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Kenneth Borris
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ALLEGORY AND EPIC IN ENGLISH RENAISSANCE LITERATURE

Heroic form in Sidney, Spenser, and Milton

Challenging conventional notions that literary allegorism declined precipitously around 1600, Kenneth Borris reassesses the Renaissance relations between allegory and heroic poetry, particularly in the major texts of Sidney, Spenser, and Milton. Through wide-ranging consideration of Homeric and Virgilian reception and its influence on both continental and English literary theory, Borris shows that allegorical epic tended to double for and displace epic throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Besides newly theorizing the interactions of allegory with literary genres, focusing on epic, he further analyses the distinctive codes and conventions that constituted the generic repertoire of Renaissance allegorical epic poetry. Whereas standard literary history assumes Sidney opposes allegory, and Milton minimizes or rejects it, Borris's detailed readings demonstrate that Sidney and Milton are major allegorists, and that Spenser remained so even in the final books of *The Faerie Queene*.

KENNETH BORRIS is Associate Professor in the English Department at McGill University. He is the author of *Spenser's Poetics of Prophecy in "The Faerie Queene"* (1991). His articles have appeared in *Spenser Studies, Milton Studies,* and *Emblematica*. He is a recipient of the MacCaffrey Award.

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To
Alastair Fowler
Patrick Grant
A. C. Hamilton

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Illustrations

1 Title page of Homer, *Homer's Odysses*, trans. George Chapman (London, 1615?). By permission of the Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University. *page* 18

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I began arguing for Sidney's allegorism in the *Arcadias* at the Sidney sessions at Kalamazoo in 1995, and thank the audience for its supportive response to that paper, which became my essay "Elizabethan Allegorical Epics: The *Arcadias* as Counterparts of *The Faerie Queene*," in *Spenser Studies*, XIII, eds. Anne Lake Prescott and Thomas P. Roche, Jr. (New York: AMS Press, 1999), pp. 191–221. Chapter Four incorporates and supersedes that article, mainly by expanding discussion of Cecropia and providing two comparable visual images. In Chapter Eight, a few paragraphs of section one, "Milton's Cosmic Allegoresis of God," derive from the opening pages of my article "'Union of Mind or in Both One Soul': Allegories of Adam and Eve in *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Studies*,

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xxi, ed. Albert C. Labriola (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1994), pp. 45–72. In Chapter Nine, section one, entitled "Miltonic Heroism, Subjectivity, and the Incarnation," summarizes my essay "Milton's Heterodoxy of the Incarnation and Subjectivity in *De Doctrina Christiana* and *Paradise Lost*" in *Living Texts: Interpreting Milton*, eds. Charles Durham and Kris Pruitt (Lexington, Ky.: Susquehanna University Press, 2000). It derives from a paper I gave at the biennial Southeastern Conference on John Milton in 1997, and I thank the auditors for their encouraging reception. Though not extracted in this study, my other prior publications provide further information on its topic, and I cite them where most relevant. A Canada Research Fellowship and Standard Research Grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada assisted my work here and previously, as did Visiting Fellowships at the Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies at Victoria University in the University of Toronto. I am thankful most of all to Luigi Mirando.

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I have used existing translations where possible; those I provide are deliberately somewhat literal, and endnotes give the original texts. In cases where I use Bernard Weinberg's translations from relatively rare Italian cinquecento works of literary criticism, furnished in his *History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance*, the original Italian or Latin can be conveniently consulted in Weinberg as cited.

My citations and quotations of Latin and Greek classical texts refer to the Loeb series, unless I state otherwise. When quoting Renaissance English texts, I normalize usage of "u," "v," "s," "i," and "j" according to modern orthography, except for archaistic Spenser, and silently expand contractions.

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