ALLEGORICAL CHARACTERIZATION IN WILLIAM DUNBAR'S THE GOLDEN TARGE

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Abstract: *Symbolism and allegory are two major rhetorical devices throughout the medieval poetic corpus. Both correspond to, or rather originate from, a way of thinking that tends to understand the world and everything in it as a "mask," as if the surface is always deceptive. Among modern scholars on medieval symbolism and allegory, including Johan Huizinga, C. S. Lewis, Umberto Eco and Alastair Minnis, only Lewis, in his* Allegory of Love, *clearly differentiates the functioning process of symbolism from that of allegory. And it is Lewis' definition of allegory that brings us closer to the core spirit of allegorical poetry as a literary genre, of which The Golden Targe, written in Middle English by the Scottish poet William Dunbar, is a fine example. This essay examines Dunbar's allegorical characterization through a close analysis of The Golden Targe, in the hope of better understanding allegory as a pivotal mode of thought in medieval literature.*

> *Omnis mundi creatura*
> *quasi liber et pictura*
> *nobis est, et speculum.*
> *Nostrae vitae, nostrae mortis,*
> *nostri status, nostrae sortis*
> *fidele signaculum.*
> *Nostrum statum pingit rosa,*
> *nostri status decens glosa,*
> *nostrae vitae lectio.*
> *Quae dum primo mane floret,*
> *defloratus flos effloret*
> *vespertino senio.*

> —Alan de Lille

The differentiation between the terms "symbol" and "allegory" in a medieval literary context, as both are abundant and conventional in the poems of the period,

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may go as far as it suits a theorist's specific critical purpose, based on his understanding of the two conceptions. One reason for this uncertainty is that both symbol and allegory in the Middle Ages correspond to, and perhaps originate from, a mental habit of comprehending the world and everything in it as a mask, as something that means more than what it looks, an attitude beautifully summarized in the above quoted verses by Alan de Lille. As Johan Huizinga has observed in *The Waning of the Middle Ages*:

> Of no great truth was the medieval mind more conscious than of Saint Paul's phrase: *Videmus nunc per speculum in aenigmate, tunc autem facie and faciem...* Such sensations may take the form of a morbid oppression, so that all things seem to be charged with a menace or a riddle which we must solve at any cost. Or they may be experienced as a source of tranquility and assurance, by filling us with the sense that our own life, too, is involved in this hidden meaning of the world. (Huizinga 1965, 194)

This tendency, very likely a highly undesirable and unwanted obsession in most modern eyes, is no mere example of the vicissitudes of literary taste. It has its root in the Biblical exegesis tradition of the Fathers at the latest, and has been enhanced by the medieval intellectual atmosphere of Scholasticism, as well as that of grasping the world via *pictura*, in a gradually fixed system of images. "Pictures were the literature of the laity (*laicorum literatura*)." (Eco 2002, 54) Such a line of thinking, combining allegorical exegesis with homiletic rhetoric, underlies the iconographic tradition of most illustrated bestiaries of the High Middle Ages, in which a pelican always stands for Christ, and a unicorn for chastity, etc. Long before the tendency reached its full bloom, Augustine had proclaimed in unmistakable words that "when that which is said figuratively is taken as though it were literal, it is understood carnally... He who follows the letter takes figurative expressions as though they were literal and does not refer the things signified to anything else." (Augustine 1958, 84) Hugh of St. Victor developed the idea in even clearer message: "Every analysis begins from things which are finite, or defined, and proceeds in the direction of things which are infinite, or undefined." (Hugh of St. Victor 1963, 92) However, Hugh at the same time scrupulously warned against the danger of intemperate allegorical interpretation by an inexperienced mind, and advised the middle-path:

> Why was that former people who received the Law of life reproved, except
> that they followed the death-dealing letter in such a way that they did not have
> the life-giving Spirit? But I do not say these things in order to offer anyone the
> chance to interpret the Scriptures according to his own will...it is necessary
> both that we follow the letter in such a way as not to prefer our own sense to
> the divine authors, and that we do not follow it in such a way as to deny that
> the entire pronouncement of truth is rendered in it. Not the man devoted to the
> letter "but the spiritual man judgeth all things." [I Cor. 2:15] (Minnis 2009, 81)

For Umberto Eco, both symbol and allegory may be categorized under "medieval symbolism," which may be further divided into "metaphysical symbolism" and "universal allegory." The former is "related to the philosophical habit of discerning the hand of God in the beauty of the world," and to medieval symbolists such as John Scotus Eriugena (ca. 815-ca. 877), "the world was a great theophany," manifesting God's causes in His beautiful creations. (Eco 2002, 56) Eco's definition of "universal allegory" is less clear despite its greater popularity and extent of institutionalization, but it is roughly summarized as a way of perceiving the world and every creature in it as possessing four levels of meaning (literal, allegorical, moral and anagogical). Though the process is hard to trace even with supra-linguistic methods, sometimes the former may transform into the latter, and "the crystallising of symbol into allegory...in the Middle Ages...were contemporaneous." (Ibid. 58) For Eco, the two are merely different expressions of the same aesthetic interest and are even interchangeable under certain circumstances, the division line is unstable and fluid. Nevertheless, a quarter of a century earlier before Eco's crystallization theory (which was first published in Italian in "*Sviluppo dell'estetica medievale*" as a single chapter in a book by various authors in 1959), things were very different with C. S. Lewis, who regards symbolism, or "sacramentalism" as "almost the opposite of allegory," and separates symbol from allegory with unmistakable determination:

> The difference between the two can hardly be exaggerated. The allegorist
> leaves the given—his own passions—to talk of that which is confessedly less
> real, which is a fiction. The symbolist leaves the given to find that which is
> more real. To put the difference in another way, for the symbolist it is we who
> are the allegory. We are the "frigid personifications"; the heavens above us are
> the "shadowy abstraction'"; the world which we mistake for reality is the flat

outline of that which elsewhere veritably is in all the round of its unimaginable dimensions ... the poetry of symbolism does not find its greatest expression in the Middle Ages at all, but rather in the time of the romantics; and this, again, is significant of the profound difference that separates it from allegory. (Lewis 1936, 45-46)

It is Lewis' definition that brings us closer to the dominant rhetoric device usually associated with medieval allegorical poems, of which William Dunbar (ca. 1460-ca. 1525) came late into the tradition. In such allegories, personified ideals are set against each other as rival authorities in competition for a spiritual prize—often the protagonist's soul—in a battle which Lewis calls the Psychomachia, or *bellum intestinum*, 'the Holy War'. (Ibid., 55) Another theorist, Angus Fletcher, has tried to explain the passion for such a literary device and the causal links between allegorical actions with the Frazerian anthropological concepts of contagious and sympathetic magic, as well as with psychoanalytic terms by partly identifying symbol with the Freudian Unconsciousness, concluding that with symbol the "normal" order of things is perceived directly "without any logical extrapolation from the phenomena of our material world, whereas in allegory there is always an attempt to categorize logical orders first, and fit them to convenient phenomena second, to set forth ideal systems first, and illustrate them second." (Fletcher 1964, 18) If we are to understand exactly how this type of allegory functions as a powerful literary (not to be simplified as a mere rhetorical) device, Dunbar's *The Golden Targe*, being both an allegorical love poem and a dream vision, thus demonstrative of two distinctively "medieval" genres, with its somewhat surprising concision of 279 lines, is a good example to examine in details.

 The Golden Targe may be counted among those works of Dunbar that have not be given due credit by modern critics. The very "aureate style" which, associated by the poet with his distinguished predecessors John Gower and John Lydgate, but best illustrated in *The Golden Targe* itself, has been frowned upon on account of its overabundance of Latinate vocabulary as well as its "poetic diction" which, to quote Patrick Cruttwell, "is just as lifeless and conventional as the worst that eighteenth century can show." (Cruttwell 1954, 175) Lewis, though expressing appreciation of the poem's language, style and images, speaks harshly about Dunbar's allegories in general: "His allegories are not of historical importance. They have no purpose in the world but to give pleasure." (Lewis,

1936, 251) About the allegory of *The Golden Targe* in particular, Lewis also remarks: "It has an intelligible allegoric action...But this action is so slight and degenerates so often into a mere catalogue of personifications (which is the only serious fault of the *Targe*) that we are right to neglect it...in it we see the allegorical form adapted to purposes of pure decoration." (Ibid., 252) This is barely a satisfactory defense of the *Targe*'s repute, for it is, after all, the allegory that makes possible the whole dramatic mechanism of the *Targe*, and it is primarily by the effectiveness of the allegory that we judge the craftsmanship of a fifteenth century poet writing in the allegoric form. The allegorical figures in the *Targe* are neither purely ornamental nor a superfluous, dead name list as the result of "degeneration," which I believe may be demonstrated by a close examination of the poem.

The *Targe*'s allegorical figures may be roughly divided into two categories: the deities from the classical tradition, both male and female, who descend from the ship but do not engage in the battle for the narrator's soul (with the sole exception of Venus); and the qualitative figures standing for one's manners, social status and morality (inherited from a relatively new tradition first brought to eminence by *Roman de la Rose*) who become warriors in the Psychomachia led by Venus. Dunbar's treatment of the two categories of personae is very different, and suitable for their respective functions. The entrance scene at the beginning of the allegorical section of the poem (starting from stanza 6) is among the most vivid and lifelike descriptions to be found in the genre, manifesting the glitter and glamour of a moving parade cart staging a mystery play, as well as the sensuous beauty, idyllic leisure, and provocative undertones only seen together in a Renaissance oil painting by the Venetian School:

> *... quhar fro anon thare landis*
> *Ane hundreth ladyes, lusty into wedis,*
> *Als fresch as flouris that in May up spredis,*
> *In kirtillis grene, withoutyn kell or bandis.*
> *Thair brycht hairis hang gleting on the strandis*
> *In tressis clere, wyppit wyth goldyn thredis,*
> *With pappis quhite and mydlis small as wandis*. (ll. 57-63)[1]

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[1] All quotations of *The Golden Targe* is from James Kinsley ed., *William Dunbar: Poems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968).

As if the emphasis on the ladies' lack of caps and headbands, their loosely hanging tresses and the symbolic greenness of their gowns is not sufficiently suggestive, the poet has to direct our eyes to their deliciously white breasts and slim waists. And as if even that is not enough, an *occupatio* of the "inexpressiblity topos" follows immediately in the next stanza, concluding that neither Homer nor Cicero has the skill required to portray "that paradise complete." (l. 72) Here, under the pretense of describing the charm of the garden, Dunbar is already writing in dangerously suggestive terms of the perfect happiness promised by erotic love.

Up to this point, Dunbar has made no distinction between the two types of allegorical figures: presumably the "one hundred ladies" include both. The next six stanzas (9-14), however, are reserved for classical pantheon out of which deities and semi-deities walk in flesh-and-blood animation, not as wooden allegories. We have details of the action: "*Thare saw I May, of myrthfull monethis quene...Within the gardyng walking up and doun...Thare saw I Nature present hir a goun...Of eviry hew under the hevin that bene, depaynt and broud be gude proporcioun.*" (ll. 82-90) We have dynamic description of expressions: "*Thare saw I Mars the god armypotent, aufull and sterne, strong and corpolent. Thare saw I crabbit Saturn, ald and haire -His luke was lyke for to perturb the aire.*" (ll. 112-15) Priapus, Phanus and "Janus, god of entree delytable" (l. 120) are deliberately placed one after another to insinuate an arousing atmosphere filled with images of phallus, fertility and sexuality. And Pluto is transformed from the grim underground ruler into "*the elrich incubus, in cloke of grene*" (ll. 125-26)—a mischievous seducer figure incarnating the power of nature—in order to be paralleled with "Bacus, the gladder of the table" (l. 124) to enhance the orgiastic ambiance in a demonic and disturbing dream, in which hell breaks loose in the disguise of deities dressed in green and earnestly playing harp or lute, perhaps symbolizing the dreamer- narrator's latent sexual anxiety. It may naturally be argued that much of Dunbar's characterization of the deities consists of inherited stock phrases, but it is Dunbar's creative arrangement and skillful illumination of them that makes the figures dance suggestively in a quasi-Aphrodisiac erotic dream. It is also useful to remember that even Homer has not ridden his epics of epithet periphrases like "ox-eyed Hera" and "Eos with rosy fingers," and that the characterization of Dunbar's shipful of deities is finished within the length of a mere 54 lines.

The second type of allegorical figures are animated by a milder version of the "Peeping Tom" topos—the narrator does not pay the price of his eyesight "*all throu a luke*" (l. 135) but is assailed by the archers of Venus. Passive tense dominates in this turning-point episode— "*I was rycht sudaynly affray*" (l. 134), "*I was aspyit*" (l. 137)—as if the narrator falls a helpless victim into a trap deliberately set for him, but it is in fact he himself that voluntarily "*crap...throu the levis and drew nere* (l. 133)," and even upon being discovered, he is not totally without comfort: "*yit rycht gretly was I noucht affrayit, / The party was so plesand for to sene. / A wonder lusty bikkir me assayit.*" (ll. 143-45) The "point of epiphany," to borrow Northrope Frye's term, the decisive moment between the Roman pantheon allegory and the truly medieval allegory of love—the central allegory of *bellum intestinum*—is actually a highly "realistic" description of the semi-voluntary, self-destructive process of falling in love.

After the ladies have let fall their green mantles, exposed the bows hidden in their tresses, and stood in a battle formation, "Dame Beautee" leads the first round of attack accompanied by the generally desirable and rather predictable qualities of a courtly love heroine: Fair Having (Attractive Deportment), Fyne Portrature (Fine Appearance), Plesance (Delightful Nature), and Lusty Chere (Joyful Countenance), some of which recognizable as traditional figures from the earlier love allegory corpus. Then with the entrance of a single rival, namely Reson (Reason) "*with schelde of gold so clere...that nobil chevallere* (ll. 151-53)," the one-to-many battle officially begins, of which the narrator takes no share, but hides behind his defender in perfect passivity. Denton Fox structualizes the following battle by dividing Venus' camp into three different groups standing for three different stages of femininity: the maiden (led by tender Youth, followed by "*virgyns ying*" of grene Innocence, schamefull Abaising, quaking Drede and humble Obedience); the young woman or "the perfect bourgeois matron" (led by Swete Womanhede, followed by Nurture, Contenence, Pacience, Gude Fame, Stedfastnes, Discrecioun, Gentrise, Considerance, Levefull Company, Honest Besynes, Benigne Luke, Mylde Chere, and Sobirnes); and the mature woman "with all the additional attractions of nobility and wealth" (led by Hie Degree, followed by Estate, Dignitee, Comparisoun, Honour, Noble Array, Will, Wantonnes, Renoun, Libertee, Richesse, Fredome and Nobilitee). (Fox 1959, 327-328) This is, of course, a logical and readily graspable categorization. Nevertheless, apart from implying the staged growth in age, temperament and social status of a woman presumably of noble birth, these three unsuccessful

assaults may also stand for the temptation from an entire spectrum of feminine qualities. One of the mysteries of erotic attraction lies in that it is not always virtues that fascinate, but imperfections, sometimes even vices as well. Allowing all the room for flexibility in interpreting words like "Wantonnes," "Libertee" and "Fredome" in their medieval semantic context, all the qualities listed above cannot consistently be embodied by a single woman. It is as if Venus is trying to figure out what type of woman is the narrator's cup of tea: innocent Cinderella or Femme Fatale, the moral gentlewoman or the dangerous Gypsy. Although not all of the above- mentioned allegorical figures may be pinpointed as clear archetypes, Venus' warriors do seem to have gradually changed their chant from the *Songs of Innocence* to the *Songs of Experience*.

Ultimately, when all her sirens fail to lure our Odysseus into doom, Venus changes her tactics and does something like plucking out the sailors' earplugs. She redeploys "Dissymilance" as the charge-leader, whose already redoubtable power is reinforced by Presence ("*plicht anker of the barge*"), Fair Callyng ("*that wele a flayn coud schute*"), Cherising, and Hamelynes ("*that hardy was and hende in archery*")—each belonging to the league of Experience—with the very first archer Dame Beautee reappearing and bringing up the rear (ll. 181-94), thus completing the formidable battle array and wrapping the Psychomachia allegory into a loop. "Fair Callying" has usually been identified as the equivalent of "Bialacoil" in *Roman de la Rose* and serves as Venus' "*uschere*" (usher) in *Kingis Quair* (l. 673). Originally derived from "*belh aculhir*" (fair welcome) in Provençals, Fair Callying is "something more than mere politeness and yet a something more which a woman of gentle breeding will find it hard to withhold from any acquaintance not obviously dishonourable or vulgar." (Lewis 1936, 122) It is exactly the ambiguous connotation in the favor given by Fair Callyng that becomes one of the most useful female weapons, buttressed by the equally flexible Cherising ("kind treatment" can easily turn into "fondling," "caressing" or "pampering") and the intimate physical contact promised by Hameynes and Presence under the leadership of Dissymilance and Beautee. At this point Reson begins to lose its ground — "*The bataill broucht on bordour hard us by. / The salt was all the sarar, suth to sayn*" (ll. 197-98)—and is finally blinded by Perilouse Presence and banished to the "*bewis grene,*" leaving the narrator alone to face his doom. The next three stanzas describe the process of how the deceptively transient satisfaction of requited love deteriorates into desertion, and how New Acquyntance delivers the narrator into the hands of Dangere (cold disdain,

standoffishness, the stoutest guardian of the Rose in *Roman de la Rose*), then that of Departing (separation), and finally that of Hevynesse (depression). The allegory does not end until Eolus blows the bugle that shakes all the leaves and reduces the paradisal dream garden into a wasteland where "*all was hyne went, thare was bot wildernes, / Thare was no more bot birdis, bank and bruke* (ll. 233-34)," bringing the narrator's former complaint about Reson's (Reason's) departure making "ane hell my paradise appere" (l. 215) into full "reality" within the framework of his dream vision, which is in turn shattered by the commotion made by the gun-firing, departing ship. At last, the awakened narrator finds himself once again in the flower-illuminated May garden of the first five stanzas which formerly lulls him into sleep.

As we can see, the second type of allegorical figures—the qualitative abstractions participating in the *bellum intestinum*—do seem to occasionally fall victims to what Lewis regards as "the only serious fault of the *Targe*," reducing the allegorical figures to "a mere catalogue of personification" (Lewis 1936, 252) instead of developing them into full-fledged, animated and sophisticated dramatic personae. Nevertheless, Dunbar's adoption of this "catalogue technique" is not without advantages in its particular context. For one thing, in depicting a situation as urgent as a battle, it is exactly the concision of the allegory, the compact, quick-paced, successive appearance of allegorical warriors in an unbroken line that catches the gist of an overwhelmingly pressing assault so hard to resist on the part of the narrator. As may be seen from the above discussion, Dunbar's allegorical characterization is richer and more abundant in details when it comes to the deity figures not involved in the battlefield. Secondly, the dramatic sense of a medieval allegorical poem is somewhere between that of non-allegorical prose, and that of a morality play—when dealing with the same subject, it is often more vivid, dynamic and three-dimensional than the former, and less so than the latter. The most proper metaphor for an allegorical poem is perhaps a pantomime, or a puppet show—part of the actors' charm lies exactly in a certain "woodenness" and rigidity inherent in the motion of their limbs, and too much dexterity and lifelikeness would only dwindle the mesmerizing aesthetic effect created by the puppeteer. For that matter, the complete absence of dialogue, or even monologue, on the part of the allegorical figures in the *Targe*, a limitation of poetic skill in the eyes of some critics, silently contributes to its pantomimic, enchanted atmosphere which is further enhanced by the glittering and resplendent imageries of the poem.

Thirdly, the "catalogue technique" brings into full effect what I would like to call "the power of nomination"—a process in which every attendee is given and called by a name and assigned to play a unique role, the process in which Adam was entitled by God to have dominance over all other animals. Does not the urgent and uninterrupted calling of fourteen personae within the length of the first five lines of Stanza 19, or that of thirteen personae in the first five lines of Stanza 20, give us the impression that Venus really has deployed the entire spectrum of what she considers as desirable qualities in a female in order to sack Reson's fortress?

Last but not the least, allegory is, by the way it functions, the exorcism of the "human" elements in a character in the disguise of personification. All allegories are anthropomorphic, but they only work by expelling the spirit of humanity from their forms; while symbols work in the opposite direction; they usually take the zoological, botanical or even insentient forms such as a stone or a wood cross, but symbolism is, at the bottom of its spirit, essentially pantheistic. It is most effective when the desires, fears and faiths of man are breathed into insentient objects, each with its allotted place in the hierarchy of medieval cosmology. It is in this sense that the central imageries of the rose and of the enamel work as such effective symbols throughout the *Targe*.

On the other hand, strictly speaking, it is only the second type of allegorical figures—those "abstract" qualities exorcised of human spirit but perform the roles of human warriors in the *bellum intestinum*—that may be categorized as pure allegories. The first group of the Roman pantheon characters are declining gods—deities that have started to lose their spiritual significance more than a thousand years ago, but the human elements in these idols in twilight have not been exorcised completely for them to become pure allegorical figures. As Yeats' favorite quotation from Heraclitus goes, gods and men are constantly "dying each other's life, living each other's death." (Yeats 1992, xxxix) Lewis has made an attempt to trace the process of the "apotheosis of the abstractions" perhaps at the expense of "the fading of the gods." (Lewis 1936, 56) He has, however, left that discussion vastly open-ended. With these being said, we can perhaps better understand and appreciate what Dunbar is doing with his second type of purely allegorical figures: his characterization skill is more like that of a relief carver than that of a round sculptor, and he is a dexterous relief carver—not only in terms of craftsmanship, but also in knowing where and when to shift a little bit towards the round sculptor, as we have seen him doing in the portraiture of less

purely allegorical pantheon figures. The archetypal garden in May, which serves as the opening *locus* of so many medieval dream visions, derives, according to A. C. Spearing, from an ideal Mediterranean landscape in places like Greece, Italy and Palestine, "typically set in bright southern sunlight, but...also provides shade against the sun, and therefore furnished with a tree or trees...and there will usually be a breeze...for comfort in a hot country," (Spearing 1976, 17-18) except that for Dunbar, the real Scottish May climate features the chilly gust of Eolus "*that with the blast the levis all toschuke*" (l. 231) instead of a benign and cozy Mediterranean breeze. The fact that the narrator is only able to return to the garden *locus* or earthly paradise—Spearing suggests influences from both Eden and "the jewelled brilliance" of New Jerusalem in the Apocalypse (Ibid., 17)—upon waking up from the dream, provides an alternative way of understanding the otherwise allegory of love.

The Golden Targe may simultaneously be read as a poem processing the anxiety of influence suffered but also bravely confronted by a poet coming late into the tradition. Dunbar, in his poetic career, has aspired after "*reverend Chaucere, rose of rethoris all*" (l. 253) as well as "*morall Gower and Ludgate laureate*" with "*sugurit lippis and tongis aureate*" and "*angel mouthis most mellifluate* (ll. 262-65);" after the kind of poetic virtuosity represented by the beautiful, translucent yet highly artificial garden at the beginning of his dream vision. The same set of vocabulary and imagery is adopted to describe both the garden and the skill of the poets he admired ("anamalit," "*illumynit*," "*ourgilt*," "*depaynt*," "*goldyn*," "*brycht*," "*licht*") and the central image of "rose redolent" connects the two in perfect Nature and perfect Art at the same time. Near the end of the dream vision, the poet discovers that his garden of supposedly perfect poesy is in fact only a bare and barren wasteland, resembling his modest description of his own "*lytill quair*" (little book) at the very end of the poem— "*Rude is thy wede, disteynit, bare and rent.*" (l. 278) However, when awakened from his dream, the poet is once again in the beautiful, fertile garden, only this time he finds that "the joyous sense of reveling in sensuous nature is somewhat lessened" and "the air attemperit, sobir, and amene (l. 249)," implying a more objective view of his own poetic skill and the poet's finding peace with himself—the regained paradise is not perfect, but things may be improved upon the simple awareness of that imperfection. In the course of the humiliating and frustrating dream, the narrator (this time also the poet) has exchanged a perfectionist ambition of his own craftsmanship for a more realistic and

surefooted hope.

Some scholars seem to have ignored Dunbar's use of allegory. For example, Fox has remarked: "Dunbar does not, in fact, seem to be much interested in the allegory of his poem...not primarily concerned with maintaining a clear allegorical narrative." (Fox 1959, 318) Of course, the *Targe* does not have to be understood as a meta-poetical allegory. The allegorical genre has often, by nature of its definition, made us forget that allegory is, first and foremost, one among many methods of appreciation. Just as in Biblical exegesis the allegorical meaning does not exclude the other three levels of meaning, nor does "decoding" the literal meaning makes it justifiable for us to nullify the intrinsic poetic value of the allegories in themselves and discard them as used tools. The *significacio* in medieval allegorical poetry is not "a chilling and irrelevant addition to the story." (Lewis 1936, 250) Rather, allegories work like lamps that throw light upon obscure corners between the lines, allowing us the *jouissance* of discovering new landscapes when visiting old places. In *The Golden Targe*, Dunbar's allegories serve as prisms that turn the entire poem into a hall of mirrors, in such a self-conscious manner and with such ingenious craftsmanship, that one is prone to find Fox's above-cited view rather unwarrantable. From Dunbar's fifteenth-century Middle English dream visions to Robert Burns' highly suggestive modern English verses, the art of allegorical characterization was never truly lost in Scottish poesy.

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