Aubrey Beardsley. As Philip Davis says in an article about Matthew Arnold; “The poet became the school inspector; the artist became the critic; the aesthete became a moralist.” (2) (This is not to say that Wilde’s work before his trial is somehow immoral or amoral. Dorian Gray is, manifestly, one of the late nineteenth century’s most moral tales, in which ‘the wages of sin are death’.) Dying, Oscar Wilde joined many of his late Victorian contemporary artists in being received into the forgiving arms of the Roman Catholic Church. Father Cuthbert Dunne delivered the Last Sacraments to the repentant sinner; thus his report of the event in the Register of St. Joseph’s Church, Paris:

On his head above the forehead, there was a leech on either side, put there to relieve the pressure of blood upon the brain. At these subsequent visits, he repeated the prayers with me again and each time received Absolution. (3)

The image of Wilde on his death-bed - cleansed of sin, on the one hand, and with leeches creating the illusion of nascent 'horns', on the other, is an intriguing one. Nevertheless, the extent and sincerity of the author's religious faith are of little importance in this particular context, since his re-creating of the personality of Christ, and his rewriting of the Bible stories, make possible a personal affinity and perceived communion with Jesus - irrespective of any affinity with Church and tradition.

De Profundis is, among other things, Wilde's attempt to attain perfect insight into his own character as well as the character of Jesus, and to establish links between the two. To achieve this, he relies relatively little upon the actual word of Scripture or the evidence of biblical research - his objective is far removed from that of Renan in his Vie de Jesus, "that gracious fifth gospel", as Wilde calls it. (4) Wilde is focusing his interest less on the 'diachronic', directional, Jesus of history, and more on the 'synchronic', timeless, Jesus of his imagination. About this latter Christ-figure he is free to speculate and make assumptions which to him are as valid and true - if not more so - as those presented and maintained by established Christianity. He says of him, poetically echoing Walter Pater's "gemlike flame" in the Renaissance and providing a contrast to Matthew Arnold's desperately isolated "devouring flame of thought" (5), that "the very basis of his nature was the same as that of the nature of the artist - an intense and flamelike imagination. He realised in the entire sphere of human relations that imaginative sympathy which in the sphere of Art is the sole secret of creation." (6) It is this "imaginative sympathy" which enables

Wilde to cast himself in the same role as his 'fellow artist' Jesus. The ability and eagerness to emphasise the artistic nature of the New Testament characters and events was not unique to Wilde, of course; in a sense, he was only following the 'sign-posts' which had been set up by William Blake before him ("Jesus & his Apostles & Disciples were all Artists" (7)) who, again, was following the thoughts of the pioneering biblical critic Lowth, writing *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* in the eighteenth century. (8)

Be that as it may, it is certain that the affinities of character and personality are more significant in De Profundis than the similarities of circumstance and historical events - which constitutes a 'spiritual return' from the physically determined Christ-likeness of Beckett's Estragon. These personal affinities make Jesus and Wilde "one" - "In his view of life he is one with the artist." (9) This sense of 'one-ness' is essential in De Profundis. It lends meaning to the self in a world where God has become a distant figure, but where the creation of a Christ with whom we can be intimate is still a possibility. "Most of the great works of nineteenth-century literature have at their centers a character who is in doubt about his own identity and asks "How can I find something outside myself which will tell me who I am and give me a place in society and in the universe?" ", says J.Hillis Miller in Victorian Subjects. (10) The Jesus-myth of Wilde's making possesses the qualities needed to fill the role of such an external 'something'. Communion, intimacy, immediacy, identification - these are the bonds that Wilde tries to re-establish between the individual (himself) and the lost world of religious significance. Art and the life dedicated to art (his own) are the perfect media for this reunion; he sees an "intimate and immediate connection between the true life of Christ and the true life of the artist." (11)

The biblical Christ is a paradoxical mixture of universality and uniqueness. He is at once Son of Man and Son of God. Wilde accepts these qualities, adopts them into his new philosophy, and reflects them in the text. Jesus, says Wilde,

pointed out that there was no difference at all between the lives of others and one's own life. By this means he gave to man an extended, a Titan personality. Since his coming the history of each separate individual is, or can be made, the history of the world. (12)

So all men and women are essentially the same, and Jesus both invents and represents the connecting spirit that binds them together. At the same time, however, the idea of separateness, chosen-ness, are just as important - "above all, Christ is the most supreme of individualists." (13) When constructing his own role as type, Wilde again makes use of these two contrasting aspects of the character of Christ. On the side of universality, he talks of St. Francis of Assisi (who, like Jesus and like Wilde himself, had been given the "soul of a poet") and how St. Francis "understood Christ, and so he became like him." (14) But Wilde wants to show that he, too, possesses such a spiritual link with Christ as to assimilate that personality into his own by intimately **understanding** it. He conjures up the biblical character not only by repeating and interpreting what Jesus is reported to have said, but by describing what "he felt". "Christ, had he been asked, would have said - I feel quite certain about it - " (15) declares Wilde, and so he too, presumably, becomes "like him" by way of personal affinity and human understanding. On the side of uniqueness, Wilde is no less able to establish a 'typological' bond between himself and Jesus. Like Strindberg's Officer, he has to re-learn the lessons of the past; "What lies before me is my past. I have got to make myself look on that with different eyes. ... do not forget in what a terrible school I am sitting at my task." But unlike the frustrated Officer, Wilde feels that his return to the 'classroom' has a

purpose: “Perhaps I am chosen to teach them something more wonderful, the meaning of sorrow and its beauty.” (16) These words, surely, reflect exactly the unique position in which the biblical Jesus found himself. Simultaneously, the word ‘chosen’ is another attempt to build a bridge between the created and the absent creator; in order to be chosen, somebody must at one stage be present to choose you.

The space which Wilde makes for himself within the extended web of biblical metaphor is sometimes far more humble than that of chosen teacher and sufferer, and more subtly integrated into the text. One such connection is made when he writes about his love for “the story St. Mark tells us [*Mark 7:28*] about the Greek woman who, when as a trial of her faith he said to her that he could not give her the bread of the children of Israel, answered him that the little dogs ... who are under the table eat of the crumbs that the children let fall.” (17) This choice of metaphor is significant inasmuch as Wilde, in the passage directly above this, has described how **he**, in his humility, carefully eats “whatever crumbs may be left on my tin plate, or have fallen on the rough towel that one uses as a cloth.” Laterally moving between biblical images and using the types as signs, he can redefine his self, identifying both with the dog who lives on sufferance and the Saviour who triumphs through suffering. These are all examples of Wilde’s response to the feeling, ubiquitous in late nineteenth-century texts, that the ‘living Word’ had lost its power of interaction with ‘modern’ life, and that people had become alienated from its true meaning - if a true meaning there was. “I never liked the idea that we know of Christ’s own words only through a translation of a translation”, wrote Wilde, expressing a distrust for the written word and a concern about the loss of religious immediacy, as if each translation were a veil muffling the **voice** of the Bible texts. Translations on the one hand, and repetition on the

other, had robbed the Letter of its Spirit: “Endless repetition, in and out of season, has spoilt for us the freshness, the naïveté, the simple romantic charm of the Gospels. We hear them read far too often and far too badly, and all repetition is anti-spiritual.” (18) The latter point rests somewhat uneasily in the structure of De Profundis - Wilde claims that, for Jesus as for himself, stereotyping and reiteration of any kind equals death, yet at the same time, the Christ of the Bible finds himself in a textual environment which is wholly dependent on repetition - the Bible texts and the cultural discourse which they have shaped are in fact built around a complex web of recurrences. Moreover, Wilde himself repeats or re-presents biblical images and passages in order, specifically, to recover the very spirit which he perceives as being lost through repetition.

When I think about religion at all, I feel as if I would like to found an order for those who **cannot** believe: the Confraternity of the Faithless, one might call it, where on an altar, on which no taper burned, a priest, in whose heart peace had no dwelling, might celebrate with unblest bread and a chalice empty of wine. (19)

Where the Bible present Jesus as the founder of a Church for those of his faith, Wilde imagines himself here as a founder of a church for the faithless, the signs and symbols of which are defined by absence and negation, showing an inversion of ritual reminiscent of Carlyle’s ‘Everlasting No’. The sermon preached in this ‘anti-church’ would, one might imagine, be that of the “great sad voice” in Thompson’s ‘City of Dreadful Night’, which employs the words of the Scriptures in order to invert the message originally carried by those words, and which is equally defined by its persistent negation:

And now at last authentic word I bring,
Witnessed by every dead and living thing;
Good tidings of great joy for you, for all;

There is no God; no Fiend with names divine
Made us and tortures us; if we must pine
It is to satiate no Being's gall. (20)

In addition to connecting the reader with Thompson's 'City', Wilde's musings on the ritual of the Mass reminds us that, as G.B. Tennyson says concerning the poetry of the Victorian writer Isaac Williams, "typology, along with allegory, symbol, and figure, is rooted in the structure of Christian worship itself" (21).

Wilde spends some time in the essay deliberating whether indeed he rightly belongs to those with faith or those without, but "whether it be faith or agnosticism, it must be nothing external to me. Its symbols must be of my own creating. Only that is spiritual which makes its own form." (22) Here we have more traces of the intertextual inheritance from Sartor Resartus, and from the 'New cloth on an old garment' parable of Matthew 9:16. Jesus, says Wilde, "pointed out that forms and ceremonies were made for man, not man for forms and ceremonies." Our habit is to rest in symbols, and to let those symbols determine the meaning of that which they signify, rather than the opposite. The ideal achievement would be, for Wilde as it was for Carlyle, Robert Elsmere, Matthew Arnold, and William Morris, to find the true spirit beneath the deadened forms, and to let this spirit shape its own, fresh, symbolic surroundings.

One complication of this is that in De Profundis the self, the individual, lends meaning to the type - not, as would be consistent with the traditional typological thinking, the other way around. Orthodox exegetical systems belong to the world of objective myth and truth, a world which, by the time of Oscar Wilde's letter, had been largely left behind. It had given way to the world of man's subjective consciousness, and this, according to Wilde, is everything. We have heard that he thinks of Jesus as the most

supreme of individualists, and he is himself “far more of an individualist than I ever was. Nothing seems to me of the smallest value except what one gets out of oneself. My nature is seeking a fresh mode of self-realisation.”

(23) The Christ-type of Wilde’s re-invention is so intensely dependent on **personality** rather than a divine and external force for its power of persuasion, that “he who would lead a Christ-like life must be entirely and absolutely himself.” (24) This is difficult to achieve in a society which sees itself as consisting mainly of people who are singularly out of touch with their own true selves (and in which there are growing doubts as to whether such a fixed ‘self’ does indeed exist). “Most people”, writes Wilde, “are other people. Their thoughts are some one else’s opinions, their lives a mimicry, their passions a quotation.” (25) This thought is related to the search for an ideal *Eigentlich Existenz* in Existentialism, and Wilde is echoing Arnold in ‘The Buried Life’ - “Hardly have we, for one little hour,/ Been on our own line, have we been ourselves.” (26) He is also subscribing to the view of contemporary life as an endless, pointless round of self-reference which we have seen in Gissing’s New Grub Street. And not being ourselves, we would lose our meaning as types, our power to redeem ourselves through meaningful repetition and change. Wilde explains Jesus’ miracles as the results of the “charm of his personality”; he is a **source** of healing energy rather than the centre through which this energy is channelled. It is as if Jesus invented himself, just as he is now being reinvented in text after text, and just as Wilde reinvents himself while in prison. Wilde sees something “almost incredible in the idea of a young Galilean peasant imagining that he could bear on his own shoulders the burden of the entire world, ... feeling through the mysticism of sympathy that in himself each had been made incarnate, ... so that at the present moment all who come into contact with his personality, even though they

may neither bow to his altar nor kneel before his priest, in some way find that the ugliness of their sin is taken away and the beauty of their sorrow revealed to them.” (27) So the force of what Wilde sees as Christ’s individuality extends beyond all external forms of Christianity to touch the lives of everybody, and everybody is a type of Christ and embodied in him - because that is how he imagined it himself. It has been said that God exists as long as somebody believes in him (28) - Wilde seems to say that Christianity exists because Jesus believed in it.

In A Dream Play, as in most of the texts examined here, the main element which connects the protagonist with her biblical anti-type is the concept of sorrow and suffering. The pain experienced by the individual is a recurring topos which, as well as serving to establish typological links, has a purgatorial function; it prepares the Christ-type for some form of spiritual elevation, as in Wilde’s case - or, as in Agnes’ case, the disappointing lack of the same. With the abrupt change from public celebration to public humiliation and from a professedly hedonistic lifestyle to two years’ hard labour, it is hardly surprising that the subject of suffering was foremost on Wilde’s mind when he wrote De Profundis. Here, too, it is seen as a learning process, inextricably bound to the development of a person’s inner worth. Another late nineteenth-century writer, much admired by Wilde, was Joris-Karl Huysmans, and a recent critic’s words on his relationship with suffering will also serve to illustrate that of Oscar Wilde;

Whatever the signs or symbols, his vision was forever evoking clusters of ambivalent feelings and sense impressions in which the monstrous and beatific figurations would coalesce: a crown of thorns gouging out the flesh while concomitantly penetrating a sublime ascensional realm. (29)

The pain caused by the thorns is, for Wilde as for Huysmans - as indeed it is pronounced by traditional Christian doctrine - an inseparable part of its

resulting spiritual glory. Quoting Dante, Wilde writes of how “sorrow remarries us to God” (30), and how pain lends sacredness and dignity to its surroundings: “Where there is sorrow, there is holy ground.” (31) Again the influence of Sartor Resartus makes itself felt: The ‘Clothes-philosopher’, also, talks of the “*Sanctuary of Sorrow*” and the “*Divine Depth of Sorrow*”. (32) Whereas the Jesus of the Passion stories suffered in order to fulfill God’s promise of redemption to mankind, Wilde’s personal version of the Christ-figure suffers to save himself. This process of salvation can only come about through his learning to understand and embrace the nature of pain. And having embraced it, Wilde sees himself and his fellow prisoners as standing “in symbolic relations to the very secret of life. For the secret of life is suffering. It is what is hidden behind everything.” (33) So for Oscar Wilde there is, after all, truth to be found in the typically Victorian ‘depth-myth’ (34) - the idea that if you peel away enough layers, you will eventually discover an ultimate, unchangeable, and objective ‘something’. In this letter, that ‘something’ is suffering, along with ‘eternal love given to the eternally undeserving’. Sorrow becomes a touch-stone for truth-value, it is “the ultimate type”, a “mode of existence in which soul and body are one and indivisible: in which the outward is expressive of the inward: in which form reveals.” (35) By letting himself be absorbed in his suffering and treating it as revelation rather than mystery, the figure Wilde creates of himself in De Profundis achieves harmony between the human self and the divine ‘other’, that spiritual uplifting which eluded Arnold’s Empedocles (36) and Strindberg’s Agnes. For him, if not for them, the reaching upwards of the soul is rewarded with an answer rather than an unresponding nothingness such as is to be found in Hardy’s novels. The seemingly paradoxical concept is a familiar one in the teachings of Christianity: in order to be raised up to great heights, you must

humble yourself - “A man’s very highest moment is, I have no doubt at all, when he kneels in the dust, and beats his breast, and tells all the sins of his life.” (37) In Wilde’s letter, as in Genesis 3:16, (and as we have seen experienced by Tess), pain is associated with birth; “out of sorrow have the worlds been built, and at the birth of a star there is pain” (38), writes Wilde. Suffering, then, is connected to the creation of something new and to a certain harmony and fulfillment - these associative links follow the associative and etymological links between the words ‘grave’/‘grief’, ‘gravid’, ‘pregnant’, ‘full’. Thus Wilde prescribes pleasure for the beautiful body, but pain for the beautiful soul. Similarly, suffering is not something to which you are subjected and exposed, but something in which you choose to participate - something, indeed, to which you are entitled: “I have a right to share in sorrow”. (39)

The story of Christ’s Passion is, typologically, an event of unsurpassed significance, it is the place towards which all other types and signs are pointing, and it has provided the world with “its most eternal symbol” (40). The idea of ‘Passion’ is about energy and release as well as suffering, and it is this energy which, for Wilde, transforms pain into something positive. He shares his emphasis on the necessity of **power** for change with those authors promoting the idea of the ‘ardent young man’, discussed in Part Two of the above; with William Morris’ ideal of “eager life while we live” (41); and with Gissing’s cry for the positive force of persuasion in The Nether World. Suffering is only negative if it is stagnant, as Wilde would have seen expressed, before him, by Carlyle - and, before **him**, by Wordsworth - “The connection which suffering has with effort, with exertion, and *action*, is immediate and inseparable”, wrote the latter. (42) So when Wilde is writing “De Profundis” - from the depths - it is the preposition, signifying as it does **movement**, which is the most

important of the two words. Consider the lines from 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol'; "But God's eternal Laws are kind/ And break the heart of stone." (43) The violence of the breaking is only 'kind' because it liberates the heart, through pain, from the even greater hopeless pain of staticity. 'Suffering' would always preferable to 'unfeeling', and "How else but through a broken heart/ May Lord Christ enter in?"

In Wilde's essay, this energy lies in the power of association. It is the power possessed by Wilde's Christ, and every individual, to associate with each other through each other's suffering - through their sympathy of imagination - and through the symbols and images representing such pain and communion. This has less to do with the rigid structures of the exegetical scholarship which provided the background for late Victorian biblical associations, and more to do with the subtle suggestion latent in the discourse of the time. "Modern life is complex and relative; those are its two distinguishing notes: to render the first we require atmosphere with subtlety of *nuances*, of suggestion, of strange perspectives; as for the second we require background." (44) According to Wilde's response to the absence of God in this 'modern' life, leading a Christ-like life will get us back in touch with life's "dynamic forces": "mystery, strangeness, pathos, suggestion, ecstasy, love." (45) The 'ecstasy' has survived from mediaeval religious communion, but the 'suggestion' is a requirement belonging specifically to the late nineteenth century. If association is our last (and only **real**?) link with Christ, then vagueness is a thing of great value. Strindberg's Christ-type exists outside of time and space because she 'lives' in a dream - Wilde's Christ is removed from the restrictions of time and space because within the realm of the imagination (ours and his own) he is no longer the same as the Jesus of History, bound by revelatory direction and plan. His suffering also contributes towards propelling him into this

vague and indefinite sphere, because suffering transcends all human attempts at measurement and location:

Suffering is one very long moment. We cannot divide it by seasons. We can only record its moods, and chronicle their return. With us time itself does not progress. It revolves. It seems to circle around one centre of pain.” (46)

This cyclical quality of pain, the idea of the ‘wheel of sorrow’, makes suffering seem almost organic, like something with an inescapably recurring place in **nature** itself. The Passion of Christ is a necessary means for the fulfilment of prophecy, and even prophecy itself has, in De Profundis, taken on a slightly detached aspect of the self-evident and the natural. “The cry of Isaiah had really no more to do with his coming than the song of the nightingale has to do with the rising of the moon - no more, though perhaps no less” (47), writes Wilde, and also, “His miracles seem to me as exquisite as the coming of spring, and quite as natural.” (48) To place the coming of Jesus, along with the events of his life and death, among such metaphorical settings as the movements of planets and the changing of seasons is, of course, to set the scene for an eternity of recurring Christ-types.

This ‘natural’ view of the prophetic voice lends a certain **inevitability** to its fulfilment; the assumption of a typological role becomes a matter of compulsion rather than grace - we are merely following “the inevitable law of self-perfection” (49). Our language prompts our imagination to cast ourselves in archetypal roles. “If he be Mr.Hyde”, writes the narrator of Stevenson’s novel, “I shall be Mr.Seek” (50) - if your opponent is a demonic figure, you must inevitably, in the imaginations of readers and characters alike, figure as the Saviour. Responding naturally to reference points already laid down, we recognise our places as types. And just as the events of the New Testament are prefigured in Old

Testament types, so Wilde feels that his own 'Passion' has its textual reference points: "Of course all this is foreshadowed and prefigured in my books." (51) The idea of typological 'necessity' is expounded in De Profundis: "everybody is predestined to his presence. Once at least in his life each man walks with Christ to Emmaus." (52) What exactly does this imply? It means that once at least in his life, man suffers. But it also means that once at least in his life, every man, through his suffering, associates himself - or is being associated, because of the way our culture is shaped around the imagery of Christianity - with Jesus. (As we have seen, this thought is one of the few which Oscar Wilde shares with Thomas Hardy.)

Wilde re-unites the force of Jesus' personality with the forces of nature, and abandons the straight line of revelation in favour of the 'natural' cycle. In this case, reiteration is a positive thing - Wilde is alienated from society, but he gains a new understanding of the divine in nature; this is the Fall in reverse:

Society, as we have constituted it, will have no place for me, has none to offer; but Nature, whose sweet rains fall on just and unjust alike, will have clefts in the rock where I may hide, and secret valleys in whose silence I may weep undisturbed. She will hang the night with stars so that I may walk abroad in the darkness without stumbling, and send the wind over my footprints so that none may track me to my hurt; she will cleanse me in great waters, and with bitter herbs make me whole. (53)

Wilde lays out a great number of lines of biblical association in this, the last passage of his letter. The wanderer in the wilderness, banished from society but still protected from harm, is closely related to Cain (Genesis 4:11-16). The cleansing in great waters is a theme of baptism. The rain which falls on just and unjust is from Matthew 5:45. Hiding in the cleft rock, before Wilde, was Moses, so that he should not be overwhelmed by the partial sight of the glory of God, in Exodus 33:22, and so on. Ultimately, they all

represent the links between the individual and the divine connecting spirit, the re-establishment of which is attempted in De Profundis - and for Wilde, they are images of redemption.

THE DEATH OF THE FATHER

We have seen how Oscar Wilde lamented the loss of immediacy and closeness in man's relations with the divine, and how, in De Profundis, he used biblical imagery in a bid to re-establish, and even re-invent, this interaction. In Dostoyevsky's The Brothers Karamazov of 1881 - his last completed work - these sentiments are echoed by Ivan Karamazov when he expresses the wish "to see with my own eyes the lion lie down with the lamb and the murdered man rise up and embrace his murderer."(1) It is not enough to have recourse to revelatory texts and prophetic images; Ivan, like Wilde, wants divine **presence** rather than divine promise. He is nostalgic of the times when "in France court clerics as well as monks in monasteries performed plays in which the Madonna, the angels, the saints, Christ, and even God himself were brought on stage. In those days it was all done very artlessly."(2) To Ivan, this mediaeval 'artlessness' is, perhaps, naïve and almost childlike, but it is also a vessel for close communication with the original biblical characters; it represents tangible, dependable faith.

The Brothers Karamazov was written in "a great deal of pain and worry", the result of an idea which had germinated in Dostoyevsky's mind for over three years.(3) It is the story of the brothers Ivan, Dmitri, and Alexey Karamazov, and their half-brother Smerdyakov. The last brutally murders Fyodor Karamazov, their father, but the author leaves the reader in uncertainty as to who has committed the parricide for a long time, and all the brothers feel to a certain extent guilty or responsible for the crime. More than a 'detective story', the novel is an exploration of the issues of faith and doubt, guilt and punishment. This is not any kind of hidden agenda - already in Book Two, as the disputing family meet in Father Zossima's monastery cell for an attempted (but unsuccessful) reunion, the growth of atheism and the necessity of finding a just and effective form of punishing criminals are being discussed, thus letting the reader know in which

terms The Brothers should be read. We are dealing, then, with the death of the father - not only of the drunkenly paranoid Fyodor Karamazov, but also of the Elder Zossima, Alexey's spiritual father, and ultimately, of course, of God the Father himself: the vanishing or rejection of Christian faith is the death or murder of God, and I shall here look at some ways in which Dostoyevsky attempts to bring this father-figure back to life.

The novel has a famous passage, 'The Grand Inquisitor' - Dostoyevsky called it "the culminating point of my literary activity"(4) - in which the intellectual unbeliever Ivan tells Alexey about an idea he has had for a poem. This story-within-the-story has Jesus return to earth fifteen centuries after his first coming, only to be taken prisoner by his supposed followers. Ivan's story appears near the end of Part Two, almost immediately before the murder, and I will return to it - but in the books preceding it, Dostoyevsky has already set the scene for this typological exploration by the introduction of several biblical types and images. In the preface 'To the Reader', the narrator establishes even in the first sentence that Alexey Fyodorovich Karamazov is the novel's "hero". We are also told that he is "a strange, almost eccentric sort of man", and that an eccentric sometimes "expresses the very sum and substance of a certain period while the other people of the same period for some reason or other do not seem to belong to it, just as though they had been cast up by the tide."(5) We know, then, that Alyosha, as he is called, is to be read as a **type**, and - in his 'singularity'; in the novel's framework of belief, unbelief, and judgement; and in his status as a monk (who is with God) going into the world (to be with men) - most likely as a Christ-type. Adding another dimension to Alexey's character, rather than restricting it to the biblical structure, the text goes on to provide evidence of his role as type. First, we see Alexey always in the position of 'the chosen one': in the monastery, he is the special protégé of Father Zossima, and at home, he is his father's favourite. His name is significant; literally, it means 'helper' (6), and he is in several places

associated with St. Alexey "The Man of God". He is, consistently, the character to whom his fellow beings **confess** - his brother Dmitri unburdens his "Ardent Heart" to him, as do Ivan, Katerina, Lise; and even Zossima on his death-bed tells the young man (who, disciple-like, takes notes) his life-story. Ivan, who unburdens himself by telling his younger brother about his intellectual and emotional rejection of Christianity, worries that he has been too insensitive in his confession: "'I'm sorry I'm torturing you, Alyosha. You're not yourself. I'll stop if you like.' 'Never mind, I want to suffer too'"(7), murmurs Alexey, thus establishing his Christ-like role as willing sufferer and, as we shall see, saviour: wanting to rescue his brother from the disillusion of unbelief, he says, "'I think everyone must love life more than anything else in the world.'

'Love life more than the meaning of it?'

'Yes, certainly ... Half your work is done, Ivan: you love life. Now you must try to do the second half and you are saved.'

'So you're already saving me, though I may not be lost at all! And what does this second half of yours consist of?'

'Why, to raise up your dead, who have perhaps never died at all.'"(8)

Already, Alexey Karamazov is associated with chosen-ness, confession, suffering, saving, and a metaphorical raising of the dead. His emotions, too, are of a distinctly 'New Testament' kind: "his love was always active. He could not love passively. When he loved someone, he at once set about helping him."(9) One of the most poignant moments of Jesus/Alexey paralleling, however, is when Ivan has just finished the telling of the 'Grand Inquisitor' story. Having been told how Jesus, instead of saying a single word in answer to the Inquisitor's heresies, kisses him gently on the lips, we now witness Alexey mirroring this action exactly - "Alyosha got up and, without uttering a word, kissed [*Ivan*] gently on the lips. 'Plagiarism!' cried Ivan, suddenly looking very delighted. 'You've stolen it from my poem!'"(10) This revelling by the characters in a sense of 'intertextuality' and

their own resemblance to those 'already written' is, incidentally, something we shall see more of.

If Alexey does more listening than talking, that is even more true in the case of the novel's "real" Jesus, the resurrected and soon to be burnt on the stake Jesus of Ivan's imagination. Ivan's version of Christ, interestingly, is completely voiceless. When the Inquisitor encounters him, dismayed by having his circle of religious power broken, he asks,

'It is you? You?'

But, receiving no answer, he adds quickly: 'Do not answer, be silent. And indeed, what can you say? I know too well what you would say. Besides, you have no right to add anything to what you have said in days of old. Why, then, did you come to meddle with us?'(11)

Orthodox Christianity has no answer, can have nothing to say, which has not already been anticipated and countered by a society that *does not want to know*. And Ivan's Jesus, like Wilde's Jesus, and like the biblical Jesus, does not want intellectual argument and reasoning; he wants unconditional love and faith that does not require proof. Therefore, he responds to the Grand Inquisitor like his literary predecessor did to Pontius Pilate - with silence - leaving his 'audience' to interpret his presence in whatever way they can. Ivan says, "In my poem he appears, it is true, he says nothing, but only appears and passes on."(12) The entire story is, in fact, devoted to the words of the Grand Inquisitor himself; this time, **he** is the teacher and the possessor of the Word, as he explains to Christ his version of Christianity. In this way, a structure of oppositions is set up between the resurrected and returned Jesus and his supposed servant, but it is a structure which focuses on the likenesses between them as much as the differences.

Ivan introduces the two into his 'poem' in terms of opposition. Jesus appears "quietly, inconspicuously", but he is instantly recognized, and "people are drawn to him by an irresistible force, they surround him, they throng about him, they follow him." "The Cardinal himself, the Grand Inquisitor," however, "is

followed at a distance by his sombre assistants and his slaves and his "sacred" guard."(13) The returned Jesus raises a little girl from the dead, he stirs people's hearts "with responsive love. He stretches forth his hands to them, blesses them, and a healing virtue comes from contact with him, even with his garment" (this is a reference to the episode of Matthew 9:20 when a diseased woman is healed simply by touching the hem of Christ's cloak), whereas the Inquisitor "sees the young girl raised from the dead, and his face darkens."(14) The direct reversal of Jesus' qualities in the Cardinal develop in the latter's exposition into a sort of inverse typology; a 'photographic negative' of the Bible's revelatory structure - here, the Devil, rather than God, is called "the wise and mighty spirit"(15), and the Devil's attempt at corrupting the biblical Jesus in the desert is turned into a miracle and a prophesy heralding truth:

And yet if ever there has been on earth a real, a prodigious miracle, it was on that day, the day of the three temptations. ... For in those three questions the whole future history of mankind is, as it were, anticipated and combined in one whole and three images are presented in which all the insoluble historical contradictions of human nature all over the world will meet.(16)

Although the Inquisitor's teachings are directly opposed to his prisoner's, his "images" in which the whole of revelation, truth, and history are "anticipated and combined in one whole" **are** typology in its truest form. No matter how much orthodox belief would object to the Cardinal's ideas, they are, manifestly, contained - and therefore suggested and even upheld - by the traditional typological structure. In the middle of this reversal, it becomes unclear whether the Inquisitor is Anti-Christ, or, in fact, anti-*type* to Christ:

Know that I, too, was in the wilderness, that I, too, fed upon locusts and roots, that I, too, blessed freedom, with which you have blessed men, and that I, too, was preparing to stand among your chosen ones, among the strong and mighty, thirsting 'to make myself of the number'. But I woke up and refused to serve madness. I went back and joined the hosts of those who have *corrected your work*. I went away from the proud and returned to the meek for the happiness of the meek. What I say to you will come to pass and our kingdom will be established. I repeat, tomorrow you will behold the obedient flock which at a

mere sign from me will rush to heap up the hot coals against the stake at which I shall burn you because you have come to meddle with us. For if anyone has ever deserved our fire, it is you. Tomorrow I shall burn you. *Dixi!*(17)

Thus establishing the links of similarity between himself and Jesus and his adumbrator John the Baptist, and simultaneously making himself his own prophet, the Inquisitor takes on the role as a 'new and improved' Christ - saving mankind from the pain of freedom of choice and "the curse of knowledge of good and evil", and substituting for them something which is more to man's liking, namely "miracle, mystery and authority". In this way, 'history' repeats itself in Ivan Karamazov's prose poem, but with the tables of typology turned.

The apparently illogical reactions of a face darkening at the sight of a resurrection and of Jesus being found supremely deserving of the fire reserved for enemies of the Christian faith, are aspects of the "terror of the redeemer"-paradox which we encountered in Strindberg's Dream Play. Such surprising juxtapositions of sentiments are found not only in the chapter on 'The Grand Inquisitor', but throughout the text: Fyodor Karamazov, after having been categorically told by Ivan that there is neither God nor immortality, exclaims, "Damn it all, what I wouldn't do to the man who first invented God! Hanging's too good for him."(18) (Rejecting the invention of God though he may, he is, of course, as deeply embedded in the discourse of faith as the novel's believers are in that of doubt, which his emphatic "Damn it all!" clearly demonstrates). Even one of the monks, the rather singular Father Ferapont, equates the image of the presence of his Saviour with the language of fear and reluctance: as he sits outside his cell with a fellow monk, looking at a big elm tree nearby, Ferapont says,

'It happens at night. See those two branches? At night it is Christ holding out his arms to me and seeking me with those arms. I see it clearly and tremble. It's terrible, oh, terrible!'

'What's there so terrible about it if it's Christ himself?'

'He may snatch me up and carry me into heaven.'(19)

This astonishing idea of Jesus as a terrifying abductor who strikes at night - Christ the Tiger rather than Christ the Lamb - is only a few steps away from Swinburne's fiercely atheistic stance in, for example, his poem 'Atalanta in Calydon', where the Chorus speaks of "The supreme evil, God"(20). Ivan's 'hallucinated' Devil, however, claims at a later stage in the novel that *he* is "the only man in the universe who loves truth and sincerely desires good" (21). A radical role-reversal has taken place, and, as Feuerbach wrote in the Essence of Christianity, "What yesterday was still religion is no longer such today; and what today is atheism, tomorrow will be religion." (22) Ivan, too, thinks with reluctance of his possible day of resurrection: "perhaps it really will happen that I myself will cry out with all the rest: 'Thou art just, O Lord!' But I do not want to cry out, and whilst there is still time, I hasten to guard myself against it." What inspires such fear and loathing in Ivan is not Christianity 'in itself', but the fact that it has, somehow, to be built on a scaffolding of the suffering of innocents. No ultimate truth could be worth the suffering of a single child; "too high a price has been placed on harmony. We cannot afford to pay so much for admission. And therefore I hasten to return my ticket of admission. ... It is not God that I do not accept, Alyosha. I merely most respectfully return him the ticket."(23) Such is "the curse of the knowledge of good and evil" - a rejection of God means the rejection of revelation, and Ivan admits that "I made up my mind long ago not to understand."(24)

The novel's most significant typological aspects - Alexey as Jesus, Jesus as the Cardinal's victim, and the Cardinal himself as (Anti-)Christ - are backed up by Dostoyevsky's more playful or 'superficial' introduction of biblical imagery elsewhere in the text. Whereas some characters (like Smerdyakov) seem unaware of their places in a 'biblically minded' reader's imagination, others (like Ivan and Zossima) take an obvious interest in analysing their own 'exegesis' and 'reading' themselves in terms of their textual background. Smerdyakov is a curious

character who is identified in connection with religious issues from the day of his birth. His mother (the "Holy Fool" of the neighbourhood, who had been raped by Fyodor Karamazov) dies in childbirth on the same night as Karamazov's servant Grigory's infant son - a boy born with six fingers, and in Grigory's mind a "dragon" who "ought not to be christened at all" - also dies. Thus Smerdyakov, in the description of whose childhood the novel's first connection between church and cruelty is in fact made, is brought up by Marfa and Grigory, who witness their adopted son developing odd habits: "As a boy he was fond of hanging cats and burying them with ceremony. He used to dress up in a sheet, to represent a kind of surplice, and chant and swing something over the dead cat, as though it were a censer."(25) Despite his fondness for playing murdering priest, however, the boy has no taste for religion. Grigory, a devout with leanings towards flagellantism, tries to teach him the Scriptures,

But that came to nothing almost at once. One day, at the second or third lesson, the boy suddenly grinned. 'What are you grinning at?' asked Grigory, looking sternly at him from under his spectacles. 'Nothing, sir. God created the World on the first day and the sun, the moon and the stars on the fourth. Where did the light come from on the first day?'

Grigory was dumbfounded. The boy looked sneeringly at his teacher. There was even something supercilious in his look. Grigory could not control himself. 'That'll teach you where!' he shouted and struck the boy a violent blow across the cheek.(26)

Significantly, when questioned about the truth and 'practicality' of the faith he possesses, Grigory - like the Jesus-figure in Ivan's story which is to follow - does not answer; he is "dumbfounded". The blow, of course, will only work against its purpose: far from 'teaching' the boy the answer to his provoking question, it will serve to show him the limitations of words in questions of faith and doubt. This is indeed what happens, as we in a later scene find the adult Smerdyakov and his stepfather repeating their religious quarrel in Karamazov's house, to the latter's great amusement. The usually silent Smerdyakov breaks into

speech like "Balaam's ass"(the reference is to Numbers 22-23:5), and the crux of his unorthodox argument is the inevitable failure of that test of faith (of Mark 4:31) which so disillusioned the young Joshua Davidson and his friends:

'it is said in the Scriptures, that if you've got as much faith as a grain of mustard and if you tell the mountain to move into the sea, it will move without a moment's hesitation at your first word of command. Well, then, Mr.Kutuzov, sir, if I haven't got no faith and you've got so much faith that you keep swearing at me continually, why don't you tell that mountain to move not to the sea (for it's a long way from here to the sea, sir) but just to the stinking little stream which runs just at the bottom of our garden, and you will see, sir, that it won't move an inch ... however much you shout at it, sir. And that means that you have no faith ... no one in our time, not only you, sir, but no one at all ... can push a mountain into the sea, except perhaps one man in the whole world or, at most, two men, who are perhaps saving their souls in secret somewhere in the Egyptian desert, so that you would not be able to find them at all'(27)

Smerdyakov, for all his scepticism, is not quite willing to give up on the idea of absolute faith in its entirety - he hangs on to the possibility of the two men in the desert somewhere - but nevertheless, his simplistic disbelief is an emblem of the general state of disintegration and "modern Russian anarchism" which Dostoyevsky had made it his task to speak out against in The Brothers Karamazov. The Karamazov half-brother is associated with biblical characters on two other occasions: he is echoing Job when he claims that he would have let himself "be killed in the womb rather than come into the world at all", and using the words of Cain when he scornfully says, "What makes you think I know about Mr.Dmitry Karamazov's movements? ... It isn't as if I was his keeper, is it?"(28) This choice of roles for Smerdyakov may not be coincidental - as we know, both Cain and Job are characters whose main function is to illustrate the issue of disobedience versus loyalty to the laws of God. The image of Cain is used again later, this time in connection with the rebellious Ivan, who himself - always the intellectual - makes the biblical usage explicit: "'I am not my brother Dmitry's keeper, am I?' Ivan snapped irritably, but suddenly he smiled bitterly. 'Cain's reply to God about

his murdered brother - eh? Perhaps that's what you're thinking now, aren't you?"(29)

Father Zossima, too, plays consciously with the casting of typological roles. He is himself, as we have seen, a spiritual father-figure for the Christ-like Alexey, and as such represents vaguely the dying God. But more openly, in his speeches to the Brothers and Elders surrounding him in his cell during his last days, he places these monks firmly in their **own** positions as ideal imitators of Christ: when a monk realizes "that he is responsible to all men for all people and all things, for all human sins, universal and individual - only then will the aim of our seclusion be achieved. ... For a monk is not a different kind of man, but merely such as all men on earth ought to be. ... It is then that each of you will have the power to gain the world by love and wash away the sins of the world by his tears."(30) He also casts Alexey as a returning type of his older brother who died while a young man (at Easter, having reached an extraordinary level of spiritual elevation) - "He appeared to me at first in my childhood", says Father Zossima, "and now at my journey's end there seems indeed to be a repetition in it. ... Alexey seemed to me to be so much like him in spirit that many times I looked on him as that young man, my brother, who had come back to me mysteriously at my journey's end as a reminder and an inspiration."(31)

The characters' rootedness in the Bible - caught as they are between "the ideal of the Madonna" and "the ideal of Sodom"(32) - is also a rootedness in other literature that has gone before. Dostoyevsky makes his characters aware of their own 'intertextuality', at times so much so that they find it difficult to express themselves without referring to other texts, be they biblical or otherwise: "I'm afraid here, too, it's impossible to begin without an introduction, that is, a literary introduction", laughs Ivan at the beginning of 'The Grand Inquisitor', and Dmitry tells Alyosha, "I should like to begin my confession with - with Schiller's Hymn to Joy."(33) Fyodor Karamazov, too, thinks of himself and his sons in terms of

Schiller and his play The Robbers - ironically, a play about parricide - "This is my most respectful Karl Moor", he says, introducing Ivan to the Elder Zossima at the novel's beginning, "while this son of mine, Dmitry, who has just come in and against whom I am seeking justice from you, is my most disrespectful Franz Moor, both from Schiller's *Robbers*, which, I suppose, makes me the *Regierender Graf von Moor*." Lise's mother is also in the business of casting and choreographing her life according to the pattern laid down by a playwright: she says to Alexey, "Now I'm just like Famusov in the last scene of *The Misfortune of Being Clever*. You're Chatsky, she's Olga, and just imagine I've run on purpose to meet you on the stairs, and in the play, too, the tragedy happens on the stairs."(34) Even the Jesus of Ivan's story is, according to the inquisitor's accusations, not free from the desire for a textual continuance - "Oh, you knew that your great deed would be preserved in books"...(35)

This intense awareness in the characters of their own possibilities and precedents as types is symptomatic of the much-commented-upon late nineteenth-century's 'objectifying' of itself (see, for example, the discussion of this issue in N.Frye's The Great Code). The introspection, self-awareness, and sense of being cast in a play, that we have seen in The Brothers' characters, is poignantly described in a Swedish novel which was published a decade later, in 1891 - Selma Lagerlöf's wonderful Gösta Berlings saga. During a break in the narrative, she describes how late nineteenth-century listeners to early nineteenth-century tales are struck by what they perceive as their literary predecessors' essential energy for life, unfettered by paralyzing reflection:

'Did the people of those days never *think* of what they were doing?' we asked.

'Of course they thought, children,' answered the old people.

'But not as we think,' we insisted.

And so the old people did not understand what we meant. But we thought about the strange spirit of self-reflection which had already taken possession of us. We thought of him, with his eyes of ice and his long, bent fingers, he who sits there in the darkest corner of the soul and picks our being to pieces, just as old women pick to pieces patches of silk and wool.

Bit by bit had the long, hard, crooked fingers picked, until our entire self lay there like a heap of rags ... The beautiful Marianne bore within herself the spirit of introspection. She felt his icy eyes and sneering laughter follow her every step, her every word. Her life had become a play, with her as the only spectator. ... She was divided into two halves. Pale, unsympathetic, and sneering, one half of her self sat and watched the actions of the other half ... She lay there acting ill, she lay there acting unhappy, acting in love, acting vengeful. She was all of these, and yet it was only a play.(36)

Philip Davis notices the same phenomenon in Matthew Arnold's poetry, and equates it with "what Hegel diagnosed as the state of Unhappy Consciousness - a division within a unity, one half of a split looking across at its other half as both a part of itself and yet also alienated from itself." (37) The fragmentation of the self, and the putting into question of the literary character's sense of 'personality', is picked up by Richard Peace: the hero of The Brothers Karamazov, he writes, "is not one man, it is a brotherhood. It is as though the central figure so typical of Dostoyevsky's previous writing is ultimately unable to withstand its own dichotomous inner tensions and has here broken apart into separate and distinct facets; in Alesha [*sic.*] we have *the soul*; in Dmitry *the emotions*; in Ivan *the intellect*: but behind them all lurks Smerdyakov - the devious, unlit recesses of man's psyche."(38) The brothers, then, have each been given yet another role to play, yet another possible reading, as analogous 'parts' of a personality 'whole'.

Not surprisingly, in a novel whose characters are consistently shown to have an added set of meanings found, as it were, outside themselves, **names**, too, are more than simply names - they become symbols. The name Karamazov takes on a symbolic significance; Alexey talks about "the earth-bound Karamazov force" in the passage which first shows signs of the youngest brother's waning faith. It is as if this "most unbridled, most Karamazovian of passions" possesses, through the sheer power of the name, a will of its own which contradicts the best intentions of the individual members of the family.(39) Also, with the disagreement and strife within the Karamazovs' inner circle, their religious

differences, their conflicting interests, and finally the murder of Fyodor, the family itself becomes a type of what Dostoyevsky saw as the political and religious state of affairs in the Russia of his time - a state of affairs to which the author's solution, according to David Magarshack, was to "transform Russia into a huge monastery"(40). Rebellion, anger and revulsion directed against the 'literal' father is, then, not only representative of rebellion against God the Father, but also against any kind of authority.

Ultimately, however, the 'Oedipal' act of parricide is a rebellion and an act of violence against one's self; this is because of the inescapable and intimate **kinship** in which attacker and attacked are interlocked. As Jacques Derrida puts it, in a different but closely related context ,

All destructive discourses and their analogues are trapped in a sort of circle. This circle is unique. It describes the form of the relationship between the history of metaphysics and the destruction of the history of metaphysics. *There is no sense* in doing without the concepts of metaphysics in order to attack metaphysics. We have no language - no syntax and no lexicon - which is alien to this history; we cannot utter a single destructive proposition which has not already slipped into the form, the logic, and the implicit propositions of precisely what it seems to contest. (41)

The significance of Derrida's words to The Brothers Karamazov is that, in the same way as Smerdyakov, Oedipus, or any other parricide, in killing their parent also kills the source of their own being, Ivan in his attack on Christian faith simultaneously upholds the concepts of that faith - the faith which has shaped the very language through which he is attacking it. Similarly, his atheistic protest exists within the discourse of the novel's faithful - this is not a case of 'parasite' and 'host' but of **interdependence**. Thus Father Paissy to Alyosha in a speech meant to arm the young man against temptations before going into the world:

Has [*Christian faith*] not existed for nineteen centuries and does it not exist today in the inmost hearts of the individual people and the masses of the

people? Why, it is living in the hearts of the atheists who have destroyed everything, and is as firmly rooted there as ever! For even those who have renounced Christianity and are rebelling against it, are essentially of the same semblance as Christ, and have always been that, for so far neither their wisdom nor the ardour of their hearts has been able to create a higher ideal of man or of man's dignity than the one shown by Christ in the days of old.(42)

Christianity, then, must tolerate living within the hearts of atheists, and atheism must tolerate the inescapable presence within them of the Christian iconography. Christianity must acknowledge the atheist's ability to "create" without the assistance of the divine, and atheism must acknowledge its **inability** to create "a higher ideal" than the one from which it has grown, and which it has grown to reject. And finally, Ivan Karamazov must realize, as Dostoyevsky realizes, that his 'Grand Inquisitor' story, designed to attack religion, does achieve its aim - but simultaneously, it ends up confirming the 'implicit propositions' of the 'history of metaphysics', simply because "Anti-Christ" is not a negation but an **affirmation** of "Christ".

THE MAN ALONE

Both J.-K. Huysmans' Against Nature (1884) and H.G. Wells' Island of Doctor Moreau (1896) are texts which lend themselves to typological readings, albeit in ways that are at times as fundamentally different as the novels themselves. Half Dutch, half French, Joris-Karl Huysmans was a member of Zola's Medan Group, but his '*À Rebours*' can hardly be said to follow the Realist/Naturalist guidelines of objective observation laid down by his mentor. Huysmans' book enters into the mind of Jean Des Esseintes, a young French eccentric and one-time hedonist, who - plagued by ill-health, religious doubts, and an ever-increasing contempt for his society - seeks voluntary solitary confinement in an oddly appointed house at Foutenay outside Paris. The degenerate nobleman's attempt at escapism is extraordinary and ultimately unsuccessful as he is eventually forced, at his doctor's orders, to return to society. He ends up, Aubrey Beardsley-like, uttering his last words in a desperate prayer for faith - a common complaint, as we have seen, in characters of late nineteenth-century fiction. Huysmans himself, incidentally, returned, fatally ill, to an extreme and ascetic Catholicism. Rejecting morphine injections meant to relieve his cancerous pain, he shouted at his doctors; "Ah! You want to prevent me from suffering! You want me to exchange the sufferings of God for the evil pleasures of the earth! I forbid you!" (1) Again, Huysmans is making the connection that we have seen re-enforced by Wilde - if we are to achieve spirituality, we, like Jesus, must endure pain: pain, unlike aestheticism, has in the last instance the power to redeem, it seems. In Jeffrey B. Loomis' words, "At its highest symbolic level of meaning, *A Rebours* is almost a pure allegory of human pride as preparation for human fall." (2)

But if Des Esseintes' life ends in relative obscurity and failure, Huysmans' novel certainly did not go unnoticed: "It was the strangest book that [*Dorian*

Gray] had ever read"(3), and was cited in the trials of Oscar Wilde as a malign influence; Huysmans himself wrote that "it fell like a meteorite into the literary fairground, provoking anger and stupefaction"(4); and a recent critic has claimed that "the total number of Des Esseintes' literary progeny is incalculable: almost every unhappy, solitary hero of a twentieth-century novel could probably trace his descent back to Huysmans' great creation."(5) Remy de Gourmont wrote that "we should never forget what a huge debt we owe to this memorable *breviary*"(6) (my italics) and his comment is reminiscent of Jorge Luis Borges' verdict on The Island of Doctor Moreau - he called it "An atrocious miracle"(7). It should not, paradoxically, come as a surprise that two novels so deeply entrenched in atheism and so shocking to the 'moral majority' at the time of publication, were spoken of in such **religious** terms.

Wells referred to his novel as "a youthful exercise in blasphemy"(8), and certainly the story's allegorical interpretation is easily arrived at, with the island as a concentrated universe and Moreau - the experimental scientist who tries to turn hapless animals into human beings by way of vivisection - as a God more cruel and relentless even than the Old Testament Yahweh. Edward Prendick is the seafarer who is shipwrecked onto this nightmarish travesty of Eden, an atheist attempting to make sense of the apparent aimlessness, indifference, and needless suffering that surrounds him. It is not just the reader who can easily spot the parabolic similarity between the Beast People's life on the island and man's life on earth: it occurs to Prendick himself - "A strange persuasion came upon me that, save for the grossness of the line, the grotesqueness of the forms, I had here before me the whole balance of human life in miniature, the whole interplay of instinct, reason, and fate, in its simplest form."(9)

In terms of style, setting, and plot, the two novels could hardly be more different. Where Against Nature is excruciatingly sophisticated, The Island, according to some press reviews at the time of its publication, is a "gruesomely

grotesque" tale in which "disgusting descriptions arouse loathing" in its readers, "an extreme instance of the horrible, the weird and the uncanny which characterise all [Wells'] writings"(10). Des Esseintes' world is intricately presented with *decadent* lingering indulgence, whereas Prendick has to fight for survival within passages of violence, raw energy, chase and fury. Oscar Wilde wrote about Huysmans' text in The Picture of Dorian Gray that "the heavy odour of incense seemed to cling about its pages"(11), while The Island's protagonist, on the other hand, is nauseated by "the disagreeable stench of the place"(12). Nevertheless, there are aspects of similarity which unite the characters of Prendick and Des Esseintes - unlikely companions though they may be - in their capacities as 'honest doubters' of their time, and in the vaguely typological textual environment in which they find themselves.

One of those unifying aspects is the essential **aloneness** of the two men; their experience of alienation which irrevocably separates them from the rest of society, reminiscent at times of the aura of separateness which envelopes the Jesus of the biblical texts. The heading of this chapter - The Man Alone - is the title of the concluding chapter of Wells' Island, and the original title of Huysmans' novel, incidentally, was '*À Rebours - Seul*' (13). At surface level, of course, this aloneness is **physical**: excluding the dubious Beast People, Prendick has only two other human beings to keep him (undesirable) company, as is the case for Des Esseintes, who tries to avoid any but the most necessary contact with his two old servants, with whom he has withdrawn to a mansion as far removed from the world of human interaction as he could get. Prendick's physical severance from society is even more extreme, surrounded as he is by endless stretches of water either on a ship, in a small dinghy, or on the hostile island itself. But their aloneness is also psychological: Prendick's inability to relate either to Moreau, Montgomery or the animal-men is widened in scope as he eventually returns to society, only to find himself caught between two worlds, cut off from

communication - "No one would believe me, I was almost as queer to men as I had been to the Beast People."(14) If Prendick can be said to be cut off from the discourse and understanding of his fellow beings simply because of his intrinsic **reasonableness**, Des Esseintes is in that same position because of his impossibly high standards and extreme sensitivity. But whatever the reason for his isolation, It became perfectly clear to him that he could entertain no hope of finding in someone else the same aspirations and antipathies; no hope of linking up with a mind which, like his own, took pleasure in a life of studious decrepitude; no hope of associating an intelligence as sharp and wayward as his own with that of any author or scholar.(15)

In fact, Des Esseintes is imprisoned within his own morbid and creative sensibilities as effectively as Wilde was physically imprisoned - "he found that he was utterly alone, completely disillusioned, abominably tired."(16) The extreme isolation felt by Des Esseintes is a reflection of that experienced by Huysmans. His emphasis on individuality as opposed to universality is strongly present in his art criticism: The author was fascinated by the *Isenheim Altarpiece* - a polyptich with nine panels, each panel representing Christ at various times of his life - a work of art dwelled upon both in La` Bas (1891) and Trois eglises et trois primitifs (1905). According to Bettina L. Knapp, "This livid, haggard, crucified Christ hanging in the nave of the ancient Isenheim cloister represented a collective agony, a suffering humanity for Grunewald; for Huysmans it replicated his own indescribable emotional torment." (17) It is the tension between 'collective' and 'own', here, which makes Huysmans - and his fictional character - identify so strongly with the figure of Jesus. When Dorian Gray speaks of Huysmans' "poisonous" novel, however, he emphasises a perceived **balance** between the individual and the collective which, as we have already noted, appealed strongly to Wilde himself. Thus Dorian's thoughts upon the subject:

It was a novel without a plot, and with only one character, being, indeed, simply a psychological study of a certain young Parisian, who spent his life trying to realise in the nineteenth century all the passions and modes of

thoughts that belonged to every century except his own, and to sum up, as it were, in himself the various moods through which the world-spirit had ever passed. (18)

This is, of course, very much how Wilde talks about *Jesus* in De Profundis, a similarity which serves, here, both to emphasise Des Esseintes status as Christ-type, and the fact that Wilde had recognised him as such: a touchstone for all human emotions and thoughts; displaced, separate, and yet the one in which everything and everybody are contained. (Dorian's reading of Against Nature also illustrates the reversibility of the terms of moral value which is present in so many of the texts discussed in this thesis: "One hardly knew at times", he says, "whether one was reading the spiritual ecstasies of some mediaeval saint or the morbid confessions of a modern sinner." (19))

The sense of **disillusion** is the second point at which the two characters' personalities converge. Shortly after arriving on the island, Edward Prendick experiences moments of *dejà vu*, just as the puzzled characters in Strindberg's Dream Play did. The truth about the Doctor's experiments is still hidden from him, and yet, in this perfectly alien setting, he has sensations of familiarity, as of something just glimpsed out of the corner of an eye: he wonders, "Where had I heard the name of Moreau before?"(20), and about one of Moreau's monsters, "Somewhere I had heard such a voice before, and I could not think where."(21) The scraps of information given to him leads Prendick to believe, mistakenly, that Moreau is experimenting on, and hideously mutilating, human beings. Expectation builds to a scene of revelation, precipitated by Prendick's threat to drown himself, in which Moreau and Montgomery are forced to initiate him into the mystery of the genesis of the Beast People. If we are to read this scene in terms of Christian analogy - as indeed we are encouraged by the author to do - we may note the little irony in Moreau's having to make his initial statement about the creation of his 'people' in **Latin**, to prevent the suspicious beasts from

understanding, much as the Church had prevented the majority of people from attaining knowledge of the Bible, through centuries of exclusively Latin scripture. However, Prendick is stunned, repulsed and disillusioned by the disclosure:

Had Moreau had any intelligible object I could have sympathised at least a little with him. I am not so squeamish about pain as that. I could have forgiven him a little even had his motive been hate. But he was so irresponsible, so utterly careless. His curiosity, his mad, aimless investigations, drove him on, and the things were thrown out to live a year or so, to struggle, and blunder, and suffer; at last to die painfully. ... I must confess I lost faith in the sanity of the world when I saw it suffering the painful disorder of this island.(22)

This passage follows closely the one in which Prendick points out how he sees the world of Moreau's creations as a miniature model, an explicit type, of human society. Thus his line, "to struggle, and blunder, and suffer; at last to die painfully", for no reason other than the sheer wantonness of a supposed higher power, turns unmistakably from a description of 'life on the island' to one of the 'human condition'. Not only does Prendick lose his faith in the "sanity of the world", but Christianity and sanity soon start to look as **undesirable** as they are impossible to believe in, when Moreau states, "Then I am a religious man, Prendick, as every sane man must be."(23) This disillusioning realisation is not far removed from the view of man's lot that we find in Hardy's later novels. Certainly, both The Island and Against Nature display an insistence on **chance** rather than pre-ordained fate as the deciding factor of our circumstances which is unmistakably Hardy-esque: "It's chance, I tell you," says Montgomery, "as everything is in a man's life. Only the asses won't see it."(24) Huysmans, similarly, talks of "the irremediable conflict between his ideas and those of the world into which chance had ordained that he should be born."(25)

If knowledge equals such disillusion and separateness, there must be a suggestion that 'ignorance is bliss', and that experience invariably leads to what W.H.Mallock called "That melancholy which in our day is attendant upon all clear sight" (26). The Beast People on The Island, for example, would have been

happily following their instincts in an un-fallen state if Moreau had not exchanged their animal innocence for an imperfect and unnatural moral sense. He has "infected their dwarfed brains with a kind of deification of himself"(27) and imposed upon them "The Law", a simplistic litany framed in biblical language, meant to instil in them enough fear and guilt to keep them obedient in the face of unreasonable authority. "The Law", a poignant example of 'the letter' lacking 'the spirit', is being chanted by the Beast People in their congregations in an obvious parody of Christian worship and the very human discrepancy between practice and preaching: Prendick observes that "This Law they were ever repeating, I found, and - ever breaking."(28) The danger of knowing too much is expressed in Wells' novel as an implicit warning in another sense - a warning, that is, against the assumption that 'all scientific progress is good' which had been so much a part of the Victorian *zeitgeist*.

The experimentation which takes place in the urban world of Des Esseintes is of a very different kind, but carries an implication of danger and excess nonetheless. Des Esseintes experiments with **his own** mind, and preferring art to nature (in the true *fin de siècle* spirit) he attempts to conduct his life, explore other countries, and experience his emotions, solely in his imagination, and by artificial means. He cultivates his singular tastes and expands his remarkable knowledge to such an extent that he eventually finds himself, like Jude the Obscure or Angel Clare, simply too refined, too 'un-deceived', too sensitive, to be able to sustain his energy or be fit for life in any sense; a "human creature, skilled in self-torment and adept in self-deception, forcing its thoughts to cheat one another in order to suffer more acutely, and ruining in advance, thanks to its power of analysis and observation, any chance of happiness it might have."(29)

The knowledge, scientific and psychological respectively, possessed by Doctor Moreau and Jean Des Esseintes, enables them to 'play God', to typify in their idiosyncratic ways the holder of creative powers. But the late Victorian

textual 'climate' in which they exist has undergone a great change, and no longer corresponds to the climate in which the Bible texts were written. Nietzsche, in The Anti-Christ of 1888, addresses this problem:

A people which still believes in itself still also has its own God. In him it venerates the conditions through which it has prospered, its virtues - it projects its joy in itself, its feeling of power on to a being whom one can thank for them. ... To be sure: when a people is perishing; when it feels its faith in the future, its hope of freedom vanish completely... then its God has to alter, too.(30)

Huysmans and Wells belong to a society which has clearly lost some of its "joy in itself" and its "faith in the future", and subsequently their perceptions, and representations, of the God-figure have altered considerably. Construction and creation would have no meaning without destruction, but with Des Esseintes and Moreau the emphasis seems to rest dangerously on the latter. The Beast People's Law extols the scientist, metonymically, as "The Hand that makes", "The Hand that wounds", and "The Hand that heals"(31), but there is little healing and a lot of wounding in The Island's universe. Moreau and his assistant find 'the sword', or rather their guns and whips, more useful in keeping the balance of power than 'the word'; there is the ever-present threat of the island's own Hell - the "House of Pain"; and the "Master" is evaluated by his ability to inflict pain, thus the Ape Man's "I am burnt, branded in the hand. He is great, he is good!"(32) Moreau's totalitarian power to do harm even within his God-figure role may bring to mind Edward Mordaunt's refusal, in The Outcast, to pray to "that monster, that demon, that fiend!"(33)

Des Esseintes, too, is associated with a certain perversion or reversal of the biblical Lazarus theme, in which everything he touches seems to wither and die: the jewel-encrusted tortoise and the exotic plants (these grotesque and hideous flowers are Des Esseintes' literal answer to Baudelaire's poetic *Fleurs du Mal*) he has brought into his "snugly heated ark on dry land" survive for a few days, at the most, in his presence.(34) In a more sinister episode, he puts his energy into the

unmaking rather than the making of his fellow beings, as he gets a young, working-class *naïve* addicted to the pleasures of a Parisian brothel, only to withdraw these "treats" abruptly, hoping the young man will turn to crime to keep up his expensive habit - he is, in his own words, "simply trying to make a murderer of the boy."(35) He tells the unsuspecting boy, at their first meeting, to "remember this most evangelic dictum: do unto others as you would not have them do unto you" (which inversion causes James Winchell to call him a true "sermonizer-on-the-*mons-veneris*"(36)), and later, disappointed of seeing his victim's name in the Police Gazette as he had expected, he exclaims, "The little Judas!"(37)

This language of **reversal** does in fact run through the entire structure of Against Nature. The unconditional love of humanity displayed by the traditional Christ-figure is equalled by Des Esseintes' universal contempt for humanity. The energy which the biblical Jesus put into virtue is equivalent to the fervent energy this character devotes to vice. We have already heard his own version of the "evangelic dictum", and he employs biblical parabolic imagery to express his religious unbelief, speaking of the lessons taught him by the Jesuit Fathers who schooled him as "the seed which had fallen on apparently barren ground"(38). He turns night into day by leading a strictly nocturnal life, breakfasting in the evening and having supper in the morning (39), and summer into winter, as he "would get into a sledge he kept at home - this in the hottest period of the year - and sit there wrapped in furs that he pulled tightly round him, shivering to the best of his ability and saying through deliberately chattering teeth: 'What an icy wind! Why, it's freezing here, it's freezing!' "(40). A turning on its head of the concept of faith which we have seen in A Dream Play is also found in Against Nature: where Strindberg spoke of "the terror of the redeemer", Huysmans worries that "nobody could be sure he would never succumb" to religious conversion(41), and mentions

Des Esseintes' "fearful intimations of faith" that "had been troubling him."(42)

Even the title of the novel itself signifies profound reversal.

Huysmans' playing with the imagery of reversal is paralleled by a playing with typological roles, and indeed a recurring theme of role-playing in general: Jean Des Esseintes must surely be the late nineteenth-century character that most exults in casting himself as various types and figures, religious and otherwise. Assuming control over his typological existence, he rearranges his appearance and his environment to produce the desired effect. Some of these efforts seem purely whimsical, as when he - prior to his escape from Paris - has fitted up in his city house

a lofty hall in which to receive his tradesmen. They used to troop in and take their places side by side in a row of church stalls; then he would ascend an imposing pulpit and preach them a sermon on dandyism, adjuring his bootmakers and tailors to conform strictly to his encyclicals on matters of cut, and threatening them with pecuniary excommunication if they did not follow to the letter the instructions contained in his monitories and bulls.(43)

(This passage is, of course, reminiscent of Carlyle's ironic 'Articles of Faith' in Sartor Resartus, in which "6. It is permitted to mankind, under certain restrictions, to wear white waistcoats", and "4. There is safety in a swallow-tail.")

(44)) Despite the apparent triviality of these "matters of cut", or perhaps **because** of the blatant and significant discrepancy between content and form, Huysmans' passage is related to the aforementioned 'anti-sermon' in James Thompson's poem, and to Wilde's 'Confraternity of the Faithless'. It demonstrates how Huysmans and his fictional character alike, more than simply being 'stuck' in a discourse-structure dominated by the language of biblical texts and implicit, universal Christian faith, actually choose to take advantage of this situation, in playful or sombre ways; to regenerate the Christian idiom by freely juxtaposing it with surprising or even contradicting ideas. Types are as flexible as the associative imagination of their interpreter, and Huysmans gives a demonstration of this as Des Esseintes

contemplates his Gustav Moreau painting of "Salome, a figure with a haunting fascination for artists and poets" (Oscar Wilde being an obvious example). The prosaic passage from St. Matthew describing Herod's promise, Salome's dance, and the murder of John the Baptist is quoted verbatim, reminding us that this biblical episode is pregnant with typological significance: it is, of course, traditionally seen as a precursor for the story of Christ's Passion. Not stopping at this, however, Des Esseintes' imagination explores all the potential meanings of Salome as type:

She had become, as it were, the symbolic incarnation of undying Lust, the Goddess of immortal Hysteria, ... like the Helen of ancient myth, ... Viewed in this light, she belonged to the theogonies of the Far East; she no longer had her origin in Biblical tradition; she could not even be likened to the royal harlot of Revelations. (45)

In this way, the figure of Salome, although retaining her typological significance, is traced as a symbol through history, and her potential scope is widened until she becomes what could be seen as a Levi-Strausseau 'mytheme'. When Des Esseintes leaves his foppish persona behind and turns, despairingly, into the solitary and disillusioned figure with which we are acquainted at Fountenay, his association with religious imagery takes on a graver aspect, "in that the life he was leading was very similar to the life of a monk", and his bedroom "had to be turned into a facsimile of a monastery cell."(46) The religious terms are, in fact, invested with increasing 'seriousness' before reaching at last Des Esseintes' final speech, having come, perhaps, full circle and returning to their home of orthodox meaning as he prays for his Lord to "take pity on the Christian who doubts"(47).

The typological play in The Island of Doctor Moreau is more explicit. From the first description of Moreau's appearance - "a white-faced white-haired man, with calm eyes. Save for his serenity, the touch almost of beauty that resulted from his set tranquillity, and from his magnificent build, he might have passed muster among a hundred other comfortable old gentlemen"(48) - there can be no doubt that the scientist fits in with a picture of God which has been

dominant in Western culture for centuries, present in anything from the Sistine Chapel ceiling, via Victorian illustrated Bibles, to contemporary children's drawings. It only makes sense, then, to hear him echo Genesis in "I made my first man. All the week, night and day, I moulded him."(49) The island's enclosure is the garden of Eden, from which his creations, the Beast People, are expelled when they start to displease their Master with the 'sin' that is latent in them: "I turn them out when I begin to feel the beast in them, and presently they wander there."(50) "Fish and flesh", incidentally, are the 'forbidden fruit' which the People must not touch. The Holy Trinity is paradoxically shadowed in Moreau, Prendick, and the drunken Montgomery, and Prendick, interestingly, is named "Man Who Walked in the Sea" by the Beast People after his near-suicide (51). As an added typological touch, Moreau, the God-figure, is himself prefigured by the violent captain of the Ipecacuancha, who is heard shouting, "I'm the law here, I tell you - the law and the prophets."(52) Montgomery, like Des Esseintes, mixes his religious metaphors, and shows that no one need stay on one side of the typological fence only, as he in exasperation calls Prendick a "logic-chopping, chalky-faced saint of an atheist"(53).

In the preface to his play Saint Joan (first performed in New York, 1923), George Bernard Shaw expands on the flexibility of types, and the cultural conditioning which makes it inevitable that we should 'type-cast', as it were, ourselves and our surroundings:

All the popular religions in the world are made apprehensible by an array of legendary personages, with an Almighty Father, and sometimes a mother and divine child, as the central figures. These are presented to the mind's eye in childhood; and the result is a hallucination which persists strongly throughout life when it has been well impressed. Thus all the thinking of the hallucinated adult about the fountain of inspiration which is continually flowing in the universe, or about the promptings of virtue and the revulsions of shame: in short, about aspiration and conscience, both of which forces are matters of fact more obvious than electro-magnetism, is thinking in terms of the celestial vision.(54)

The section from which this passage is taken is called 'The Mere Iconography Does Not Matter', which is the natural conclusion to draw from the suggestions made in The Island of Doctor Moreau and Against Nature some decades before the above passage was written.

Having now crossed the imaginary boundary into the twentieth century, I would like, finally, to look at a story in which many of the directional lines that typological language started to follow in the texts included in this thesis come together. This story is 'The Man Who Died' by D.H. Lawrence, first published in 1929. It opens with Jesus waking up "from a long sleep in which he was tied up" and leaving his grave, not for a resurrection and ascension to heaven, but to a new life on earth. His role as the fulfilment of biblical prophecy has been played out: "The teacher and the saviour are dead in me; now I can go about my business, into my own single life."(55) Rising as a cock crows at dawn, "He was alone; and having died, was even beyond loneliness. Filled still with the sickness of unspeakable disillusion, the man stepped with wincing feet down the rocky slope"(56). This is Christ as painfully, pitifully, and utterly **human**, but still alien to the human world into which he has been re-born: "He went on, on scarred feet, neither of this world nor of the next. Neither here nor there, neither seeing nor yet sightless, he passed dimly on"(57), himself now resembling the people to whom he addressed the parable of Matthew 13:13 ('Neither seeing, they see not, nor hearing, they hear not...'). The Godhead having left him, he is no longer the '*Son of God*' or the '*Son of man*', but is constantly referred to simply as "the man" - this is a 'coming of age' of the Christ-figure, and risen with the aloneness and disillusion he shares with Des Esseintes and Edward Prendick, he possesses, instead of the compassionate and imaginative energy attributed to him in De Profundis, a "deathly indifference and cold resoluteness"(58). Aware of the consequences facing a type which does not fulfil the promise it embodies, he says, "Now my own followers will want to do me to death again, for having risen up

different to their expectation."(59) Nevertheless, the separateness of this 'new' Jesus bears more promise than that of the literary shadows preceding him;

For in the tomb he had left his striving self, which cares and asserts itself. Now his uncaring self healed and became whole within his skin, and he smiled to himself with pure aloneness, which is one sort of immortality.(60)

(Thus associating aloneness with a Christ-like figure is not unique to 'The Man Who Died' in Lawrence's writings. 'The Man Who Loved Islands', for instance, craves nothing more than this "pure aloneness", wanting to exclude everything that lives from his own life, and his fellow characters draw several associative lines of comparison between their "Master" and Jesus - "He was wonderful with children, talked to them simply wonderful, made you think of Our Saviour himself."(61))

We can now see a connection between a collection of characters who have returned from the unspeakable 'outside' with an experience that cannot be shared: Jesus, here, come back from the grave; Wilde returning from prison, knowing that "society can have no place for me now"; Des Esseintes who "must leave the shelter of this haven of his and put out to sea again in the teeth of that gale of human folly that had battered and buffeted him of old!"(62) Prendick returns from the hell of Moreau's island only to find, like Lucifer in Milton's Paradise Lost, that his hell has followed him; he walks in fear among his fellow men, feeling "as though the animal was surging up through them; that presently the degradation of the Islanders will be played over again on a larger scale."(63) Yet another character has the same experience just before the turn of the century: Marlow in Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness, following his journey in Congo - which could be described, in George Eliot's words, as "a disappointed pilgrimage to a shrine where there were no longer the symbols of sacredness"(64) - returns to find himself

back in the sepulchral city, resenting the sight of people hurrying through the streets to filch a little money from each other, to devour their infamous cookery, to gulp their unwholesome beer, to dream their insignificant and silly dreams. They trespassed upon my thoughts. They were intruders whose knowledge of

life was to me an irritating presence, because I felt so sure they could not possibly know the things I know.(65)

These characters have found that if there is somewhere an indisputable truth, it is that your experience is essentially **unknowable** to anybody else. They have realised the impossibility of truly sharing your experience, a realisation which causes in them repulsion, contempt, or disillusion - and which lends an uneasy irony to the fact that these people are in fact trying to share those very experiences through the act of writing, or 'being written'.

But 'The Man Who Died' does not end at this conclusion. It goes beyond this separateness, through the flexibility of type, to arrive at "the great atonement, the being in touch" - albeit an atonement which does not include Christianity. While travelling alone, Jesus meets a priestess of Isis (she has assigned this role to herself, *reading* into a type her own needs: "in Egypt, she had found Isis, in whom she spelled her mystery."(66)) who is searching for somebody like him, although known to her by a different name: "She was looking for the fragments of the dead Osiris"(67) to whom she can give renewed life, fulfilling **her** role as saviour. Having connected with her, he is no longer bound by the lines of typological revelation, so when she asks him, "You are Osiris, aren't you?" he is free to answer, "If you will."(68) Similarly, if he can be Osiris to her, she can be Mary Magdalene to him:

When she chafed his feet with oil and tender, tender healing, he could not refrain from saying to her: 'Once a woman washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with her hair, and poured on precious ointment.' (69)

There is still the understanding that no communion can be a perfect exchange of experience; "She would never know or understand what he was. Especially she would never know the death that was gone before in him. But what did it matter?"(70) 'The Mere Iconography Does Not Matter', and types can be used interchangeably and even playfully. As the priestess of Isis becomes pregnant by

Jesus and one myth merges with another, we see how Huysmans' view of sexuality as corrupting and deceased has given way to that of Lawrence. In 'The Man Who_Died', he presents us with his version of a reversed Fall and a regained Paradise: love, sex, and procreation constitute our only hope of resurrection, a resurrection on earth. Back in the cycle of ever-recurring natural events, we are promised a **third** coming: "The suns come back in their seasons: and I shall come again."(71)

CONCLUSION

We may approach a conclusion by returning to the beginning of the late Victorian period - specifically, to Matthew Arnold's 1875 God and the Bible, being in essence an answer to the many fierce critics of his earlier Literature and Dogma. Arnold establishes in his preface that "at the present moment two things about the Christian religion must surely be clear to anybody with eyes in his head. One is, that men cannot do without it; the other, that they cannot do with it as it is."(1) Arnold's intention in God and the Bible is to **liberate** the Bible - its language, its images and meanings - to the continued use, enjoyment, and instruction of its readers despite the perceived death of popular theology. Moreover, he wants to facilitate the continued usage of the biblical vocabulary and imagery in a sort of literary 'recycling process' - such a process having thus far been prohibited by the laws of the "preternatural, which is now [*the Bible's*] popular sanction."(2) The once popular Victorian poet Isaac Williams wrote how

Some from tongue and pen
Banish all figure, comprehend it not:
Others read wisdom from similitudes,
Through medium of external sign and form,
Their speech by nature rich with images,
And this, if I with reverence so may speak,
Is God's own language. (3)

This reclaiming of the moral and aesthetic forces contained within the Bible texts - "God's own language" - is Arnold's **offering**, and his answer to the question which seemed to him, as it did to all the authors discussed in Part Two of this thesis, of such monumental importance: now that the "illusions which charmed and aided man's inexperience" are being dispensed with, "what have you to give him in the place of them?"(4)

What I claim to be the two major strains of typology usage in late Victorian literature - the first being the attempts at constructing a sound moral platform, to

replace the crumbling foundations of Christian orthodoxy, through the conscious imitation of Christ; the second being the more free, playful, and associative employment of biblical types and figures - are both anticipated, and positively encouraged, by Matthew Arnold in this work. He wishes, on the one hand, to promote "the sincere, uncompromising return to the method of Jesus, with the deep and firm sense of reality which this in turn inspires."(5) Such a return, repetition, or imitation, constituted the tasks which Joshua Davidson, Robert Elsmere, and Julian Gray, to name but a few, attempted to perform. The presence of potential Christ-types in his time is fully recognised by Arnold. Angered by contemporary fellow unbelievers, who wanted to leave the language of their religious past behind altogether (an idea made utterly futile, as we have seen in the words of Derrida, Lance Butler, and Dostoyevsky's Father Paissy, by the interdependency of the discourses of faith and doubt), he insists that Christianity's

fairy-tale, far from being a degraded superstition, is full of beauty and power, and that its divinities are magnifications of nothing unworthy, but of a sort of character of which we have an eminent example amongst ourselves.(6)

Thus having advocated the sentiments explored by the texts included in Part Two of the above, Arnold is quite as eager to sanction the less specific and more imaginative use of what is offered by our biblical literary past - the use which takes delight in, and advantage of, its sheer power over the human mind - in other words, such uses as we have seen explored in Part Three. Despite the non-existence of God as a scientifically and philosophically definable, personal **being**, the language concerning such a God is still useful and desirable and, moreover, **natural** to us, according to Arnold: "we know that men inevitably use the anthropomorphic language about whatever makes them feel deeply, and the Biblical language about God we may therefore freely use, but as approximative and poetical merely."(7) The force of the 'inevitable', in this passage, of keeping our ties with our Christian past, is balanced and made new by Arnold's addition of

the words 'freely', 'approximative', and 'poetical'. No matter how provocative this suggested 'poetic' understanding of biblical language seemed to Arnold's contemporaries, he was in fact only echoing what had been said in the 1782-3 work by Johann Gottfried Herder, The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry; "Let the scholar then study the Old Testament, even if it be only as a human book full of ancient poetry, with kindred feeling and affection." (8)

The theory of typological language being *natural* in the human experiences and expressions, as previously noted in the work of Gerhard von Rad and Oscar Wilde ("Once at least in his life each man walks with Christ to Emmaus"), is also at work in Arnold's writing. After all, as several of the writers and characters here discussed realised, one's literary 'types' can often feel more immediately significant and 'real' than one's contemporaries - thus Dorian Gray:

Yet one had one's ancestors in literature, as well as in one's own race, nearer perhaps in type and temperament, many of them, and certainly with an influence of which one was more absolutely conscious. (9)

Whereas Arnold approaches the intellectual history of man with a linear progression in mind - he was echoed by his niece, Mary Augusta Ward, in professing that it is man's increased experience and knowledge which makes him gradually reject the 'childish' notions of 'miracle' and a 'personified God' - there is a cyclical movement implied in **reclaiming** the poetical language of the Scriptures and **returning** to the "method of Jesus". Arnold's exhortations, in this sense, foreshadows the marked movement from the perception of typology as a diachronic line of revelation, towards the idea of typology as a synchronic, almost compulsive, recollection or re-enactment of our biblical textual history - a shift which we have witnessed in both the imitative and the associative typological encounters here recorded.

I have attempted to show how late nineteenth-century texts made use of deliberate inversions of the Bible types and figures in order to express unbelief and a typical sense of dislocation from a spiritual as well as a linguistic **centre**. Arnold discusses how he went to etymology in order to discover the true meaning of words like 'God' and 'being', endowed by theology with such dogmatic significance:

we were not ashamed, I say, instead of assenting with a solemn face to what we did not understand, to own that we did not understand them, and to seek humbly for the little words at the bottom of it all; and so the futility of all the grand superstructure was revealed to us.(10)

There are two slightly opposing ideas at work here. One lies in the fact that Arnold suggests what has been so fully realised by post-structuralism: there is no "true" linguistic centre to unfailingly support a "true" moral or political centre; the building of a theology - or any other theory or philosophy - upon the supposedly unchangeable and transcendental meaning of words, is an unreasonable exercise bound for failure. When probed, the "futility of all the grand superstructure" is inevitably revealed to the inquisitive mind, and "To such a degree do words make man, who invents them, their sport."(11) (Incidentally, Arnold's syntax, here - in addition to the ironic echoing of King Lear - is a good example of his skill: the interposing of the sub-clause makes it a point of debate whether man is 'maker' or 'made' in his relationship with language.) Nevertheless, despite the author's distrust of the metaphysical terms which "popular theology" used with such confidence and, to his mind at least, arrogance, Matthew Arnold **himself** is relying upon etymology for the answer to a philosophical query; he is seeking the "meaning of the little words at the bottom of it all", and those meanings do lead him to a conclusion, albeit a different conclusion to those reached by his more orthodox contemporaries. Feeling the effects of dislocation from one centre, Arnold transfers his trust and ideology to a centre which appears, to the late

twentieth-century reader, only slightly different from the 'original' - a movement, it seems, that was true to the spirit of the late nineteenth century.

Inversions of the traditional use of biblical images and quotations, similar to what we have previously seen in other texts, however, abound in God and the Bible. Arnold indicates in 1875, as Ernest Renan had done in 1863, that those who most fervently subscribe to the name of Christianity may well be those who least deserve to use it. Referring to the story of Polycarp's martyrdom as reported in the letter of the Church of Smyrna, and how he flung the accusation of atheism back at his accusers, Arnold says;

So deeply unsound is the mass of traditions and imaginations of which popular religion consists, so gross a distortion and caricature of the true religion does it represent, that future times will hardly comprehend its audacity in calling those who abjure it atheists; while its being stigmatised itself with this hard name will astonish no-one.(12)

This may not be so much an inversion as a **reverting**, or returning, to the "true religion", a 'true state of things': as we progress intellectually, we turn back from the corruption of the past, and grasp as a new religion our perception of the way things 'really' were. The ideas of the late Victorians, and their obsession with all things new, also paradoxically echo the sentiments expressed in Ecclesiastes 1:4-9 - "That which hath been is that which shall be,/ And that which hath been done is that which shall be done;/ And there is nothing new under the sun." Even Henrik Ibsen, the breaker of so many traditions, utters, in Ghosts of 1881, the view of unbelief and 'modern' ideology as something which is not new, only unrecognised. Thus the scene in which the local rector finds texts of "new-thinking" in the Alving family's home:

PASTOR MANDERS: Do you read that sort of thing?

FRU ALVING: Yes, indeed I do.

PASTOR MANDERS: Do you feel that you are made, somehow, better or happier through such reading?

FRU ALVING: I feel, in a sense, more secure.

PASTOR MANDERS: That's strange. How so?

FRU ALVING: Well, it seems to explain and confirm to me a lot of the things I have been thinking for myself. Yes - because **that** is the strange thing, Pastor Manders - there's actually nothing at all **new** in these books; they say nothing other than what most people think and believe. It's just that most people don't explore their thoughts properly, or won't admit to them. (13) [*My translation*]

The ideas of unorthodoxy, then, are not revolutionary as much as rediscovered. However, an elusive but definitive 'true state of things' may - as we begin to discern in Sartor Resartus - prove to be more than temporarily obscured by a dead religion: as the twentieth century replaces the myth of the 'truth within' with the 'relativity of reality' and the arbitrary nature of signs and symbols, a 'true state of things' becomes an impossibility. It is hard to move beyond the metaphor, as one sign is invariably explained, not by its 'true meaning', but by another sign. However that may be, the metaphors to which the Christian religion gave rise are as powerfully suggestive now as they were in the late nineteenth century - and attempts made at 'playing' with them are still subject to controversy and even moral outrage.

The religious indignation caused by late Victorian literature's treatment of the Bible stories is occasioned today, it seems, mainly by film rather than literature. The medium of film holding, arguably, the position in our popular cultural discourse equivalent to that held literature at the end of the last century, this shift may not be a surprising one. As film-makers of the late twentieth century follow the tradition, begun by the writers of the late nineteenth century, of representing and changing biblical topoi, emotions run as high and criticism is as fierce amongst the religiously orthodox as it was then. The Life of Brian, directed by Terry Jones, - a story about an unfortunate contemporary of Jesus, the satirical kicks of which are directed not at Christianity itself but at those who follow it unthinkingly - has, since its release in 1979, had a practically unprecedented history of censorship in Britain. Martin Scorsese's Last Temptation of Christ of

1988, adapted from the novel by Nikos Kazantzakis, had people in the United States demonstrating against it in the streets **before** it had been publicly screened - despite the fact that this is a film in which the character of Jesus, through **imagining** on the Cross that he succumbs to this 'last temptation', manages to resist it and fulfil his role as Redeemer. Of course, not all the films that overtly play with typological themes are received with such consternation. The Canadian/French Jesus of Montreal (Denys Arcand, 1989) has as its protagonist a young actor who creates and stars in an unusual production of the Passion Play, and whose private as well as professional life become 'taken over' by his role as Christ. More recently, Mel Gibson's Braveheart (1995) is, according to Rob Brown, writing in The Scotsman;

suffused from start to finish with Christian symbolism. Wallace's first altercation with the English comes as he rides alone, arms outstretched, into the enemy encampment on a horse not dissimilar to a donkey. Throughout he is portrayed as a reluctant warrior, a peace-lover who eschews violence even after his father and elder brother are slain by the English and dispatched with a full Latin mass. The hero has an even more glorious exit, being gouged to death on a crucifix-shaped scaffold. (14)

Far from perishing in the eighteen eighties, then, the stories and types of the Bible - and especially the stories told of the life and Passion of Jesus - are rich sources from which to draw 'new' material. Moreover, they are just as capable of bringing about debate as they were a hundred years ago. The problematic nature of re-telling a story in which so many people have, as it were, a 'vested interest', shows itself clearly in Gerd Theissen's novel of 1986, The Shadow of the Galilean, which re-tells the story of Jesus, but in which the character of Jesus never actually appears - for fear, seemingly, that the author may somehow take liberties with it and "get it wrong". Thus the foreword, in the shape of a letter to a colleague;

Yes, the rumours that have reached you are true: I'm writing a narrative about Jesus. You beseech me never to publish this book. You're anxious about my scholarly reputation and concerned for the

good name of New Testament interpretation. Your worries would be justified if this were the kind of Life of Jesus which imaginatively filled in those areas about which historical sources are silent and sacrificed historical truth to making an effect. Let me reassure you: I am most averse to writing anything about Jesus which is not based on sources. There is nothing about Jesus in my book which I have not also taught at the university.(15)

To remove oneself from the background of orthodox sources, to take creative license, and use repetition with variation, in connection with the most distinguished of anti-types, is obviously still a cause of worry and precaution in some quarters. The intense wish and will to “get it right” when relating, or reacting, to the typological or biblical image contends with the growing conviction that there is no such exclusive “right”.

Matthew Arnold remarked; “how prone is the human imagination to reproduce striking incidents a second time.”(16) The fabric of recurrences which makes up typological language - be it used as an attempt to **participate** in our biblical past and lost faith, or to **confront** that faith by repeating it in a new context - ensures that many of our thoughts and characters are “typecast” in the mould of (even if not according to the rules of) biblical typology. Its continued attraction is not tied to any literary or historical era: Bruce F. Kavin explains in Telling it Again and Again how “Repetition carries within itself the germ of the nature of eternity; and eternity is not “a long time” - it is timeless.”(17) As W.B.Yeats said in ‘A Dialogue of Self and Soul’;

I am content to live it all again
And yet again, if it be life ... (18)

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