

INTRODUCTION

ALLEGORY PAST AND PRESENT

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Allegory is everything we already know it to be: a mode of literary and artistic composition, and a religious as well as secular interpretive practice. It is, however, much more than that—much more than a sum of its parts. Collectively, the phenomena that we now tend to subsume under this term comprise a dynamic cultural force which has left a deep imprint on our history, whose full impact we are only beginning to comprehend, and which therefore demands precisely such dedicated cross-disciplinary examination as this book seeks to provide.

That we are now in the position to describe allegory in this way is the achievement of modern allegory studies: of the recognition, around the middle of the twentieth century, of allegory as a discrete domain of scholarly inquiry and the rise of a more focused and comprehensive approach to the subject, emerging in the work of such scholars as Abraham Bezanker, Ellen Douglass Leyburn, Northrop Frye, Edwin Honig, and Angus Fletcher.¹ Previously, scholarly interest in allegory had largely been restricted to select domains within literary history, art history, and the history of biblical hermeneutics, it tended to concentrate in the so-called Middle Ages, and it was typically auxiliary to an interest in a particular author, work, or topic. Meanwhile, broader reflection on the subject typically took place outside of academic scholarship. Goethe, Coleridge, Schopenhauer, Baudelaire, Yeats, Proust, Croce, Heidegger, Benjamin, Borges, Foucault—these are just some of the more prominent figures, among numerous others, who had insightful or at least memorable things to say about allegory, but who said them principally as philosophers and literary critics rather than scholars. Even as we point out the limitations of either faction, we should acknowledge the immense debt we owe to both. While often failing to engage with wider perspectives on the allegorical tradition, the scholars have collected a wealth of period-, author-, and work-specific information, providing a firm evidentiary basis for such engagements by others. Conversely, it is to the philosophers and the critics that we owe our basic orientation in any

¹ See Bezanker, “An Introduction to the Problem of Allegory” (diss. Michigan, 1954), esp. ch. 1; Leyburn, *Satiric Allegory* (1956; repr. Westport, 1978); Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957; repr. Princeton, 2000), esp. 89–92; Honig, *Dark Conceit* (1959; repr. New York, 1966); Fletcher, *Allegory* (1964; repr. Princeton, 2012).

theoretical approach to the subject, even if little of their work could now withstand rigorous scholarly scrutiny.

Since the 1950s, however, allegory has increasingly been approached in ways that bring these perspectives into closer alignment: as a phenomenon in its own right, inviting a broad historical and theoretical outlook, yet also informed by specific discipline-, period-, author- or work-focused contexts. So construed, allegory studies have become an stable nexus of cross-period and cross-disciplinary work in the humanities and social sciences, as a growing number of scholars has come to realize that the subject has outgrown traditional disciplinary models and requires a dedicated research platform in its own right. The past decades have seen a steady stream of primary scholarship informed by such perspectives, a number of accessible handbooks and reference works consolidating and mediating this work to wider audiences, and a healthy and stable interest by graduate students, at least in the Anglophone academia.² The advent of the phrase adopted in the volume's title, *allegory*

² The best single-authored overview of the subject, with extensive references and a survey of modern scholarship up to the 1990s, is found in Jon Whitman's introductory essays in *Allegory and Interpretation*, ed. Whitman (Leiden, 2000), 3–70, 259–314. In addition to those already mentioned, major publications representative of the modern approach include Nuttall, *Two Concepts of Allegory* (1967; repr. New Haven, 2007); Călin, *Alegoria și esențele* (Bucharest, 1969), tr. as *Auferstehung der Allegorie*, tr. Dumreicher (Vienna, 1975); MacQueen, *Allegory* (London, 1970); Clifford, *The Transformations of Allegory* (London, 1974); Barney, *Allegories of History, Allegories of Love* (Hamden, 1979); de Man, *Allegories of Reading* (New Haven, 1979); Quilligan, *The Language of Allegory* (Ithaca, NY, 1979); *Formen und Funktionen der Allegorie*, ed. Haug (Stuttgart, 1979); *Allegory and Representation*, ed. Greenblatt (Baltimore, 1981); *Allegory, Myth, and Symbol*, ed. Bloomfield (Cambridge, MA, 1981); Van Dyke, *The Fiction of Truth* (Ithaca, NY, 1985); Warner, *Monuments and Maidens* (1985; repr. London, 1996); *Enlightening Allegory*, ed. Cope (New York, 1993); Paxson, *The Poetics of Personification* (Cambridge, 1994); *Allegory Old and New*, ed. Kronegger and Tymieniecka (Dordrecht, 1994); *Allegory Revisited*, ed. Tymieniecka (Dordrecht, 1994); Madsen, *Rereading Allegory* (Basingstoke, 1995); Flores, *A Study of Allegory* (Lewiston, 1996); Leeming and Drowne, *Encyclopedia of Allegorical Literature* (Santa Barbara, 1996); Madsen, *Allegory in America* (Basingstoke, 1996); Teskey, *Allegory and Violence* (Ithaca, NY, 1996); "Allegory and Science," ed. Clarke, in *Configurations* 4 (1996); Kelley, *Reinventing Allegory* (Cambridge, 1997); Greenfield, *The Ends of Allegory* (Newark, 1998); Drügh, *Anders-Rede* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 2000); "Rereading Allegory," ed. Amer and Guynn, *Yale French Studies* 95 (1999); "Reformulating Allegory," ed. Knaller, *The Germanic Review* 77.2 (2002), with a limited but useful bibliography (160–3); Brittan, *Poetry, Symbol, and Allegory* (Charlottesville, 2003); Zhang, *Allegoresis* (Ithaca, NY, 2005); *Metaphor, Allegory, and the Classical Tradition*, ed. Boys-Stones (Oxford, 2003); *Allégorie des poètes, allégorie des philosophes*, ed. Dahan and Goulet (Paris, 2005); Brown, *The Persistence of Allegory* (Philadelphia, 2007); Kernev Štrajn, *Renesansa alegorije* (Ljubljana, 2009); Tambling, *Allegory* (London, 2010); *The Cambridge Companion to Allegory*, ed. Copeland and Struck (Cambridge, 2010); *Thinking Allegory Otherwise*, ed. Machosky (Stanford, 2010); "Cognitive Allegory," ed. Harris and Tolmie, *Metaphor and Symbol* 26.2 (2011); Johnson, *The Vitality of Allegory* (Columbus, 2012); Kerr-Koch, *Romancing Fascism* (New York, 2013); Machosky, *Structures of Appearing* (New York, 2013); *La Personnification du Moyen Âge au XVIII^e siècle*, ed. Demaules (Paris, 2014); Kablitz, *Zwischen Rhetorik und Ontologie* (Heidelberg, 2016); *Allegorie*, ed. Haselstein (Berlin, 2016); *Personification*, ed. Melion and Ramakers (Leiden, 2016); Crawford, *Allegory and Enchantment* (Oxford, 2017); Escobedo, *Volition's Face* (Notre Dame, IN, 2017); *Schriftsinn und Epochalität*, ed. Huss and Nelting (Heidelberg, 2017); Jameson, *Allegory and Ideology* (London, 2019); *The Oxford Handbook of Allegory*, ed. Parry (forthcoming). According to information retrieved from the Proquest Dissertations and Theses database, each of the four decades between 1970 and 2010 has produced an average of 140 MA and PhD dissertations wholly or predominantly devoted to the subject, with the present decade set to yield comparable figures.

studies is itself symptomatic of these developments, first appearing, to the best of the author's knowledge, in Gordon Teskey's appeal "to open up the field of allegory studies by asking questions about what lies beneath the phenomenon under analysis."³

This is the tradition out of which the present volume emerges and to which it seeks to contribute, collecting some of the most compelling recent work on the subject in a range of disciplines and specializations in the humanities and social sciences. It is global in reach, it ranges from classical antiquity to the present day, it accommodates a wide array of topics and approaches, and it addresses both allegory specialists and a wider academic audience looking for a sampling of the current research on this subject. This Introduction has been written with both these audiences in mind, adopting a slightly unusual format for this purpose. For the benefit of the specialist, it presents all of its key arguments in an uncluttered main text, with only essential annotation included in the footnotes. For the benefit of the non-specialist, it presumes little previous knowledge of the subject and provides a parallel set of supplementary endnotes, designated by Roman numerals, which attempt to anticipate points where additional documentation and argumentation might be needed. Although inevitably biased and limited in certain respects, it attempts to provide a reasonably objective overview of the current state of the field, furnishing a wider backdrop for the nine chapters that follow.⁴

I

What, then, do we know about allegory today that we did not know—or at least not as well, or as widely—around the middle of the twentieth century? To begin with, we know that it has been with us for much longer than most previous scholarship had acknowledged. Certainly the Western allegorical tradition, with which this volume is largely concerned, is virtually as old as Western culture itself. Some of the earliest ancient Greek thinkers on record were allegorical interpreters and the earliest surviving European manuscript of intellectual and literary relevance, the miraculously preserved text known as the Derveni Papyrus, records an allegorical reading of a poem attributed to the legendary figure of Orpheus by an unknown author of the fifth or fourth century BCE.¹ Indirect evidence of such reading—usefully

³ *Allegory and Violence*, xii.

⁴ Specifically, many choices in the ensuing pages betray the editor's disciplinary formation in the field of English literary history. This will be felt especially in the relative neglect of allegory in the visual arts; for criticism of this tendency in allegory studies more generally, see the references indicated in Lisa Rosenthal's chapter in this volume (XXn4). That said, an effort has been invested to at least touch on all the major domains covered by the subject, and it is hoped that most of the arguments, even when based in the literary sphere, have a wider applicability.

distinguished from compositional and rhetorical allegory as *allegoresis*—is earlier still, with the title of the first Western allegorist contested by two shadowy figures of the sixth century BCE, Pherecydes of Syros and Theagenes of Rhegium.ⁱⁱ Composition of works plausibly described as allegorical is also of great antiquity: some are philosophical in nature (like Pherecydes’ theogony or, later on, the “myths” included in some of Plato’s dialogues, most famously the *Republic*’s Allegory of the Cave), while others are more properly literary, whether lyric (as in Alcaeus’ poems of the Ship of State), narrative (as in Prodicus’ story of the Choice of Heracles), or dramatic (as in the topical and satirical allegory of the Old Comedy, for example Aristophanes’ *Knights*).ⁱⁱⁱ Finally, the notion of a rhetorical trope defined as an extended metaphor or sequence of related metaphors, pushing figurative language to or beyond the limit of intelligibility, is not much later, emerging already with Aristotle and further developed by later Greek and Roman rhetoricians.^{iv}

As far as we know, it is in the sphere of Hellenistic rhetoric that the Greek word itself, *allēgoria*, first appears: a coinage formed of *allos*, “other,” and *agoreuein*, “to speak,” later Latinized as *allegoria*, and eventually the European vernaculars.^v Already in some of its earliest recorded instances, however, we see the term’s range expanding beyond strictly rhetorical usage and intersecting with terminology employed for allegory in its interpretive and compositional aspects.^{vi} That *allegory* has come to eclipse other comparable terms in modern usage is at least partly a consequence of this conceptual flexibility, assisted by the word’s capacious and suggestive etymology. We have, for example, explicit testimony from the second century CE that “what used to be termed ‘hidden meanings’ [*huponoiais*] . . . are nowadays called ‘allegories’ [*allēgoriais*],”⁵ and if we compare these two terms with regard to their potential scope, the latter’s advantage is obvious. One can refer to either a *huponoia* or an *allēgoria* contained within a work, but one cannot refer to that work itself, or the compositional practice as such, or the related rhetorical figure, as (a) *huponoia*. By contrast, *allēgoria*—“saying one thing but meaning another,” in its broadest, etymology-derived definition—comfortably covers all these and still further contexts.^{vii} This does, however, come at a price, and it is worth noting at the outset that the same flexibility which seems to have given *allegory* an evolutionary edge over competing terminologies has also been the cause of endless variation in its use over the ages, and remains a fundamental point of contention in modern work on the subject—the discussion returns to this problem below, once the necessary historical parameters have been established.

⁵ Plutarch, “How the Young Man Should Study Poetry,” 19e (adapted). Cf. Silk’s comments below (XX).

As the above examples suffice to show, the range of allegory in ancient Greece already approximates that found in later stages of the tradition. Yet allegory is older still, older than the West itself. Here the scholar of the Western tradition must tread with caution, risking being led astray by cultural bias, but it still seems incontestable that forms of literary and exegetical allegorism comparable to those attested in ancient Greece have indeed been documented in the religious and literary culture of ancient Egypt at least as early as the second millennium BCE.^{viii} And even then, we have so far been talking only about *textual* allegory. Once we turn to the visual and the plastic arts, and to material culture at large, the perspective deepens further, with representations plausibly described as allegorical appearing at even earlier dates, until eventually, with the question of the ultimate origins of textual and non-textual allegory alike, we walk out of recorded history altogether, passing into a lost world of ancient religious, ritual, and divinatory practices—a world in which we are all foreigners now, where epistemological concerns multiply exponentially, and where further significant progress can only come through sustained cross-disciplinary collaboration.

Further questions then await us once we turn in the other direction, for although it reaches so deep into the past, allegory's history extends into the present day. Indeed, if there is one single greatest discovery of modern allegory studies, it is the sheer scale of the phenomenon that it has brought to light. Even before anything further is said about it, this is in itself a momentous step forward, conclusively overturning the previous, rise-and-fall paradigm of allegory's history, which saw it as emerging in the decadent twilight of pagan antiquity and, especially, the Christian "Middle Ages," and then declining with the onset of Western cultural and aesthetic modernity in the "Renaissance" or, still more explicitly, "early modern" period. How such a distorted view of allegory's history came into being cannot be fully recounted here, but it comes down to a star-crossed convergence of the following three tendencies in the intellectual culture of the mid-nineteenth century: the radical anti-allegorical impulse that receives its classic statement in Romantic aesthetics, accompanied by a growing sense that the heyday of allegorical art belongs to a past historical period, however defined and delimited; the limited and narrowly disseminated knowledge of the allegorical tradition in classical antiquity; and the impulse, epitomized by the seminal work of the Swiss historian Jacob Burckhardt, to establish "the Renaissance" as a comprehensive period in European cultural history, and furthermore, as the period which inaugurates the modern stage of that history.^{ix} Once all three parameters were in place, allegory was no longer one problem among others. For Burckhardt's model to work, the presence on either side of the so-called Middle Ages of a doctrine now seen as the very antithesis of Western modernity simply could not be

allowed. Accordingly, not only was allegory to be quarantined to these Middle Ages, but was to become “essentially” medieval: the distillate of this entire benighted millennium of Western history, during which European human beings lost their sense of individual identity, and came to express themselves in this debased and now alien artform. “The Middle Ages were essentially the ages of allegory.”⁶

While still widely influential, this account of allegory’s history is no longer borne out by the best work on the subject. Of particular significance here has been the rise of scholarship on allegory in the classical period, dispersing the mirage of an allegory-free antiquity reborn in an allegory-free modernity. Here also, however, the breakthrough has come only very recently, as classical studies had long been dominated by this same anti-allegorical bias, tending to dismiss the tradition as a minor, late, and unrepresentative element in the intellectual and aesthetic culture of the period.^x Over the past several decades, however, a wealth of scholarship has appeared, including translations of major texts previously inaccessible to the non-specialist reader.^{xi} Much the same goes for the presence of allegory in the period following the so-called Middle Ages: here also specialist scholarship has long since established that allegory continues to thrive across the imaginary boundary, and we authors challenging the established periodization as early as the 1930s—and here also considerable institutional resistance is yet to be overcome before this work is fully integrated into wider historical and theoretical perspectives.^{xii} Intellectually, however, the battle can be confidently declared as won. Embraced or ignored, the evidence has accumulated to the point of no return, and where we once saw a medieval rise and a postmedieval decline, we now see essential continuity of the allegorical tradition throughout the first two and a half millennia of European cultural history.

This is particularly the case with allegorical interpretation: Homeric allegoresis is an exemplary case, extending unbroken across this entire period, but clusters of allegorical commentary also accrete around numerous other works and authors, most notably those of Hesiod, Virgil, and Ovid.^{xiii} Allegoresis also underlines much of the mythographical tradition, focusing not on a particular author or work but the mythical figures and motifs themselves, drawn from any number of sources, from Herodorus of Pontic Heraclea (*fl.* 400 BCE) to the widely influential sixteenth-century syntheses of Vincenzo Cartari and Natale Conti, and

⁶ *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* [1860], tr. Middelmore [1878] (1945; repr. London, 1995), 262. On the supposed inability of “medieval” Europeans to experience themselves as individual beings, see *Civilization*, 87: “In the Middle Ages . . . [m]an was conscious of himself only as a member of a race, people, party, family, or corporation—only through some general category.”

beyond.^{xiv} Particular strands of poetic and/or mythographical allegoresis emerge with some schools of classical and postclassical philosophy, notably the Stoic and the Neoplatonic, as well as some esoteric traditions, such as that which searched for hidden wisdom in the yet undeciphered Egyptian hieroglyphs. With the advent of Christianity, immense energies also begin to be channeled into biblical allegoresis, one of the new faith's paradoxical inheritances—partly directly and partly through Jewish intermediaries like Philo of Alexandria—from its pagan adversaries, eventually giving rise to complex, multi-sense models, underpinned by a range of conceptual and terminological developments.^{xv}

Allegorical composition also moves into new territories. Intentional allegory comes to be closely associated with two generic clusters, both epitomized in later classical and postclassical times by the works of Virgil: that of pastoral poetry and related kinds of literature, often used to convey political, satirical, autobiographical, and other forms of broadly topical allegory; and that of epic and its descendants and affiliates (metamorphoses, epyllia, romances), also lend themselves to “higher”—moral, philosophical, religious—allegorical meanings.^{xvi} We also see the rise of what we now call “personification allegory”: the mode of allegorical representation characterized by episodic and especially sustained use of personified abstractions, both of which can be dated to very early times, particularly in the visual arts.^{xvii} In the literary sphere, enough survives of Cratinus's *Wine-Flask* (423 BCE) to show that it featured the playwright himself as the protagonist, cheating on his wife Comedy with his mistress Drunkenness, making it not only a genuine example of fifth-century personification allegory, but presumably also the earliest instance in European literature of the *psychomachia*, an allegorical genre which plays a prominent role in the tradition's later stages.^{xviii} Also of interest here are instances of overlap between literary and visual traditions, most notably in *The Tabula of Cebes*, the earliest known deployment of literary personification allegory on a scale comparable to later developments in the tradition, albeit in ekphrastic form.^{xix} Personification allegory is thus a long-established and fast-developing literary and artistic mode by the time it moves into the Christian tradition, with virtues and vices engaging in combat for the believer's soul in Prudentius' *Psychomachia* (c. 408–09), inaugurating a widespread and enduring taste for such works in postclassical European literature, typically featuring sustained use of personified abstractions in palpably non-realistic (undifferentiated, visionary, oneiric, fantastic . . .) settings, with a range of stock motifs and devices (psychomachias, dream-visions, pilgrimages, quests, dialogues . . .) alongside more original creations.^{xx} In the literary sphere, the tradition informs some of the most widely influential works of the period, often thought of as the “classic” expression of

literary allegory: among others, Martianus Capella's *Marriage of Philology and Mercury* (c. 410–39), Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* (c. 524), Alan of Lille's *Plaint of Nature* (c. 1150–70) and *Anticlaudianus* (c. 1180–85), Jean de Meun and Guillaume de Lorris's *Romance of the Rose* (c. 1260–85), Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy* (c. 1307–21), William Langland's *Piers Plowman* (c. 1370–90), Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (1590–96), and John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678–84).

Personification allegory in the visual arts also thrives throughout this period. The Princeton *Index of Medieval Art* records 227 different personifications between the early Christian period and the fifteenth century, encountered in over a thousand artworks, realized in twelve of the *Index*'s seventeen media categories.⁷ Here also we find original efforts alongside those based on established topoi (the Wheel of Fortune, the Seven Deadly Sins, the Four Ages of Man . . .) as well as combination with classical, biblical, and contemporary figures and motifs, all capable of providing additional layers of allegorical and topical reference. Further encouraged, from the fourteenth century onward, by the most intense and enduring of the “renaissances”—the periodic intensifications of classicist sentiment that punctuate the elite culture of postclassical Europe—the taste for visual allegory continues throughout the final three premodern centuries, producing, among countless others, such iconic works as Sandro Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* (c. 1485), Albrecht Dürer's *Melancholy I* (1514), or Peter Paul Rubens' *Horrors of War* (c. 1638).^{xxi} The spread of print disseminates the allegorical image to a previously unprecedented degree, including works combining visual and textual elements, as in the widely influential vogue of the emblem, inaugurated by Andrea Alciato's *Book of Emblems* (1531).^{xxii} Finally, all these elements—interpretive and compositional, textual and visual—coalesce with the performative, architectural, and musical arts in the sphere of drama and spectacle: moral plays, *autos sacramentales*, interludes, masques, pageants, entries, tableaux, and still other kinds of dramatic and semi-dramatic entertainments.^{xxiii} It is perhaps in the most elaborate of such multimedia spectacles, benefitting from lavish civic or aristocratic patronage, that we get the ultimate expression of the premodern allegorical tradition in all its scope and variety—the premodern allegorical *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

The most powerful testimony, however, to allegory's continued presence in premodern European culture resides in an absence—an absence, namely, from this entire period of the now-familiar notion of allegory as an identifiable literary and artistic kind or

⁷ *Virtue and Vice*, ed. Hourihane (Princeton, 2000).

genre. Premodern authors did not write—did not seem themselves as writing—allegories. They wrote poems and stories of various generic affiliations, which may or may not, comprehensively or episodically, use or contain allegories.^{xxiv} It is easy to misinterpret this circumstance as an argument against the continuity thesis—if allegory is really so central to European premodernity, then why does a class of allegorical writings and artworks remain lexically invisible throughout this period? The opposite is, in fact, the case: the category fails to emerge precisely because allegory is too deeply embedded in premodern poetic thought for it to be meaningfully distinguished from other generic concepts, and ultimately, from imaginative literature as such.

The clearest evidence of this comes from the history of premodern literary theory. Classical sources offered a range of possibilities here, from pro-allegorical at the one end to anti-allegorical at the other. Even here, however, while convincing arguments can be made for implicit anti-allegorism in the surviving work of at least three major figures—Aristotle, Aristarchus of Samothrace, and Philodemus of Gadara—the absence of explicit and unequivocal anti-allegorical sentiment is striking.^{xxv} Yet whatever is to be said of the classical period, the narrowing of options in postclassical times is unmistakable. Nothing is so alien to representative literary thought of this period as Aristotle’s conviction that “poetry does not have the same standard of correctness as politics, or as any other art,” or Philodemus’s insistence on the indivisibility of poetic form and content.⁸ As such positions fade from view, poetry increasingly comes to be classified as either a branch of philosophy, or of the verbal arts of the trivium, especially rhetoric, or of both—a form of philosophy with respect to its content, and of the verbal arts with respect to its form.^{xxvi} This conception then maps directly on the period’s prevailing functional definition of poetry, typically expressed in terms of a Horatian imperative to “teach and delight,” which in turn maps seamlessly onto the notion of allegory.⁹ Indeed, the allegorical conception of imaginative literature that comes to dominate premodern literary thought is nothing else but the scheme’s fullest expression, taking the twin impulses of disciplinary subordination and categorical form-content opposition to their logical conclusion—the literary work itself becomes a covering of rhetorical “delight” cast over a body of philosophical “teaching.”

⁸ Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1460b; as Halliwell clarifies here, “politics” (*politikē*) is not to be understood in the modern sense but as a “general term for the ethics of both public and private life.”

⁹ Horace, *Ars poetica*, ll. 333–44: “Poets aim either to benefit, or to amuse, or to utter words at once both pleasing and helpful to life,” yet “He has won every vote who has blended profit with pleasure.” On the immense influence of Horace’s work, see Herrick, *The Fusion of Horatian and Aristotelian Literary Criticism* (Urbana, 1946); Weinberg, *History*, chs 3–6.

This tendency is further reinforced by the concerns raised for premodern literary theorists from Plato onwards by the perceived excesses of the literary and artistic imagination, especially in its highest and lowest reaches. This is why epic and pastoral, representing precisely these highest and lowest reaches—the actions, respectively, of gods and heroes, and of shepherds and farmers—come to be seen as allegorical by tradition and eventually by definition.^{xxvii} And this in turn is why, beginning with Petrarch, representative literary theorists of the c. 1350–1650 period come to see allegory as a defining criterion of imaginative literature as such. Not that every single work was necessarily understood as allegorical: with the middle register in particular—the realm of the probable or at least the possible, below that of the heroes and above that of the shepherds—the categories of the example and the moral were often sufficient. Any comprehensive theory, however, had to account for the full spectrum of poetic imagination, and this meant that imaginative literature, at the highest level of abstraction, had to be declared allegorical by definition. “The poets,” Petrarch writes in 1355, “strive to adorn the truths of the world with beautiful veils [in order for them to elude] the ignorant masses”; more than two centuries later, this is still the view of Philip Sidney, asking his reader “to believe, with me, that there are many mysteries contained in Poetry, which of purpose were written darkly, lest by prophane wits it should be abused.”¹⁰ Here again the Burckhardian model is not only invalidated but turned on its head: it is precisely during the so-called Renaissance that we witness the fullest development of a theory of imaginative literature which conflates it with its “essentially” medieval antithesis—and consequently precludes the development of a class that would formally separate allegorical literature from literature at large.

Wherever we look, then, allegory plays a major role in Western culture from classical antiquity to the eighteenth century. However, as we rewrite our histories to accommodate this staggering continuity, two potential lapses must be avoided. Firstly, continuity must not be mistaken for stasis. Even the barest outline, such as provided above, should be sufficient to indicate that while continuously present throughout the premodern West, allegory undergoes a number of important developments and transformations during this period. Secondly, we must not let this dynamic continuity overshadow the fact that the allegorical tradition is also underlined by a struggle between broadly pro- and anti-allegorical tendencies. Although it is

¹⁰ Petrarch, *Invectives*, ed. and tr. Marsh (Cambridge, MA, 2003), 1.37; Sidney, “*An Apology for Poetry*,” ed. Shepherd, 3rd ed., rev. Maslen (Manchester, 2002), 116. Cf. the passage quoted by Silk below, XXXn73. Note that these statements do not refer to particular literary works, genres, or modes, but literature as such. Cf. Treip, *Allegorical Poetics*, 18–22; Borris, *Allegory and Epic*, 23–6, and, on Sidney’s *Defence* in particular, 110–14. Similar statements recur throughout the c. 1350–1650 period.

often useful to view them separately, ultimately these are most profitably studied in tandem, as two faces of a single theoretical and historical complex.

The problem is well-illustrated by the emergence of anti-allegorical positions in Christian biblical hermeneutics. As already noted, biblical allegoresis plays an essential role in the consolidation and development of the Christian tradition. From the earliest times, however, it coexists with alternative and indeed contrary approaches, derived in part from the Jewish exegetical tradition, and aimed precisely at countering and forestalling accusations levelled at allegorical reading—that it devalues or even negates a work’s literal sense and substitutes arbitrary fabrications for the intended authorial meaning.^{xxviii} One such approach, usually designated as “typology” in modern scholarship, reconceptualizes biblical hermeneutics as one of “things” rather than “words”: a hermeneutics of divinely ordained events rather than the text in which these events happen to be recorded, now understood to have only a single, literal sense.^{xxix} Another reconceptualizes the notion of the literal sense itself, either by redefining it as the intended (rather than the manifest) sense, or by positing multiple literal senses, or some combination of both.^{xxx} A classic example of such hermeneutics in its fully developed form is found in one of the most widely influential works of Christian theology, the *Summa theologiae* (c. 1265–74) of Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas begins with a straightforward distinction between a “literal” and a “spiritual” sense:

The author of Holy Writ is God, in whose power it is to signify His meaning, not by words only (as man also can do), but also by things themselves. So, whereas in every other science things are signified by words, this science has the property, that the things signified by the words have themselves also a signification. Therefore that first signification whereby words signify things belongs to the first sense, the historical or literal. That signification whereby things signified by words have themselves also a signification is called the spiritual sense, which is based on the literal, and presupposes it.¹¹

However, as the discussion unfolds, out of this seemingly straightforward distinction a highly complex scheme emerges, utilizing both approaches highlighted above:

¹¹ *Summa Theologiae*, ed. Mortensen and Alarcón, tr. Shapcote (Lander, 2012), 1a.1.10. Several of the chapters discuss this same passage: see Silk (54–55), Ossa-Richardson (131–3), Gulya (150–1).

Now this spiritual sense has a threefold division. . . . [S]o far as the things of the Old Law signify the things of the New Law, there is the allegorical sense; so far as the things done in Christ, or so far as the things which signify Christ, are types of what we ought to do, there is the moral sense. But so far as they signify what relates to eternal glory, there is the anagogical sense. . . . [H]istory, etiology, analogy . . . are grouped under the literal sense. For it is called history, . . . whenever anything is simply related; it is called etiology when its cause is assigned . . . ; it is called analogy whenever the truth of one text of Scripture is shown not to contradict the truth of another. . . . The parabolical sense is contained in the literal, for by words things are signified properly and figuratively. Nor is the figure itself, but that which is figured, the literal sense. When Scripture speaks of God's arm, the literal sense is not that God has such a member, but only what is signified by this member, namely operative power.¹²

Although initially defined in straightforward typological terms, Aquinas's "spiritual" sense turns out to encompass a domain far broader than that of Old Testament prophecy, splitting into three subdivisions—where *allegory* designates precisely what modern scholars would call *typology*—and where the "literal" sense is redefined as the intended sense, with further four subdivisions.

What we are witnessing here is the tension between allegorical and anti-allegorical impulses in an advanced hermeneutical tradition approaching breaking point. What Aquinas wants is an approach free of even the slightest taint of allegory (in the modern sense, as opposed to typology), which leads him to posit the simplest textual hermeneutics imaginable, distinguishing only a single, literal sense—"For many different senses in one text," he posits with Aristotle, "produce confusion and deception and destroy all force of argument."¹³ What Aquinas needs, however, is for his alternative hermeneutics of events to offer approximately the same range of signification, which can only be achieved by expanding the remit of the "spiritual" sense far beyond typology proper, and submitting the notion of the "literal" sense to the most extraordinary conceptual and terminological contortions. This same tension would continue to smoulder throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, to then erupt with unprecedented force—because now cutting across the new confessional divides—with

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1006b: 'not to have one meaning is to have no meaning'.

the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Protestant exegetes in particular would come to associate *allegory*, in both term and concept, with Roman Catholicism—an association sometimes welcomed by Roman Catholic exegetes themselves, who saw themselves as upholding a legitimate hermeneutic tradition reaching back to Paul of Tarsus, and made much of his use of the term in Galatians. Mutual accusations of hermeneutic heresy, along with tensions between competing currents within the folds of Roman Catholic and Protestant orthodoxies, are a commonplace of the theological and controversial literature of the period, and they reverberate—although not always in easily predictable ways—in secular hermeneutics. The discussion returns to these developments below. In the meantime, the above should suffice to illustrate the significance of the second caveat: in tracing allegory’s premodern history we are not dealing simply with continuity, but with a dynamic as well as contested and conflicted continuity—an evolving tradition shadowed by an evolving counter-tradition.

II

At least in its broad outlines, the above account of the scope and continuity of premodern allegorical tradition should no longer be controversial. Now, however, we stand on the threshold of the eighteenth century, the period which sees an unprecedented rise in anti-allegorical sentiment culminating in the Romantic aesthetic of the symbol—to the best of our knowledge, the first fully articulated secular anti-allegorical aesthetic in history, which goes on to dominate Western art and thought until the mid-twentieth century.^{xxxi} Unsurprisingly, at this point opinions begin to differ considerably, including those represented in this volume. While this plurality can be disorienting, it is also symptomatic of a healthy and fast-developing field of study, and no attempt is made here to sweep it under a thick carpet of editorial equivocation. On the contrary, where the preceding section of this Introduction has sought to establish such common ground as has arguably been reached, this one will attempt to foreground some of the principal polemical axes which traverse the field.

It may seem we are still faced with an essentially historical question. Now that the Burckhardtian rise-and-fall model has been discarded, what is to replace it? Four competing narratives can be discerned in the current scholarship: an alternative decline-of-allegory narrative, a transformation-of-allegory narrative, a persistence-of-allegory narrative, and a return-of-allegory narrative. The first of these actually takes us back to work preceding the Burckhardtian paradigm, and has never been entirely displaced by it, especially in work

focusing on the post-1700 period. According to this narrative, allegory does decline with the onset of modernity, but it is accepted that the tradition is present across the full sweep of Western premodernity, with the watershed pushed forward to the eighteenth century.^{xxxii} The other three narratives are a much more recent, twentieth-century development. The persistence narrative denies that allegory experiences a modern decline and tends to view it as an aesthetic and perhaps even cognitive universal, liable to manifest itself, in one form or another, in any historical period.^{xxxiii} The transformation narrative similarly rejects the interpretation of allegory's fate in modernity as simply one of decline, but accepts that it undergoes a fundamental turn of direction at this point, severing it conclusively from the premodern tradition.^{xxxiv} Finally, the return narrative accepts a modern decline but sees it as a short-lived anomaly, lasting roughly from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-twentieth century, when allegory is restored to its rightful place in both artistic practice and critical discourse.^{xxxv}

Obviously, if taken at face value, these four narratives are mutually exclusive. Allegory either declines or does not decline at the onset of modernity. If it declines—which eliminates the persistence and transformation narratives—then it either does or does not undergo a postmodern restoration. If it does not decline—which eliminates the decline and return narratives—then it either does or does not undergo a fundamental transformation in this period. But should we be taking all this at face value? Are we really dealing with competing views of allegory's history here, and thus a problem that could be solved by further accumulation and assessment of the historical evidence? Or are we dealing with a more fundamental, theoretical problem, one of definition and terminology? It seems incontrovertible that the latter is in fact the case, and that much of our disagreement begins with, or ultimately returns to, the term *allegory* itself. So far in this Introduction, this term has been used with only the minimal caveats and qualifications, as if its meaning was obvious or at least a matter of broad consensus. Now it is time to acknowledge that there is no such consensus in modern allegory studies: no universally accepted answer to the basic theoretical question at stake—what, precisely, is *allegory*? And yet, any historical account of the subject, including the one offered above, inevitably relies on some theoretical understanding of this term, just as any theoretical account inevitably projects a certain historical framework, even where these are only tacitly assumed rather than explicitly argued.

Consequently, a central imperative in contemporary allegory studies is, or ought to be, that of bringing theoretical and historical perspectives on the subject into meaningful alignment. At present, this effort is impeded by two divergent tendencies, behind which we

can discern the remnants of the old scholar-philosopher divide. On the one hand, there is a tendency to expand the scope of the term *allegory* to the point where its historical usefulness becomes compromised. As this development is traced in Michael Silk's chapter in this volume, there is no need to discuss it in detail here; suffice it to say that by the 1980s it was possible to speak of allegory as the "trope of tropes, representative of the figurality of all language, the distance between signifier and signified."¹⁴ For example, Frye's "sliding scale" is only a logical consequence of his exceptionally broad definition of "allegory" in both its compositional and interpretive aspects: "A writer is being allegorical whenever it is clear that he is saying 'by this I *also* (*allos*) mean that'"; "all commentary is allegorical interpretation, an attaching of ideas to the structure of poetic imagery".¹⁵ The opposite tendency is to renounce theory altogether: to let history do the thinking for us and wait for the facts to speak for themselves. "The definition of allegory," we read, "is found in understanding its history," since "any theoretical statement about allegory that seeks to capture its essence can only be as good as the historical understanding on which it is founded."¹⁶ This is perfectly true, but the converse applies as well: any historical statement about allegory can only be good as the theoretical understanding on which it is founded, as the historical evidence will shuffle and reshuffle itself, emerge into and disappear from view, in relation to any such understanding that is brought to it. The question is whether we can successfully navigate between these two extremes, delimiting the notion in way that is both theoretically cogent and historically warranted.

This question cannot be fully asked, let alone answered, here, but some preliminary distinctions can indicate the broad parameters of the debate. To begin with, we are ultimately concerned with concepts rather than terms. Terminologically focused study is an indispensable step but it is ultimately a means to an end, which is the isolation of a coherent and historically attested concept, or at least a family of concepts, underlying the endless terminological variation encountered in the sources. In delimiting such a concept, it seems best to start at the far ends of the spectrum and work towards more feasible options closer to the middle. The widest definitions—from the classical "saying one thing and meaning

¹⁴ Fineman, "The Structure of Allegorical Desire," *October* 12 (1980), 48.

¹⁵ *Anatomy of Criticism*, 89–90. On the disjunctive sense of *allos* as the operative one in such *allos*-based compounds as *allēgoreuein*, see Whitman, *Allegory*, 263–4, on the disjunctive sense as the operative one in *allos*-based compounds like *allēgoria*: 'it [*allos*] inverts the sense of the second component [*agoreuein*]. . . . [T]his component was combined with the inverting word *allos* *Allos* combined with *agoreuein* by dropping its *os* suffix, as was common before words beginning with *a* + guttural, such as *agoreuein*. The composite word thus means to "speak otherwise," to "say other thing," to say other than that which is meant'.

¹⁶ *Cambridge Companion*, ed. Copeland and Struck, 1.

another” to the postmodernist “trope of tropes”—capture one essential criterion, a distinction between a primary and secondary level of signification, but must be narrowed considerably if the phenomenon is to be meaningfully distinguished from other types of semiosis or indeed semiosis as such. At the other end, we can begin by discarding the ancient and still widely influential rhetorical concept of the continued metaphor, historically biased towards the literary sphere and useful only in describing one particular form of allegorical composition. As we have known since Quintilian, allegory need not involve metaphor at all, continuous or otherwise, and we must begin from the premise that it can rest on nothing more than arbitrary convention.^{xxxvi} Also to be excluded, as criteria of primary definition, are the age-long but inessential and indeed contested association of allegory with personification as well as any attempts to define it as a genre. That allegory must be a category of broader compass than that of genre—Fletcher’s *mode* probably remains our best choice here—is obvious from the fact that we meet with allegorical and non-allegorical variants of established genres and subgenres, as well as the trans-generic kinds, traditionally distinguished in the literary sphere as lyric, drama, and epic.^{xxxvii} Finally, whatever definition we arrive at must be applicable across a range of media, covering not just the verbal but also the visual, plastic, dramatic, and musical arts.^{xxxviii}

The next step is to distinguish between any mode of signification fitting these initial parameters and any religious, mystical, philosophical, or psychological doctrines that may be particularly conducive to it, or to the broad environment in which it can thrive, but cannot be equated with that mode itself. One major example of such a distinction, between “allegory” and “typology” in Christian hermeneutics, has already been discussed above. In this tradition, “allegory” denotes a mode of signification ascribed to, or brought to bear on, a particular artefact—in this case a text, but in principle any man-made object designed, or perceived to be designed, for such a purpose. “Typology,” however, denotes a state of affairs existing independently of human agency and any artefacts such agency may produce. For someone who believes that the aborted sacrifice of Isaac by his father Abraham was a genuine historical event, divinely ordained to take place in order to foreshadow the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, any representation of this event—even if created by someone who does not share or indeed explicitly denies this belief—is inherently imbued with this secondary significance. Consider, by contrast, Elizabeth I’s conviction that, in the build-up to the Essex Rebellion of 1601, she was being allegorically represented in a play about her fifteenth-century predecessor Richard II, famously confiding in her archivist: “I am Richard II. [K]now ye not

that?”¹⁷ The queen may or may not have been right about this, but she is obviously not acting on the presumption that the secondary signification proceeds from something inherent in the nature of things, some transcendental reality independent of human agency.

Admittedly, in practice the distinction is not always as clear-cut as in these two examples, but it is theoretically fundamental and has been repeatedly recognized throughout the history of Western hermeneutics.^{xxxix} Beyond biblical typology, comparable categories have ranged from other premodern religious, philosophical, and esoteric models— (philosophical) realisms, celestial hierarchies, mystical bodies, books of nature, and so on— to the “natural supernaturalism” of the Romantic and ultimately those faint “correspondences” registering on the still more finely tuned instrument of the Symbolist. More recently, critical schools usually subsumed under the heading of “poststructuralism” have similarly directed their “symptomatic” readings at uncovering forces manifesting themselves in cultural artefacts independently of their authors’ conscious intentions—an approach ultimately indebted to Freudian psychoanalysis, including Freud’s own readings of Sophocles’ *Oedipus the King* and Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* as manifestations of a psychological mechanism named, after Sophocles’ play, the Oedipus complex.^{xl} Clearly a process of secularization is at work here: a gradual ontological emptying moving us from categories requiring belief in the supernatural to those perceived to be grounded in material and social reality. Common to all of them, however, is that they are understood as independent of individual human agency, and there is solid theoretical ground as well as extensive historical precedent for distinguishing them from semiotic modes that do presume such agency. To simply equate the two, as is sometimes the case, is a cardinal error with far-reaching consequences: both theoretical, as it becomes impossible to distinguish “allegory” (or whatever other term we use) from non-“allegory,” and historical, as it becomes impossible to account for the fact that analogous semiotic modes pre-exist and post-exist the shelf life of any such metaphysical category, or that alternative modes co-exist with these during this period.^{xli}

Finally, a distinction is to be drawn with regard to the status accorded to the primary, “literal” sense in the various models which broadly fit this description. Here again it would be useful to explore a spectrum of possibilities, ranging from pure literalism on one side to pure allegorism on the other, but it is sufficient for the present purpose to condense this spectrum

¹⁷ The comment first appears in print in Nichols, *Bibliotheca topographica Britannica* (London, 1780–90), 1:525. For discussion, see Scott-Warren, “Was Elizabeth I Richard II?” *The Review of English Studies* 64 (2013).

into two basic categories already recognized in the scholarship, sometimes denoted by a pair of self-explanatory *ad hoc* terms introduced in an influential article by the Dante scholar Charles S. Singleton: “this-*for*-that” allegory and “this-*and*-that” allegory.¹⁸ However crude, Singleton’s terms capture another distinction which is not only theoretically justified but repeatedly encountered in the sources. Historically, we can indeed discern models positing a this-*for*-that transaction, where the primary sense is understood to exist solely or predominantly for the purpose of transmitting a more valuable secondary sense—solely, where the primary sense is understood to be *offensive* if taken in its own right; predominantly, where it is understood to be *insufficient*, although not offensive, and is typically treated as a gateway to the secondary sense.^{xlii} Equally, we can discern models premised on a this-*and*-that transaction, where the two senses are either held to be of equal value, or where the primary sense predominates, but does not eclipse or exclude the secondary.^{xliii}

Since the various phenomena discussed in the preceding passages have all been called *allegory* at one point or another, a purely empirical approach is impossible. We cannot depend on history to do our thinking for us, for we would simply end up with as many histories as there are such variant usages. Meaningful definitions, namely such as are both theoretically cogent and historically attested, are to be sought in further elaboration of the basic coordinates outlined above. Only such an approach will enable us to improve on the current maps of the field: to discern stable patterns underlining the terminological variation in the sources and relate these to the tendencies manifest in the scholarship, including the competing historical narratives. Essentially, the broader the definition, the flatter the history of allegory begins to look, ultimately ending in a persistence-of-allegory narrative. Conversely, as we narrow the definition, peaks and valleys begin to emerge, and depending on how we configure the various criteria—with vs without metaphor, textual vs trans-medial, generic vs modal, agentive vs non-agentive, this-*for*-that vs. this-*and*-that, and so on—we

¹⁸ “Dante’s Allegory,” *Speculum* 25 (1950), 80: “This allegory of the poets, as Dante presents it in the *Convivio*, is essentially an allegory of ‘this *for* that,’ of ‘this figuration in order to give (and also to conceal) *that* meaning.’ . . . / But the kind of allegory to which the example from Scriptures given in the Letter to Can Grande points is not an allegory of ‘this *for* that,’ but an allegory of ‘this *and* that,’ of this sense *plus* that sense.” Singleton is discussing incompatible conceptions of poetic allegory found in Dante’s *Convivio* and the Dante-attributed “Letter to Can Grande,” especially the former’s distinction between the “allegory of the poets” (i.e., allegory) and “allegory of the theologians” (i.e., typology), but the distinction has a wider import and is referenced in a number of recent studies: e.g., Suttie, *Self-Interpretation in “The Faerie Queene”* (Cambridge, 2006), chs 2–3; Machosky, *Structures of Appearing*, 106–7; Crawford, *Allegory and Enchantment*, 19–21. On Dante’s views, see, e.g., *Literary Criticism of Dante Alighieri*, ed. and tr. Haller (Lincoln, NE, 1973); *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism*, ed. Minnis and Scott, rev. ed. (Oxford, 1991); and in the present volume, Silk (xxx), Machosky (xxx).

arrive at some version of the three remaining, decline-, return-, and transformation-of-allegory narratives.

At present, the most important divide seems to be the one between this-*for*-that and this-*and*-that models. Historical precedent strongly favours the use of *allegory* to denote the former. The only domain where *allegory* comes to designate a this-*and*-that model with any consistency is that of biblical hermeneutics, where, as we saw with Aquinas, the term is sometimes used to designate what modern scholarship classes as typology. This, however, is a special case, arising from pressures specific to the Christian tradition, notably the fact that a single usage of *allegory* makes it into the biblical text itself—at Galatians 4:24, “Which things are an allegory” (KJV)—making many later Christian exegetes reluctant to disregard it or dismiss it as anomalous.^{xliv} Even in this tradition, however, a negative, this-*for*-that sense of *allegory* is never wholly removed from sight and erupts with renewed force in the work of Protestant Reformers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, becoming a proscribed term, attributed Satanic origins and associated in particular with perceived Roman Catholic heresy.^{xlv} Yet Protestant anti-allegorism in the sphere of biblical exegesis did not necessarily extend into the sphere of secular literature, as the work of Spenser and Bunyan, among others, testifies. In the secular sphere, we find no unambiguous instance of *allegory* being used to designate a this-*and*-that model of signification until such eighteenth-century authors as Giambattista Vico or Johann Winckelmann, who use it to denote what they perceive as expressions of pre-rational thought and/or artistic alternatives to rational thought—specifically, in Winckelmann’s case, a visual alternative to spoken language.^{xlvi} Such usage clearly foreshadows the Romantic theories of the symbol, by which it is eventually eclipsed, but later comes to exert an influence, especially through Winckelmann, on the seminal work of Walter Benjamin. Until Vico and Winckelmann, however—and between them and Benjamin, for the most part—*allegory* is typically used to designate this-*for*-that semiosis, and even specifically, from the Romantics onward, this-*for*-that semiosis *as opposed to* this-*and*-that semiosis, the latter designated by *symbol* or, depending on the context, *myth*, *archetype*, *theme*, or still further terms. Endless examples of such usage could be cited, from Heraclitus to Coleridge and beyond. What begins to change by the later seventeenth century, to then culminate in the c. 1800–1950 period, is the *value* assigned to this mode of expression. “[N]ow,” writes Joseph Addison in 1694,

the Mystick Tale, that pleas’d of Yore,
Can Charm an understanding Age no more;

The long-spun Allegories fulsom grow,
 While the dull Moral lies too plain below.
 We view well-pleas'd at distance all the sights
 Of *Arms* and *Palfries*, Cattel's, Fields and Fights,
 And Damsels in Distress, and Courteous Knights.
 But when we look too near, the Shades decay,
 And all the pleasing Lan-skip fades away.¹⁹

As one attends to the secondary sense, the primary “decay[s]” and “fades away.” This was a good thing for Heraclitus and is now a bad thing for Addison, but it is palpably the *same* thing.

It further seems incontestable that the etymologies of the two main terms at stake in modern usage, *allegory* and *symbol*, clearly gravitate toward this-*for*-that and this-*and*-that conceptions, respectively. Etymologically, *allegory* unmistakably connotes *hierarchical disjunction*: not merely “speaking otherwise”—the abbreviated etymology given above, and widely encountered in the literature—but as we should now further specify, “speaking otherwise than in the *agora*,” the public assembly and marketplace of the Greek city-state; speaking, then, otherwise than publicly and otherwise than democratically, in a coded language designed to transmit a message only to a social or cultural elite while concealing it from the masses.^{xlvii} By stark contrast, the etymology of *symbol*—*sumbolon*, from the verb *sumbalein* (“throw together, bring together, unite”), compounded from *balein* (“throw, put, place”), modified by the prefix *syn-* (“together”)—connotes precisely the opposite relationship, one of *non-hierarchical conjunction*.^{xlviii} Going by both history and etymology, then, it has hard to think of a more suitable pair of terms than *allegory* and *symbol* for denoting the this-*for*-that and this-*and*-that conceptions, respectively, and in addition to the heritage of Protestant anti-allegorism, the dominance of such usage from the Romantics to the mid-twentieth century must owe something to this fact.

Projected into history, a this-*for*-that understanding of *allegory* inevitably returns a decline or strong-transformation narrative. By contrast, what is common to the transformation narrative in its weaker forms, and to the return narrative in particular, is their divergence from this established usage: the use of *allegory* to denote a this-*and*-that transaction, typically accompanied by a revisionist historical argument attributing the innovation in use to the

¹⁹ “An Account of the Greatest English Poets,” in *The Annual Miscellany* (London, 1694), sig. X8r.

Romantics. Here the Romantics were the real revisionists, robbing *allegory* of its original this-and-that meaning and transferring it to the *symbol*, while the neoallegorists are merely putting things back in their rightful place. The earliest and most widely influential instance of this view appears in Walter Benjamin's 1928 study *Origin of the German Trauerspiel*. To Benjamin, the Romantic symbol is a "usurper" of a throne which rightly belongs to allegory: not, however, to allegory understood in this-for-that terms—"as a mere mode of signification," "a perfunctory illustrative technique," effecting a purely "conventional relation between a signifying image and its signification"—but allegory understood as "expression" in its own right, "as language is expression, as indeed writing is expression."²⁰ However, although Benjamin's work has been widely influential since its rediscovery in the 1960s, it is important to note that the same impulse emerges independently in the Anglo-American sphere.^{xlix} As early as 1956, Leyburn uses the same metaphor, denouncing the eighteenth-century "usurpation of the word allegory" and insisting on (genuine) allegory's ability to convey its meaning just as "actually" as metaphor.²¹ Leyburn is closely followed by Honig, whose *Dark Conceit* opens with a fully articulated polemic against

the nineteenth-century notion that allegory, a debased kind of symbolism, moves implacably along on two fixed lines of meaning and uses the narrative only as a convenient conductor for the moral lesson. The insistence on the "inside" and "outside" succeeds only in isolating a rather barefaced kind of personification allegory. A good allegory, like a good poem, does not exhibit devices or hammer away at intentions. It beguiles the reader with a continuous interplay between subject and sense in the storytelling, and the narrative, the story itself, means everything.²²

After this point, any number of similar statements could be cited.¹ By the 1970s the Benjaminian and non-Benjaminian strands begin to mix in various degrees, and by the 1980s,

²⁰ *The Origin of the German Trauerspiel*, tr. Eiland (Cambridge, MA, 2019), 165, 169. In the early decades of the twentieth century, we find a handful of anomalous, positive usages of *allegory* in authors who are all well-documented influences on Benjamin: Proust, Baudelaire, Heidegger (cf. *Allegory and Interpretation*, ed. Whitman, 295–6). The influence of Winckelmann, however, and the eighteenth-century background more broadly, seems worthy of detailed further scrutiny. Although Benjamin quotes Winckelmann only to disagree with him or read him against the grain, the *Origin's* central contention that allegory is rightly understood in radically this-and-that terms, as "expression"—and note the addition here: "as language is expression"—seems directly indebted to Winckelmann's *Versuch*, 2: "Die Allegorie ist, im weitläufigsten Verstande genommen, eine Andeutung der Begriffe durch Bilder, und also eine allgemeine Sprache" ("Allegory, in the broadest sense, is the indication of concepts through images, and thus a general language").

²¹ *Satiric Allegory*, 4.

²² *Dark Conceit*, 5. Cf. Honig, 'In Defense of Allegory', *The Kenyon Review* 20 (1958).

the term is further extended to characterize the “symptomatic” readings in various strands of “poststructuralist” criticism, a usage originating with Fredric Jameson’s *Political Unconscious* and, especially, Paul de Man’s *Allegories of Reading*.²³ It is clear, however, that the impulse originally emerges independently with thinkers of very different backgrounds on both sides of the Atlantic.

This revisionist impulse has been a mixed blessing for allegory studies. It has injected a polemical energy into the field and significantly expanded its scope. On the other hand, it has also created conceptual and terminological divides which have impeded progress in other respects, notably in further refining our historical understanding of the phenomenon. Now that its heyday is behind us, it is time to take stock and see if further consensus can be reached. For one thing, it would be good to retire the fallacious “usurper” narrative often offered in support of the revisionist argument, according to which allegory was widely understood in positive, this-*and*-that terms in the premodern period, until redefined in negative, this-*for*-that terms by eighteenth-century and Romantic critics, with its this-*and*-that qualities transferred onto the “usurping” category of the symbol. Whatever else is to be said of the revisionist impulse, this is plainly a fantasy: no impartial review of the evidence will support it and no coherent history of the subject can ever be built on this basis. Nor do the revisionists need this narrative, for they have a much more potent weapon in their arsenal. The decisive determinant of a word’s meaning is neither its etymology nor its history but its usage, and there can be no doubt that the revisionist usage of *allegory* has met with considerable and lasting success across a number of domains in the humanities and social sciences. Indeed, it is precisely the *lack* of historical precedent that makes this such an interesting development, and for the traditionalists to simply dismiss such usage as erroneous—as not “really” allegory—is as futile as for the revisionists to deny how radically innovative it demonstrably is. The real question for both camps is that of where this impulse has come from. Why has a significant number of informed authors, across multiple national traditions and disciplinary specializations, felt compelled to not merely change but reverse the term’s meaning, employing it to designate precisely the kind of semiosis it had been previously invoked to oppose?

The sooner we work through this question and its implications to further levels of conceptual and terminological consensus, the better equipped we will be to tackle various issues that require our attention in future work on the subject. To be sure, consensus in these

²³ See n. [xlii](#).

points does not necessarily entail consensus in others, and is in fact bound to disturb the present stalemate between “traditionalist” and “revisionist” schools of thought. For what this editor’s opinion is worth, few things would be more beneficial to the field as it now stands. The wider one reads through the literature, the harder it becomes to escape the feeling that allegories studies are overdue not merely for open and constructive dialogue but an episode of full-blown, no-holds-barred polemic—but only if this polemic proceeds from a genuine interest in overcoming the impasses outlined above and reaching further common ground between divergent approaches. In addition to illustrating the parameters of current research in the field, it is hoped that the ensuing pages, in which many of these disparate approaches are represented, may encourage such dialogue and polemic.

III

Overall, the volume proceeds in a loosely chronological manner, yet within their boundaries, many of the chapters transcend the limits of a single disciplinary formation and/or established historical period. Exemplary in this respect is the opening chapter by Michael Silk, tracing the fortunes of “Allegory in Theory: From Demetrius to de Man”—which is to say, from its earliest attestations in Hellenistic rhetoric to its rehabilitation in contemporary literary and aesthetic theory. In addition to providing us with a comprehensive, nuanced, and provocatively critical survey of term’s history, drawing on both canonical and previously neglected sources, Silk’s chapter raises a number of questions central to any inquiry into the subject, expanding a number of points already touched on in this Introduction. How feasible is it to extend the term *allegory* to materials predating its emergence in the Hellenistic period, or use it interchangeably with alternative terminology encountered in later periods? Should we persist in associating, as we now do, allegory with personification, or does such an association—not to be traced, as Silk argues on the basis of new evidence here, beyond the later sixteenth century—obscure a fundamental divergence between these categories? What role in the term’s long and complex history is played by its etymology, with its suggestive, but perhaps misleading, gesture toward the “other”? Ultimately, “what is it about allegory that so attracts the theoretical gaze?”—the question that is at the heart of so much contemporary discussion of the subject, but is rarely raised against such a broad historical background as is offered here.

With Marco Nievergelt’s chapter, “The Failures of Allegory and the Allegory of Failure: Displacement, Time, and Subjectivity, c.1230–1600,” we move from theory to

practice, and into a corpus of works which are often considered to be the “classic” expression of allegory in the literary sphere: poems like *The Romance of the Rose*, *Pearl*, or *Piers Plowman*—all discussed, along with further examples, here—which clearly fascinated educated European readers of their time, but have since become one of the most laboriously acquired tastes in all of literary history. Observing literary allegory in what is arguably its natural habitat, Nievergelt finds that our modern intuitions are in one sense correct, yet in another sense, deeply misguided. In criticizing allegory’s “failure to provide more than a transitory, phantasmatic vision” and “to signify in some truthful, definitive, ‘translucent’ or ‘tautegorical’ manner,” Romantic and post-Romantic critics highlight a genuine, integral feature of the works in question, yet prove unable to recognize it as such, submitting these works to alien standards of ontological consistency, generic decorum, and aesthetic achievement. Drawing on broader perspectives in allegory studies as well as the history of subjectivity, Nievergelt stakes a position that transcends this post-Romantic impasse: allegories indeed fail, exposing themselves “as figments of an all-too-human poetic imagination that is emphatically denied any form of closure—narrative, cognitive, or ontological”—but they fail deliberately, inviting us “to engage in self-exploratory thought experiments in narrative form,” and revealing to us, in the process, important things about literary history as well as the history of the self.

With Kristen Poole’s “Stoics, Origen, Bacon: On the Interconnections of Physics and Allegory,” we move from the inner to the outer universe, where another counter-intuitive and revisionist thesis awaits. Traditionally, the seventeenth-century emergence of modern science, heralded by its Baconian manifesto, has been seen as one of the most significant forces behind allegory’s modern demise. By contrast, Poole proposes a very different genealogy, uncovering an obscured line of influence extending from the Stoic philosophers of late antiquity to Origen of Alexandria, one of the key figures in early biblical allegoresis, and from Origen to Francis Bacon, where allegory goes on to inform, rather than oppose, one of the formative statements of modern scientific methodology. Specifically, Poole argues, the Stoic idea of a continuum of matter, differing in degree but not in kind from the coarsest to the most refined, informs Origen’s account of the “cooling” of the divine intelligences following their original fall and other elements of his cosmology; this Stoic-derived cosmology then informs Origen’s view of biblical allegoresis, whose three senses correspond to the three key points on the ontological spectrum—for “[j]ust as man . . . is said to consist of body, soul and spirit, so also,” Origen deduces, “does the holy scripture”; finally, overlooked echoes of Origen’s thought are shown to inform prominent passages in Bacon’s

Advancement of Learning, in which an analogous conceptual structure emerges, once again “fold[ing] natural philosophy into allegorical reading.” Across the centuries, instead of a fundamental antithesis between allegory and science, Poole thus uncovers a deep conceptual affinity, in which “[t]he structure of the world, the process of investigation, and the nature of text become correspondent and interconnected.”

From these cosmic canvasses, Lisa Rosenthal’s “Painted Allegory’s Fortunes in Seventeenth-Century Antwerp” takes us into the art collector’s cabinet, looking at representations of Fortune and Opportunity in the works of four Flemish painters of the period: Peter Paul Rubens, the brothers Frans and Hieronymus Francken, and Adriaen van Stahlbeemt. On the one hand, Rosenthal carefully contextualizes these works in the social world of Counter-Reformation Antwerp, where the patronage of an emergent class of affluent collectors and “art lovers” gave rise to a bustling and sophisticated art market. On the other, Rosenthal’s approach has much in common with the revisionist perspectives in allegory studies, notably the “new materialism” advocated by Jeremy Paxson, urging an approach which views allegory not only in terms of “the didactic or ideological claims of its reigning conceit,” but is also “alert to the discursive and sensual powers of [its] embodied form.” The resulting perspective helps us understand a context-specific episode in the history of the subject—the process whereby the art market of a major Counter-Reformation centre “created new conditions for the production and consumption of allegorical paintings,” causing artists to deploy visual allegory “in novel ways that took into account the circulation of their art as commodities”—but also illuminates the individual works in question, showing how their personifications operate as “both material body and iconographic concept,” how they adapt to shifting “notions of moral, artistic, and mercantile value,” and how they “invite, and deliberately intertwine, visual delectation, connoisseurial knowledge, and allegorical interpretation.”

In “Allegory, Ambiguity, Accommodation,” Anthony Ossa-Richardson seeks out points where broader historical trajectories fail to add up, where theoretical models bend under the weight of specific polemical contexts, where tensions inscribed in the notion of allegory lead to interesting crossovers with such neighbouring concepts as ambiguity or accommodation, and crucially, where our focus moves from ideal to actual readers—readers “naïve, zealous and biased,” who “don’t do what they are supposed to do [but] make mistakes and misbehave,” and in doing so show us that “allegory is not such a dull and stable type as has been made out, and not so immune to ambiguity.” In arguing this case, the chapter first looks at how classic schemes of advanced biblical hermeneutics, epitomized by the work of

such figures as Thomas Aquinas, collided with intensely polemical impulses emerging from the Protestant Reformation and Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation, resulting in conceptual and terminological upheaval that is yet to be fully charted and a body of literature that remains understudied in the work in this field. The chapter then goes on to show that similar tensions also occur in the literary sphere, commenting on indicative passages in both premodern and modern authors: Spenser, Tolkien, and especially Tasso, whose well-documented vacillation over the presence of allegorical meaning in his own *Jerusalem Delivered* affords a particularly illustrative example of what meets us at that “ambiguous boundary between allegory and accommodation.”

Ossa-Richardson’s chapter ushers us into the eighteenth century, where we remain with Jason Gulya’s “[C]onsigned to a Florida for tropes’: Theorizing Enlightenment Allegory.” Gulya’s chapter addresses another major problem in the history of the subject: the problem of the interim, arguably, between the final stage of the premodern phase of the allegorical tradition and the new page turned by the anti-allegorism of the Romantics. What happens to allegory in this interim? Gulya sides with scholars who have contested the decline-of-allegory narrative, but also seeks to move beyond the apologetic argument to addressing specific ways in which allegory “adapted to the cultural changes accompanying the Enlightenment, including the increasing dominance of the empirical worldview, the process of secularization, and the rise of the modern aesthetic.” The first half of the chapter is devoted to clearing the theoretical terrain for such an inquiry: instead of approaching the period’s output with a preconceived notion of allegory, especially in its relation to such categories as personification or genre, we should do so “with a degree of open-mindedness . . . , treating it as a specific term but also as flexible enough not to exclude texts that contemporary readers and writers understood as allegorical.” Once such a perspective is adopted, we will find not only continuity but also a number of key innovations: a tendency towards generic experiment and fragmentation—for example, in inclusion of allegorical elements and episodes in otherwise non-allegorical works or increased emphasis on narrative detail—as well as an increased self-awareness underlining such writing, often expressing itself as parody but also leading to breakthroughs in critical and theoretical treatments of the subject, notably in the seminal critical debate on the use of “allegorical persons” in Milton’s *Paradise Lost* and the important “Essay on Allegorical Poetry” by John Hughes. Ultimately, Enlightenment authors were interested neither in “abandoning the form completely nor in simply carrying it over from medieval or Renaissance periods,” but in “picking and choosing

components of allegory and retooling them for an audience becoming increasingly invested in the here and now, instead of the heavenly and eternal.”

The role of allegory in mediating between the here and now and the heavenly and eternal, albeit in very different circumstances, remains the focus of Maria Cichosz’s “Late Modernist Allegory and the Psychedelic Experience,” combining research on the history of psychedelic culture and modernist art to show how allegory informs, and is informed by, the “reimagining of transcendence as immanence” that underwrites the “final iterations of the late modernist dream.” Cichosz starts from two paradigmatic statements, by two “allegorists who would not have called themselves such”: a writer, Aldous Huxley, and his famous mescaline trip of 6 May 1953, described in *The Doors of Perception*, and a painter, Morris Louis, whose work sees a contemporaneous breakthrough into techniques and motifs which come to be associated with the Color Field school of the 1950s and 1960s. Relating details of Huxley’s experiences and Louis’s technique to wider perspectives in the history of modernist art and the psychedelic counterculture, Cichosz unearths suggestive correspondences both at the level of specific images—the ladder, the grid, the veil—as well as the general impulse toward “transcendent vision . . . unambiguously and strategically anchored in materiality.” In this period, 1950s, Cichosz argues, this impulse gave rise to a new conception of allegory “tailored to the concerns of late modernism,” characterized by “a condensation of [its] transcendental power . . . into a single, charged, immanent plane.” The aim of the psychedelic trip or the Color Field canvas is no longer “to take us to fantastic realms, or reveal any hidden content, but merely to produce the same kind of experience that inspired them, necessarily rendered in allegorical terms because of its incommunicability: an experience of the Other World in this one.”

In “Allegory and the Work of Aboriginal Dreaming/Law/Lore,” Brenda Machosky relates allegory to another domain of transcendental experience which does not seem to have been previously discussed in this light: the “Dreaming” or “Dreamtime” of Australian Aborigines, these being the most common English renderings of a notion widely acknowledged as resistant to straightforward translation into Western concepts—a “mythic space,” in Machosky’s words, as well as a “long-standing law,” both “accessible through the mode of story or lore.” Acknowledging the epistemological and political issues involved, Machosky’s chapter carefully stakes out the possibility of “bridging these two knowledge systems” by relating Aboriginal “Dreaming/Law/Lore”—her own, deliberately disruptive coinage—to the notion of allegory developed in her previous, phenomenologically-inflected work on the subject. For Machosky, allegory is to be “extracted from western metaphysics . .

. and not conceived as a structure of meaning (saying one thing and *meaning* another thing)” but as a non-hierarchical, this-*and*-that mode of semiosis: “an alternate language that challenges and even disrupts metaphysics and the knowledge system it asserts so powerfully over all of western culture, philosophy, and literature.” So understood, allegory seems to open a portal for the Western scholar into the non-hierarchical, simultaneous experience of the “Dreaming/Law/Lore”: “a modality by which to suspend more comfortable and familiar ways of knowing,” enabling us “to engage with an absolutely different way of being . . . without appropriating it into a western context, or at least to put up a strong resistance to such an appropriation.” Starting from these premises, Machosky carefully explores this possibility in a discussion which ranges from a close reading of the “polysemous” model of allegory proposed in Dante’s (or Dante-attributed) “Letter to Can Grande” to the work of the contemporary Aboriginal novelist Kim Scott.

Finally, in their chapter on “Allegory and Bodily Imagination,” Raymond W. Gibbs, Jr. and Lacey Okonski tackle a number of fundamental issues involved in perceiving and processing allegorical meaning from the viewpoint of cognitive literary studies. In one of the most interesting developments in allegory studies of the past decades, work in this field has rehabilitated and reformulated the ancient rhetorical notion of allegory as continued metaphor in the light of the seminal advances in metaphor studies in cognitive linguistics and the cognitive and psychological sciences more generally. In this chapter, Gibbs and Okonski draw widely on this work, including their own previous studies, to challenge the long-established view of allegory as “a form of artistic expression that is often used to convey broad symbolic meanings about major themes in human experience [and] consequently often thought to transcend ordinary, mundane bodily sensations and actions.” On the contrary, they argue, allegorical expression “emerges from, and continues to be energized within, ordinary bodily functions in everyday life,” even as these functions are revealed to be “deeply socialized, enculturated, and . . . themselves full of allegorical significance.” In pursuing this thesis, the chapter draws on a diverse range of cross-period literary examples, from *Piers Plowman* to Adrienne Rich and beyond, while also building on a series of previous experimental studies, showing their subjects to discern allegorical meanings in literary works by instinctively engaging in “embodied simulation” of the literal actions represented in these works. This would seem to account for the tendency, reported in these studies, to discern allegorical meanings in literary works even when specifically directed not to go beyond their literal meanings, and conversely, to experience bodily sensations relating to these literal meanings even when specifically directed to ignore them and focus on the metaphorical

and/or allegorical level. All of this seems to point to the existence of a deeply seated “allegorical impulse,” grounded in our embodied cognition, and underlying artistic expression and everyday experience alike. Ultimately, “[t]he reason we so often express ourselves in allegory is that we live allegorical lives.”

Collectively, the contributions to this volume are intended to provide a representative sample of current work in the field, highlighting principal points of consensus and controversy and indicating a number of avenues to pursue in further work on the subject. Above all, however, the volume hopes to convey, particularly to the non-specialist, the profound significance of the phenomenon under investigation and the immense potential for future work along similar, collaborative lines. Competing attitudes to allegory and closely related phenomena have shaped our world to a far greater extent than is usually recognized, and the continuing need for studying these attitudes and their transformations, across their history in the West and beyond, cannot be overstated. However, if the advances of the past decades have shown us just how much remains to be done, they have also shown us that space for significant progress by individual researchers—the traditional and still dominant model of research organization in the humanities—is narrowing. As individual researchers, we can hope to master only a single or at best a limited number of domains covered by this subject, even as we grow increasingly confident that it is indeed a single subject we are dealing with: that underneath the immense variety of its manifestations over the ages there are stable theoretical concepts to be described and meaningful historical trajectories to be uncovered. This cannot be accomplished by any other means than focused and sustained cross-disciplinary collaboration, and it is hoped that this volume, continuing in what is by now a long tradition of such efforts in the field, further contributes to this end.

ⁱ The most recent English translation is in the Loeb *Early Greek Philosophy*, ed. Laks and Most (Cambridge, MA, 2016), 6:373–435. Unless otherwise noted, other classical works are also quoted from editions in the Loeb Classical Library: Aristotle, *The “Art” of Rhetoric*, tr. Freese (1926; repr. 2006); Aristotle, *‘Metaphysics’*, *Books I–IX*, tr. Tredennick (Cambridge, MA, 1933); Aristotle, Longinus, and Demetrius, *“Poetics”* . . . *“On the Sublime”* . . . *“On Style,”* ed. and tr. Halliwell, Fyfe, and Innes, rev. ed. (1999); *Fragments of Old Comedy*, ed. and tr. Storey (2011); Cicero, *De oratore*, in *De oratore: Books I–II*, tr. Sutton and Rackham, rev. ed. (1948) and *De Oratore: Book III*, tr. Rackham (1942); Cicero, *De finibus*, tr. Rackham (1914); *Fragments of Old Comedy*, ed. and tr. Storey (2011); *Greek Lyric*, ed. and tr. Campbell (1982–93); Horace, *Ars poetica*, in *Satires*, tr. Fairclough, rev. ed. (1929); Horace, “To the Ship of State,” in *Odes and Epodes*, ed. and tr. Rudd (2004); Plato, *Republic*, ed. and tr. Emlyn-Jones and Preddy (2013); Plutarch, “How the Young Man Should Study Poetry,” in *Moralia*, tr. Babbitt et al. (1927–2004); Quintilian, *The Orator’s Education*, ed. and tr. Russell (2002); Virgil, *Eclogues*, in *Eclogues*, tr. Fairclough, rev. Goold (1999).

ⁱⁱ Pherecydes, an early philosopher sometimes numbered among the fabled Seven Sages of Greece, appears to have read physical allegories into Greek myths and himself written a work of a similar nature. Theagenes, a “grammarian,” is reported to have composed a book of Homeric allegoresis, which included a reading of the *Iliad*’s theomachy as a conflict of natural phenomena and/or moral qualities. In addition to the literature in n. **xxx**, a compact recent discussion is Domaradzki, “The Beginnings of Greek Allegoresis,” *The Classical World* 110 (2017).

ⁱⁱⁱ *Early Greek Philosophy*, 2:155–205, 8:441–51 (Pherecydes and Prodicus); Plato, *Republic*, 514a ff.; *Greek Lyric*, fr. 6, 73, 208, 249, 305b (Alcaeus). The nature of topical allegory in the Old Comedy remains a subject of debate: see, e.g., Vickers, *Pericles on Stage* (Austin, 1997); Dover, “The Limits of Allegory and Allusion in Aristophanes,” in *Law, Rhetoric and Comedy in Classical Athens*, ed. Cairns and Knox (Swansea, 2004); Sidwell, *Aristophanes the Democrat* (Cambridge, 2009); Bakola, *Cratinus and the Art of Comedy* (Oxford, 2010); Vickers, *Aristophanes and Alcibiades* (Berlin, 2015). Cf. n. **xi** below.

^{iv} In the *Poetics*, 1458a, Aristotle identifies a poetic vice consisting in speech “compose[d] entirely” of “metaphors,” calling it *ainigma* (“riddle, enigma”). In Demetrius, *On Style* (second century BCE?), 99, Aristotle’s opposition is replaced with one between *allēgoria* and *ainigma*: “we should avoid a succession of [allegories], or our words become a riddle.” Later rhetoricians then conflate these two perspectives, reintroducing metaphor and expanding the dyad into a triad. See esp. Quintilian, *Orator’s Education*, 8.6.14, 8.6.44–50: “The first type [of allegory] generally consists of a succession of Metaphors When an Allegory is too obscure, however, we call it an Enigma. It is a fault in my opinion, . . . but the poets use it . . . and so sometimes do the orators.”

^v The earliest securely datable instances are in Philodemus’s (c. 110–40 BCE) *On Rhetoric*: see *The Rhetorica of Philodemus*, ed. and tr. Hubbell (New Haven, 1920), 297–9. Likely earlier is Demetrius, but the dating is uncertain: see further in Whitman, *Allegory*, 263–8, and Silk, in the present volume. The earliest recorded instance of the English word is in the Wycliffite translation of the New Testament, c. 1384: see *Oxford English Dictionary*, *allegory*, n., 1.

^{vi} The principal pre-*allegory* terms are *ainigma* and its derivatives, alongside *huponoia* (“deeper sense,” “covert meaning”), and *sumbolon* (“symbol”). Some relation between the rhetorical and hermeneutical aspects is implicit already in Aristotle’s treatment of the *ainigma* (cf. n. **xxx** and **xxx**), and Demetrius employs *allēgoria* in association and sometimes interchangeably with all three terms (*On Style*, 99, 123). Quintilian explicitly extends *allegoria* to literary works and distinguishes between allegory “with” and “without metaphor” (*Orator’s Education*, 8.6.44–7), enabling him to class as allegorical not only works meaningfully analysed as continued metaphor, such as Horace’s ode 1.14, “To the Ship of State,” but also Virgil’s self-representation in the person of the shepherd Menalcas (*Eclogues*, 5). A still wider range is found in Heraclitus, *Homeric Problems*, ed. and tr. Russell and Konstan (Atlanta, 2005), covering allegoresis, metaphor (esp. elaborate and/or sustained), figurative sayings of early philosophers like Heraclitus and Empedocles, and perceived instances of personification, such as Homer’s Eris and Ate (5.3–16, 24.1–7, 29.4–5, 37.4–6).

^{vii} For early instances of the etymology-derived definition, in both rhetorical and hermeneutical contexts, see, e.g., Cicero, *On the Orator*, 3.166: “the metaphorical use [not] of a single word but in a chain of words linked together, so that something other than what is said has to be understood”; Heraclitus, *Homeric Problems*, 5.1–2: “The word itself, which is formed in a way expressive of truth, reveals its own significance. For the trope which says [*agoreuōn*] one thing but signifies something other [*alla*] than what it says receives the name ‘allegory’ precisely from this.”

^{viii} See Griffiths, “Allegory in Greece and Egypt,” *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 53 (1967); Selden, “The Crossing Out of Egypt,” in *Allegorie*, ed. Haselstein. On cross-cultural comparisons, see Zhang,

Allegoresis, esp. ch. 1, and Machosky in the present volume. For an overview of comparable interpretive practices in Jewish, Islamic, Sanskrit, and Chinese traditions, see Most, “Allegoresis and Etymology,” in *Canonical Texts and Scholarly Practices*, ed. Grafton and Most (Cambridge, 2016), 72–4, with further references; as Most notes here, “caution, circumspection, and above all intense and sustained interdisciplinary and international discussion and collaboration are certainly called for.” In addition, see Klein, *Allegories of Desire* (Cambridge, MA, 2002); Latona, “Reining in the Passions,” *American Journal of Philology* 129 (2008); Heath, “Allegory in Islamic Literatures,” in *Cambridge Companion*, ed. Copeland and Struck.

^{ix} See further in Brljak, “The Age of Allegory,” *Studies in Philology* 114 (2017), and “Inventing a Renaissance,” in *Beyond Aristotle’s “Poetics” in the Italian Renaissance*, ed. Brazeau (London, 2020).

^x See esp. Struck, *The Birth of the Symbol* (Princeton, 2004), 17–18, challenging the “view expressed among some scholars that allegorism is rare in the extant evidence, outside the main currents of ancient reading, and generally concentrated in the later periods”: “At least half a dozen major allegorical tracts survive . . . , roughly equivalent to the number of major tracts that survive from the rhetorical tradition of reading, and allegorical commentary is as well represented in the scholia as other kinds. . . . Considering time distribution, a large group of allegorical works survives from the early and late Roman periods—but this is not much different from the distribution of tracts of rhetorical criticism. . . . [W]e have indication enough that allegoresis forms a more or less continuous strand of literary thinking through the classical, Hellenistic, and early- and late-Roman periods.” An important circumstance here is that one of the key documents, the Derveni Papyrus, was not discovered, published, and translated until 1962, 1982, and 1997, respectively: see “Der orphische Papyrus von Derveni,” *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 47 (1982); *Studies on the Derveni Papyrus*, ed. Laks and Most (Cambridge, 1997).

^{xi} Major studies include Coulter, *The Literary Microcosm* (Leiden, 1974); Lamberton, *Homer the Theologian* (Berkeley, 1986); Whitman, *Allegory* (Cambridge, MA, 1987); *Homer’s Ancient Readers*, ed. Lamberton and Keaney (Princeton, 1992); Brisson, *How Philosophers Saved Myths* [1996], tr. Tihanyi (Chicago, 2004); Ford, *The Origins of Criticism* (Princeton, 2004), esp. ch. 3; Struck, *Birth of the Symbol*; Ramelli and Lucchetta, *Allegoria* (Milan, 2004); Ramelli and Lucchetta, *Allegoria* (Milan, 2004); Del Bello, *Forgotten Paths* (Washington, 2007); Herren, *The Anatomy of Myth* (Cambridge, 2017), esp. chs 6, 9–11. For translations of key texts, see *Derveni Papyrus*; Heraclitus the Allegorist, *Homeric Problems*; Porphyry, *On the Cave of the Nymphs*, tr. Lamberton (Barrytown, 1983); Pseudo-Plutarch, *Essay on the Life and Poetry of Homer*, ed. and tr. Keaney and Lamberton (Atlanta, 1996); *Proclus the Successor on Poetics and the Homeric Poems*, ed. Lamberton (Atlanta, 2012); Cornutus, “*Greek Theology*,” ed. Boys-Stones (Atlanta, 2018).

^{xii} A major impulse here came from the scholarship at the intersections of art history and wider literary and intellectual perspectives, especially that associated with the so-called Warburg Circle, whose cross-disciplinary interests made it particularly attuned to the continuities suppressed in the Burckhardtian model. See, e.g., Sez nec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods* (1953; repr. New York, 1961); Klibansky, Panofsky, and Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy* (1964; repr. Nedeln, 1979); Wittkower, *Allegory and the Migration of Symbols* (London, 1977). On the shift away from Aby Warburg’s own, strongly Burckhardtian views, see Duits, “The Waning of the Renaissance,” in *Images of the Pagan Gods*, ed. Duits and Quiviger (London, 2009). In consequence of such work, the acceptance of the continuity of the allegorical tradition beyond the “Middle Ages” seems much more widely accepted in art history than in literary studies: see, e.g., Lisa Rosenthal’s chapter in the present volume, starting from the assumption of its “ubiquit[y]” in “[e]arly modern Europe.” For comparable perspectives in literary history, see Lewis, *The Allegory of Love* (Oxford, 1936); Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* [1948], tr. Trask (London, 1953); Tuve, *Allegorical Imagery* (Princeton, 1966); Allen, *Mysteriously Meant* (Baltimore, 1970). For early criticism of the established periodization, Allen, “Symbolic Color in the Literature of the English Renaissance,” *Philological Quarterly* 15 (1936); Sez nec, *Survival*; Lewis, *De descriptione temporum* (Cambridge, 1955); Panofsky, *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art* (1960; repr. New York, 1972), esp. 35.

^{xiii} See, e.g., Scully, *Hesiod’s “Theogony”* (Oxford, 2015); Jones, “The Allegorical Traditions of the *Aeneid*,” in *Vergil at 2000*, ed. Bernard (New York, 1986), and n. xxx below; Gerber, *Medieval Ovid* (New York, 2015).

^{xiv} See *An Anthology of Classical Myth*, ed. and tr. Trzaskoma, Smith, and Brunet (Indianapolis, 2004), 121; Vincenzo Cartari’s “*Images of the Gods*,” tr. Mulyran (Tempe, AZ, 2012); Natale Conti’s “*Mythologiae*,” tr. Mulyran and Brown (Tempe, AZ, 2006). Evidence of the approach applied to visual sources is also found at an early date, e.g. in the report of Chrysippus (third century BCE) in Origen, *Contra Celsum*, ed. and tr. Chadwick, corrected ed. (1965; repr. Oxford, 1980), 4.48; see Chadwick’s note for other reports of Chrysippus’s interpretation. The best unified discussion in English remains Allen, *Mysteriously Meant*, and material from a number of postclassical sources is compiled in Brumble, *Classical Myths and Legends* (London, 1998).

^{xv} The best known is the fourfold scheme epitomized by a distich traced to a c. 1260 work by Augustine of Dacia: “The letter teaches events, allegory what you should believe, / Morality teaches what you should do, anagogy what mark you should be aiming for.” A wealth of material is collected in de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis* [1959–64], tr. Seban and Macierowski (Grand Rapids, 1998–2009), although the discussion of this material is strongly influenced by de Lubac’s concerns as a practising Roman Catholic cleric and theologian, and thus not always reliable for scholarly purposes—cf. Contreni in *The Medieval Review* (1999); Hughes, “The ‘Fourfold Sense,’” *The Heythrop Journal* (2002); *T&T Clark Companion to Henri de Lubac*, ed. Hillebert (London, 2017), esp. ch. 8. Studies particularly useful to scholars interested in how developments in Christian scriptural hermeneutics fit in the broader dynamic of the allegorical tradition include Rollinson, *Classical Theories of Allegory and Christian Culture* (Duquesne, 1981); Simonetti, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church* [1981], tr. Hughes (Edinburgh, 1994); Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley, 1992); Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (1997; repr. Cambridge, 2001); Cullhed, *The Shadow of Creusa* [2006], tr. Knight (Berlin, 2015), esp. chs 1–2; Sandnes, *The Challenge of Homer* (London, 2009).

^{xvi} Intentionally allegorical uses of pastoral settings have been plausibly identified as early as the fourth century BCE, as well as in some of the earliest pastoral poetry proper, with at least a single instance in Theocritus: see Hamblin, “The Development of Allegory in the Classical Pastoral” (diss. Chicago, 1928); Starr, “Virgil’s Seventh Eclogue and Its Readers,” *Classical Philology* 90 (1995); Kronenberg, *Allegories of Farming* (Cambridge, 2009); Kronenberg, “Epicurean Pastoral,” *Vergilius* 62 (2016), with further references. On intentional episodic allegory in the *Aeneid*, see Hardie, *Virgil’s “Aeneid”* (1986; repr. Oxford, 1988). Hamblin identifies the eclogues of the Carolingian poet Moduin of Autun (fl. 790–840) as the first instance of self-acknowledged allegory in a pastoral work (“Development,” 74–5). For an early instance in a work from the epic/romance family, see *The “Lais” of Marie de France*, ed. and tr. Waters (Peterborough, ON, 2018), Prologue, ll. 9–16.

^{xvii} An important strand of scholarship has denied the existence of personification, in the modern sense of the word, in the classical period or even the whole of Western premodernity, arguing that the figures in question are not to be understood as representations of inanimate entities in animate and especially human or quasi-human form, but as actual divine, semi-divine, or daemonic beings. A classic example is Huizinga, *The Autumn of the Middle Ages* [1919], tr. Payton and Mammitzsch (Chicago, 1996), 244: “When we encounter the names Bel-Accueil, Doulce Mercy, Humble Requeste, it is only with difficulty that we think of something tangible. But for the people of the time they were realities clothed in living form and imbued with passion. They are perfectly comparable to Roman divinities that were also derived from abstractions, such as Pavor, Pallor, and Concordia, etc.” More recently, see, e.g., Escobedo, *Volition’s Face*; Crawford, *Allegory and Enchantment*. Although this work is useful in making us reassess the assumptions we bring to the subject, it is difficult to see how the larger claims can stand. In addition to the literature indicated in notes **xxx** and **xxx**, see the work on personification in the classical period, including Shapiro, *Personifications in Greek Art* (Kilchberg, 1993); Stafford, *Worshipping Virtues* (London, 2000); *Personification in the Greek World*, ed. Stafford and Herrin (Aldershot, 2005); Smith, *Polis and Personification* (Leiden, 2011). On the related questions of whether personification can be meaningfully classed as a form of allegory, and when the two categories come to be associated, see esp. Silk in the present volume, **xxx–xxx**. For a sense of the range of current work on personification, Bernini et al., *Personification across Disciplines* (program booklet for the international conference that took place at Durham University on 17–19 September 2018).

^{xviii} Other plays by Cratinus also employed allegory relying on mythical figures rather than personification: see the evidence for his *Dionysalexandros*, where “Pericles is very persuasively made fun of through innuendo [*emphasis*] for having brought the war on the Athenians” (*Fragments of Old Comedy*, 1:290–1, 1:362–75; cf. n. **xxx**). Episodic use is still earlier, arguably appearing already in Homer and Hesiod, and later on Virgil and Ovid, as well as in the Bible: recent discussions include Lowe, “Personification Allegory,” *Mnemosyne* 61 (2008), and Dodson, *The “Powers” of Personification* (Berlin, 2008).

^{xix} See *The Tabula of Cebes*, ed. and tr. Fitzgerald and White (Chico, CA, 1983). Cast in dialogue form, the work constitutes an interpretation of an allegorical painting attributed to an unnamed Pythagorean and Parmenidean sage, including such personifications as Deceit, Opinions, Desires, Pleasures, Fortune, etc. Cf. Cicero’s report of the Stoic philosopher Cleanthes (331/0–230/29 BCE), who “would tell his audience to imagine a painting representing Pleasure, decked as a queen, and gorgeously apparelled, seated on a throne; at her side should stand the Virtues as her handmaids, who should make it their sole object and duty to minister to Pleasure” (*De finibus*, 2.21.69).

^{xx} The fact that the *Psychomachia* is often erroneously cited as the origin of personification-allegory in European literature is another residuum of the Burckhardtian paradigm, where, again, allegory must be an invention of the Christian “Middle Ages.” It is therefore important to emphasize Prudentius’ continuity with

classical achievements in the mode. Particularly puzzling is absence from many discussions of the *Psychomachia*'s background of *The Tabula of Cebes*, including in the most recent edition by Pelttari (Norman, OK, 2019). Cf. Pelttari, *The Space that Remains* (Ithaca, NY, 2014), 84–96—even though elsewhere in this same chapter (97, 108) Pelttari actually discusses the lost Virgilian cento-translation of the *Tabula*, mentioned in Tertullian's *Prescription against Heretics*. It seems like further research, specifically focused on this issue, is necessary, especially in the light of the strong Virgilian influence in Prudentius' poem. For the time being, however, we know that a Virgilian-Latin version of the *Tabula*—the most directly comparable work to the *Psychomachia* to survive from antiquity—existed around the turn of the third century.

^{xxi} For a recent overview with further references, and a sampling of current scholarship, see *Early Modern Visual Allegory*, ed. Baskins and Rosenthal. On the contribution of the Warburg school, n. xxx.

^{xxii} For a modern edition of Alciato's work, see *Andreas Alciatus*, ed. Daly (Toronto, 1985). For recent perspectives on this vast and extensively researched tradition, *Emblem Scholarship*, ed. Daly (Turnhout, 2005); Daly, *The Emblem in Early Modern Europe* (Abingdon, 2014); *Emblems and the Natural World*, ed. Enenkel and Smith (Leiden, 2017); and on its literary influence, Daly, *Literature in the Light of the Emblem*, 2nd ed. (Toronto, 1998).

^{xxiii} In addition to the wealth of literature focusing on England, see *The Medieval European Stage*, ed. Tydeman et al. (Cambridge, 2001); *Everyman and Company*, ed. Gilman (New York, 1990); Brown, *Persistence of Allegory*.

^{xxiv} Quintilian classifies Virgil's self-representation as Menalcas as allegorical, but does not extend the term to the whole poem, or even the whole passage, in which "everything is explicit . . . except the proper name." Even when allegorical meaning is explicitly ascribed to a poem in its entirety—e.g., by the interpreter of the Derveni Papyrus: "from the first word <continuously> until his last one" (*Derveni Papyrus*, 6:388–91)—no generic category for such poetry is posited. At its widest, Heraclitus' usage of *allegory* extends to episodes of perceived allegorical meaning in Homer's poems, never to those poems themselves. The passage into the postclassical period only compounds the problem, for even here, alongside works now often taken to epitomize allegory in the literary sphere, a distinct generic class fails to emerge: cf. Nievergelt, "Allegory," in *The Encyclopedia of Medieval Literature in Britain*, gen. ed. Echard and Rouse (Chichester, 2017), 1:51.

^{xxv} Aristotle's surviving works contain no overt statement on the subject, but his silence on the subject is a meaningful one, his treatment of the *ainigma* in the *Poetics* (see n. xxx) has plausibly been read as a tacit rejection of the allegorical position, and more explicit treatments may well have appeared in works now lost: see Struck, *Birth of the Symbol*, esp. 63–8, and Mayhew, *Aristotle's Lost "Homeric Problems"* (Oxford, 2019), esp. ch. 10. On Aristarchus, see Schironi, *Best of the Grammarians*, esp. 140–1n81, 413–42; Nünlist, 'Aristarchus and Allegorical Interpretation', in *Ancient Scholarship and Grammar*, ed. Matthaïos, Montanari, and Rengakos (Berlin, 2011). As with Aristotle, Philodemus's hostility is nowhere explicitly voiced in the surviving material, but allegory seems categorically incompatible with a number of the views attested in the partially preserved *On Poems*: see esp. "Philodemus, *On Poems* Book 5," tr. Armstrong, in *Philodemus on Poetry*, ed. Obbink (New York, 1995). In addition to the essays in Obbink's collection, for a recent account of Philodemus's poetic theory, see McOsker, 'The Good Poem according to Philodemus' (diss. Michigan, 2015).

^{xxvi} See Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism* (Chicago, 1961), ch. 1.

^{xxvii} See, e.g., *Boccaccio on Poetry*, ed. and tr. Osgood (1930; repr. New York, 1956), 48–9, 53: "however much the heroic poets seem to be writing history . . . yet their hidden meaning is far other than appears on the surface"; "would [Petrarch] have taken such pains merely to represent Gallus begging Tyrrhenus for his reeds, or Pamphilus and Mitio in a squabble, or other like pastoral nonsense?" A new complete translation of Boccaccio's work is forthcoming in the I Tatti Library: *Genealogy of the Pagan Gods*, ed. and tr. Solomon, 3 vols (Cambridge, MA, 2011–). On later developments in the epic tradition, see Treip, *Allegorical Poetics and the Epic* (Lexington, KY, 1994); Borris, *Allegory and Epic in English Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge, 2000); on pastoral, n. xxx.

^{xxviii} To what degree these alternative approaches were an independent development, and to what a response to the criticism, both pagan and Christian, of the allegorical approach taken by early Alexandrian exegetes like Origen, remains a topic of debate in the specialist scholarship in this field—a debate broadly analogous to that on whether Homeric allegoresis arises as an creative or apologetic impulse in the early classical period. Either way, it is clear that biblical allegoresis came under fire early on, and both from without, for example by the second-century pagan philosopher Celsus (cf. n. xxx), and from within, notably by the school of biblical exegesis flourishing in the Syrian city of Antioch. In addition to the literature cited in n. xxx, for a recent discussion of Antiochene hermeneutics, see Perhai, *Antiochene "Thēoria"* (Grand Rapids, 2015).

^{xxix} For a representative discussion, see O’Keefe and Reno, *Sanctified Vision* (Baltimore, 2005), chs 4–5, and for a survey of the debate in patristic studies, Martens, “Revisiting the Allegory/Typology Distinction,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 16 (2008), 283–96. The distinction is essentially valid, provided two important caveats are kept in mind. The first is again terminological: the distinction does not always correspond to the terminology encountered in the sources, including instances where *allegory* is used precisely where modern scholarship would use *type*, and vice versa. The word *allegory* in fact enters the Christian tradition in precisely such an instance, employed at Galatians 4:24 to designate an interpretation of an Old Testament passage plausibly classified as typological: see further below, ^{xxx}. *Type* is biblical as well—e.g. at Romans 5:14, where Adam is ‘the figure [*tupos*] of him that was to come’—although *typology* is a modern coinage: the earliest instance recorded in the *OED* is from 1845. The second and more important caveat is conceptual: in the narrow sense, typology refers to the belief that some events recorded in the Old Testament (“types”) foreshadow events recorded in the New Testament (“antitypes”), but in later formulations the approach actually encompasses a much broader range of secondary signification: see further below, ^{xxx–xxx}, on such expansion in the work of Thomas Aquinas.

^{xxx} For a wide-ranging discussion of the literal sense, see Cummings, “Literally Speaking,” *Paragraph* 21 (1998). For still further developments, involving such neighbouring concepts as allusion, application, or accommodation, see Ossa-Richardson in the present volume.

^{xxxi} See, e.g., Todorov, *Theories of the Symbol* [1977], tr. Porter (Oxford, 1982), esp. ch. 6; Whitman, “From the Textual to the Temporal,” *New Literary History* 22 (1991); Halmi, *The Genealogy of the Romantic Symbol* (Oxford, 2007); and in the present volume, Silk (^{xxx}) and Nievergelt (^{xxx}).

^{xxxii} Historically, it is thus the Burckhardtian paradigm that is the alternative version of this original decline narrative, and as far as the premodern segment is concerned, recent scholarship has actually vindicated a view of allegory’s history first formulated in the mid-eighteenth century. For a representative example, see the seminal work of Thomas Warton, e.g. in his *Observations on the Faerie Queene of Spenser* (London, 1754), esp. sigs Gg2r–Hh4r, and *The History of English Poetry* (London, 1774–[1806?]), *passim*. For Warton, as for most of his contemporaries, the Western allegorical tradition begins in classical antiquity and expires around the turn of the seventeenth century. See further in Brljak, “Age of Allegory.”

^{xxxiii} Particularly influential here have been Frye’s comments in *Anatomy*, where instead of a history, we find “[w]ithin the boundaries of literature a kind of sliding scale, ranging from the most explicitly allegorical, . . . to the most elusive, anti-explicit and anti-allegorical” (91). Only a very general sense of historical development is to be discerned from the examples provided in illustration of this scale: ordered from left to right, they begin with Spenser and end with Dadaism, but in between we also find that Milton follows Bunyan, and Shakespeare follows Milton, while Melville and Hawthorne rub shoulders with James and Woolf. Frye was a major influence on early work adopting similar perspectives, notably Honig (see *Dark Conceit*, ix) and esp. Fletcher: if allegory is “a protean device, omnipresent in Western literature from the earliest times to the modern era,” its history becomes unthinkable, dispersing into “numberless small observations of changing literary convention” (*Allegory*, 1). More recently, similar perspectives are implicit in work on allegory in cognitive literary studies, where the rhetorical notion of the continued metaphor has taken on a new life. Paradigmatic is the early article by Crisp, “Allegory,” *Language and Literature* 10 (2001): if allegory is a cognitive universal, a “part of the natural continuum of metaphorical expression,” then we could study the history of “the interaction of a universal aspect of the human mind with . . . particular historical context[s]” (1–2)—but not, on any remotely comparable scale, of that universal aspect itself.

^{xxxiv} See, e.g., Kelley, *Reinventing Allegory*, 2: “I agree that [modernity] produced the end of allegory a symbolic mode based on Platonic ideas, Christian theology or syncretic versions of these and other belief symptoms. My argument in this book concerns rather the allegorical impulse in modernity that . . . has managed to survive in modernity’s fundamentally hostile climate”; Johnson, *Vitality of Allegory*, 2–3: “While it is certainly true that a very particular kind of didactic-religious-personification composition from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance has mostly faded from the best-seller lists and from our collective critical consciousness, to say more globally that allegory is dead is manifestly untrue”; Gulya, in the present volume.

^{xxxv} The notion first emerges in Walter Benjamin’s work in the early twentieth century, but the same impulse develops independently in the Anglo-American sphere before the rediscovery of Benjamin’s work in the 1960s: see further discussion below, ^{xxx–xxx}.

^{xxxvi} In the literary sphere, the notion of allegory as continued metaphor is useful especially in cases where the continued metaphor is pursued throughout an entire work, or a self-contained episode within a larger work. Such cases, however, represent a relatively minor phenomenon within the broader tradition, and also one of relatively limited scope. Quintilian’s example, taken over by many later rhetoricians, is Horace’s ode of the Ship of State, a poem of twenty lines. It is possible to sustain this kind of composition further, but not by much: see, e.g., the

absurd effect produced in Younge, *The State of a Christian* (London, 1636), pursuing a continued ship metaphor to the length of a single broadside of densely printed prose. On Quintilian's "allegory without metaphor," see above, xxx–xxx. That allegory need not rely on metaphor is also implicitly recognized in the emergence of the rogue category of the "enigma," designating precisely those cases in which excessive use of continued metaphor passes the bounds of comprehensibility—comprehensibility being a necessary criterion of any type of figurative language, properly speaking. "A Trope," Quintilian writes, "is a shift of a word or phrase from its proper meaning to another, *in a way that has positive value*" (*Orator's Education*, 8.6.1, emphasis mine). This latter qualification is significant, as is the further definition of a trope's use, namely to either "to assist the meaning" or provide "embellishment" for a meaning that is already sufficiently clear without such assistance (8.6.2). Quintilian's example of "allegory without metaphor"—Virgil's use of the word "Menalcas" to signify himself in his *Eclogues*—does involve a "a shift of a word . . . from its proper meaning to another," but does it carry any "positive value"? Does it "assist the meaning"? Or does it do precisely the opposite? The problem re-emerges in the work of the cognitivists, who resurrect the rhetorical definition. Here again Crisp is representative, cornered into a question-begging definition of allegory as that "form of extended metaphor whose extension is so radical that it is no longer obviously a metaphor" ("Allegory," 7). It should be emphasized, however, that these comments are made solely in relation to the problem of general definition. Many instances of allegory certainly involve metaphor and cognitivist work is one of the most interesting developments in exploring this aspect of the subject: see Gibbs and Okonski in the present volume, with further references.

xxxvii See Fletcher, *Allegory*, 1: "We have to account for an even wider variety of material than with categories like 'satire,' 'tragedy,' or 'comedy.' Only the broadest notions, for example the modal concepts of 'irony' or 'mimesis,' embrace so many different kinds of literature." The earliest attempt to define allegory as a genre seems to be Hughes, "An Essay on Allegorical Poetry," in *The Works of Mr. Edmund Spenser*, ed. Hughes (London, 1715), 1:xxiv–lvii. More recently, see Quilligan, *Language of Allegory*; Madsen, *Rereading Allegory*; Van Dyke, *The Fiction of Truth*. While ultimately unsuccessful in defining allegory as a genre, all these and still further studies have usefully highlighted particular allegorical genres within the broader tradition or at least prominent features shared by groups of works we recognize as allegorical. In the present volume, see esp. Gulya, xxx–xxx.

xxxviii A pioneering essay here is Bukofzer, "Allegory in Baroque Music," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 3 (1939–40). Crist, "Bach, Theology, and Harmony," in *Critica Musica*, ed. Knowles (1996; repr. Abingdon, 2016), includes a brief survey of later scholarship up to the 1990s.

xxxix The clearest reflection of this is found in the various terminological pairs proposed for capturing this distinction: *allegory* vs. *theoria*, *allegory* vs. *type*, *allegory in words* vs. *allegory in events*, *allegory of the poets* vs. *allegory of the theologians*, *allegory* vs. *symbol*, *allegory* vs. *transcendentalism*, *this-for-that allegory* vs. *this-and-that allegory*, *human symbol* vs. *transcendental symbol*, etc. For a single example of each, see Diodore of Tarsus, *Commentary on Psalms 1–51*, ed. and tr. Hill (Leiden, 2005), 4: "what is arrived at in defiance of the content is not discernment [*theoria*] but allegory"; John Chrysostom, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*, rev. ed. (Oxford, 1879): "Contrary to usage, [Paul] calls a type an allegory"; Bede, *Concerning Tropes and Figures*, tr. Tannenhau, in *Readings in Medieval Rhetoric*, ed. Miller, Prosser, and Benson, tr. Miller et al. (Bloomington, 1973), 118: "allegory uses facts at one time and words at another"; Dante, *Literary Criticism*, 112: "the theologians understand [the allegorical] sense in another way than the do the poets"; Coleridge, see n. xxx; Lewis, *Allegory of Love*, 44–5: "On the one hand you can start with an immaterial fact, such as the passions you actually experience, and can then invent *visibilia* to express them. . . . This is allegory. . . . But there is another way of using the equivalence, which is almost the opposite of allegory, and which I would call sacramentalism or"; Singleton, "Dante's Allegory," quoted below; Chadwick, *Symbolism* (London, 1971), 4: "Symbolism . . . of the human and of the transcendental kind."

xl Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* [1899], gen. ed. Strachey, ed. Richards, tr. Strachey, corrected ed. (1958; repr. London, 1991), esp. 363–8. The term *symptomatic reading* seems to originate with Louis Althusser—see Althusser and Balibar, *Reading Capital* [1965], tr. Brewster (London, 1970), 28: "Such is Marx's second reading: a reading which might well be called 'symptomatic' (*symptomale*), insofar as it divulges the undivulged event in the text it reads, and in the same movement relates it to a different text, present as a necessary absence in the first." However, the term has since been adopted to describe other comparable approaches, interested in reading literary works, and cultural artefacts at large, as symptoms of forces operating independently of their makers' intentions (for other comparable terms, see the relevant uses of *deconstruction*, *hermeneutics of suspicion*, *reading against the grain*, etc.). The key publication in popularizing the use of the term *allegory* in designating such symptomatic readings, and in poststructuralist theory and criticism more broadly, was Paul de Man's 1979 monograph *Allegories of Reading*. The notion of "allegories of reading" has a specific meaning in de Man's work, referring to self-referential and deconstructive properties "constitutive of all literary language," the literary work's tendency to thematize these properties, becoming an "allegorical narrative of its own

deconstruction,” and the symptomatic reading aimed at uncovering these processes, unfolding independently of, and often undermining, an author’s conscious intentions (*Allegories of Reading*, 17, 72). However, even where these specific ideas were rejected or played only a secondary role, the formula of de Man’s title, *allegories of X (in Y)*, soon came to be widely imitated, with hundreds of instances of such phrases—“allegories of power,” “allegories of empire,” “allegories of desire,” etc.—emerging in the 1980s, peaking between 1990 and 2010, and now seemingly on the wane. Indeed, in many such instances it is dubious to what extent the reading in question is genuinely symptomatic: saying *allegories of X (in Y)* often seems to be merely an alternative way of saying *theme of X (in Y)*, *representation of X (in Y)*, or *symbol of X (in Y)*, retaining much the same meaning while signalling the work’s allegiance to these novel theoretical perspectives. Another early publication, exemplary of both Freudian and de Manian influence, was Fredric Jameson’s *The Political Unconscious* (Ithaca, NY, 1981). Jameson’s expanded use of the psychoanalytic notion of the unconscious was similarly influential—random recent examples include “the cultural unconscious,” “the biopolitical unconscious,” “the petroleum unconscious,” etc.—as was his use of *allegory* to describe the advanced model of Marxist reading proposed in the work. Of particular interest is Jameson’s attempt to establish a continuity between his usage of *allegory* and earlier traditions: specifically, to posit “some deeper kinship” (32) between the model of the fourfold sense in Christian scriptural hermeneutics and the advanced base-superstructure models in Marxist analysis. This also affords a good example of the detrimental influence of de Lubac’s *Medieval Exegesis*: Jameson explicitly (29) bases his revisionist usage of *allegory* on the highly distorted treatment of the subject in de Lubac’s work, specifically his theologically motivated insistence that Christian allegory is always a this-and-that transaction, preserving the integrity of the literal sense. In the background of all this hovers, yet again, the spectre of Frye: see Frye’s own proposal for “a modern restatement of the medieval theory” of the fourfold sense in “Levels of Meaning in Literature,” *The Kenyon Review* 12 (1950), and *Anatomy of Criticism*, esp. 71–128. Cf. Jameson’s references to Frye’s work in *Political Unconscious*, *passim*, and the further development of his ideas in the recent study *Allegory and Ideology*.

^{xli} Cf. the important early critique of the neoallegorical impulse by Zhang, “Historicising the Postmodern Allegory,” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 36 (1994), 217: “when everything becomes allegorical, nothing is properly allegorical. Under such conditions, it is difficult and indeed impossible to talk about allegory as a particular strategy or phenomenon with its own history and historicity.”

^{xlii} See, e.g., Heraclitus, *Homeric Problems*, 1.1–2: “If [Homer] meant nothing allegorically, he was impious through and through, and sacrilegious fables, loaded with blasphemous folly, run riot through both epics.” The point is clearly not to retain both senses in mind but rather to *replace*, to the greatest degree possible, the primary with the secondary. To be sure, if we could get into Heraclitus’s head, we would probably find that, regardless of his theoretical principles, the primary meaning is never completely erased from his imagination, but this is an unintended side-effect, rather than a defining feature, of allegorical expression. For an early example of the second, more moderate variety of the this-for-that position, see the Prologue to Alan of Lille’s *Anticlaudianus*, in *Literary Works*, ed. and tr. Wetherbee (Cambridge, MA, 2013), 223: “the sweetness of the literal sense will lend itself to a youthful audience; moral doctrine will lend itself to the developing mind; the keener subtlety of allegory will sharpen the proficient intellect.” Each of the three senses performs a legitimate role, although they are clearly not, especially the literal, of equal value. The idea of entertaining the literal sense solely for its own sake is expressly denounced: “let those be forbidden entry to this work,” Alan adds to the above, “who seek only the sensory appeal of imagery and have no appetite for the truths of reason, lest what is sacred be prostituted and defiled by dogs.”

^{xliii} A classic and widely discussed statement of the Romantic allegory-symbol opposition appears in Coleridge’s *Statesman’s Manual*, quoted in Nievergelt’s chapter, xxx–xxx, and also discussed by Silk, xxx–xxx. Later developments tend toward still less schematic notions of the secondary sense. A passage by George Saintsbury (1845–1933), whose career spans the full modernist trajectory, is representative: “Modern readers and modern critics have usually a certain dislike to Allegory. Yet in the finer sorts of literature, at any rate, the apprehension of some sort of double meaning, is almost a necessity. The student of any kind of poetry, and the student of the more imaginative prose, can never rest satisfied with the mere literal and grammatical sense, which belongs not to literature but to science. He cannot help seeking some hidden meaning, something further, something behind, if it be only rhythmical beauty, only the suggestion of pleasure to the ear and eye and heart”; *A History of Criticism and Literary Taste in Europe (Edinburgh, 1900–04)*, 1:10–11. It is worth emphasizing here that there is no necessary overlap between non-agentive and this-and-that models. Biblical typology is an instance where the two combine: the two (or more) meanings proceed from an underlying non-agentive source *and* are held as equal in importance in the semiotic transaction proceeding from that source. For a contrary example, see the Platonic models, which generally drift towards a divergence in this respect: the semiosis proceeds from a non-agentive source but generally translates into this-for-that models—the point is to ascend to a higher meaning, leaving the lower behind, not to entertain both simultaneously.

^{xliv} Cf. *Novum Testamentum Graece*, ed. Aland et al., 28th rev. ed. (Stuttgart, 2012): “ἄτινά ἐστιν ἀλληγορούμενα [*hatina estin allegoroumena*].” For some indication of the controversies over this passage, see Brljak, “The Satanic ‘or,’” *The Review of English Studies* 66 (2015), 409–17. Some commentators accepted that the apostle departs from established usage here: see John Chrysostom, quoted in n. xxx. On the whole, however, the belief in the Bible’s infallibility meant that most Christian commentators were more comfortable assuming that the term is used correctly and accommodating their terminology to fit this belief.

^{xlv} For an overview of Protestant positions, see Cummings, “Protestant Allegory,” in *Cambridge Companion*, ed. Copeland and Struck. On allegory’s Satanic genealogy, Brljak, “The Satanic ‘or.’”

^{xlvi} On Vico, see Mali, “*Vera Narratio*,” in *Allegory and Interpretation*, ed. Whitman, along with Whitman’s own comments, 284–9; Kelman, “*Diversiloquium*,” *New Vico Studies* 20 (2002). Winckelmann’s role in the story often goes unacknowledged, at least in Anglophone scholarship. See his “Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Works” [1755], in *Johann Joachim Winckelmann on Art*, ed. and tr. Carter (Rochester, NY, 2013), 52–5, and esp. *Versuch einer Allegorie* (Dresden, 1766), seemingly unavailable in English translation except for a short extract in Winckelmann, *Writings on Art*, ed. and tr. Irwin (London, 1972). More broadly, Vico’s, Winckelmann’s, and any other comparable eighteenth-century usages are part of the initial shifting of the ground that eventually—but never fully—stabilizes in the *allegory-symbol* opposition. Cf. the brief but acute remarks of Berefelt, “On Symbol and Allegory,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 28 (1969), 201–2; Silk, in the present volume, xxx–xxx; and n. xxx on the influence on Benjamin.

^{xlvii} See esp. Whitman, *Allegory*, 263: “*Allēgoria* has two component parts in Greek. The first of these parts, coming from the word *allos*, means ‘other’; it inverts the sense of the second component. This second component is the verb *agoreuein*, originally meaning ‘to speak in the assembly,’ in the *agora*. Though already in Homer this verb has the general meaning ‘to speak,’ throughout its history it retained the original sense of discoursing in public, speaking in the open. / The ‘open assembly,’ or *agora*, developed at an early stage two quite different connotations. On the one hand, it referred to the open assembly. . . . On the other hand, the word *agora* refers to the open market. Accordingly, its derivatives sometimes had the sense of ‘common’ or ‘low’ . . . / The second component of the word ‘allegory’ thus had historical connections both with official, political address and with everyday, common speech. When this component was combined with the inverting word *allos*, the resulting composite connoted both that which was said in *secret*, and that which was *unworthy* of the *crowd*.” Cf. Silk in the present volume, xxx–xxx.

^{xlviii} See Struck, *Birth of the Symbol*, ch. 2. Particularly illuminating here the term’s original usage, preceding its transference to the sphere of hermeneutics, which predominantly designates an authenticating token: “an object—usually a piece of cloth, wood, or pottery—that is deliberately split in two,” “allocated to the parties to an agreement,” and “reassembled at a later time to verify the deal” (*ibid.*, 78).

^{xlix} Wider dissemination of Benjamin’s work follows the posthumous publication of his *Schriften*, ed. T. and G. Adorno (Frankfurt, 1955). The *Origin* becomes a key influence behind the early neoallegorical arguments in Gadamer, *Truth and Method* [1960], tr. Barden et al., 2nd rev. ed. (2004; repr. London, 2006); de Man, “The Rhetoric of Temporality” [1969], in *Blindness and Insight*, 2nd rev. ed. (Minneapolis, 1983); Spivak, “Thoughts on the Principle of Allegory,” *Genre* 5 (1972). Wider dissemination of the Benjaminian strand of the neoallegorical impulse the Anglo-American sphere follows in the later 1970s and 1980s, in the wake of the first English translation of the *Origin*, tr. Osborne (London, 1977), de Man’s *Allegories of Reading* (New Haven, 1979), an important series of articles in the journal *October*—Fineman, “Structure”; Owens, “The Allegorical Impulse,” 12–13 (1980); Melville, “Notes on the Reemergence of Allegory,” 19 (1981)—and Jameson’s *Political Unconscious*. Further comments on allegory appear in a number of other works by Benjamin, including *Charles Baudelaire*, [ed. Zohn et al.], tr. Zohn (1973; repr. London, 1997), and *The Arcades Project* [1982], ed. Tiedemann, tr. Eiland and McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA, 1999). The literature is extensive but most of it is uncritical in approach, straightforwardly adopting Benjamin’s idiosyncrasies with little attempt to place them in wider contexts and analyse them in a more objective critical vocabulary. Exceptions include Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism* (London/New Haven, 1955–92), 7:181–204; Cowan, “Walter Benjamin’s Theory of Allegory,” *New German Critique* 22 (1981); *Allegory and Interpretation*, ed. Whitman, 296–9; Caygill, “Walter Benjamin’s Concept of Allegory,” in *Cambridge Companion*, ed. Copeland and Struck; Silk, in the present volume.

¹ See, e.g., Tuve, *Allegorical Imagery*, 3: “we must not suffocate an allegory with the tightly drawn noose of inflexible equations, but allow meanings to flow into and inhabit the literal so that it is symbolic also”; Clifford, *Transformations of Allegory*, 8: “It is of course important that the abstraction, the universal, coexists with its particular manifestation in the narrative. The view of allegory as a mere translation of non-poetic ideas into more or less poetic form . . . is one that has hampered many critics”; Quilligan, *Language of Allegory*, 26: “Our traditional insistence on allegory’s distinction between word said and meaning meant [must be replaced by an insistence on] the simultaneity of the process of signifying multiple meaning”; Machosky, *Structures of*

Appearing, 1: “In allegory there is a phenomenologically simultaneous appearance of two things in the same image, in the same ‘space’ at the same time”; Borris, reviewing Machosky’s book in *The Spenser Review* 43 (2014), and criticizing her for belabouring the obvious: “I have always read allegory in this way, rather than in ‘levels,’ and have assumed that this procedure can be taken for granted among early modern literary scholars, as common knowledge since the 1960s.”