

JASON CRAWFORD. *Allegory and Enchantment: An Early Modern Poetics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. Pp. 256. \$80.00 (cloth).  
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The word *allegory* is best translated as “other-speaking for the marketplace.” The fact that this other-speech takes place in the *agora*, the site of economic exchange, ties literary allegory to economic as well as to verbal modes of alienation. Allegory systematically removes the reader from the world of sensory experience, transporting him or her into a realm of walking, talking, abstractions. For that reason it is often used to reflect on the psychological effects of commodification, which imposes a symbolic exchange-value on the world of immediate experience. In allegory such symbols come alive, in a manner analogous to the spectral animation achieved by commodities. The technique of *prosopopeia*, in particular, has traditionally provided a means to reflect on the reification to which human beings are subjected by the alienation of their activity in the symbolic form of money. In Renaissance England, such allegorical techniques were frequently employed to comment on the process that Jason Crawford calls “disenchantment,” by means of which magical thinking was purged from the conceptual mindset of Europe’s intelligentsia.

The process of “disenchantment” has often been linked to the rise of the economic marketplace and the development of a money economy. With the gradual growth of usury, money began to reproduce and to impose itself as an active force in society, and the occult power of every species of image became a matter of public concern. Following Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer’s seminal *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947), an entire critical tradition has shown how the autonomous reproduction of financial value constituted a new form of supernatural causality that incrementally displaced older forms of magic. Today, the domination of money over the human beings whose activity it represents is more pronounced than ever before. The cultural power of the commodity, it is often argued, has produced a condition of “hyper-reality,” in which ordinary experience melts into representation, blurring the distinctions between appearance and reality, sign and referent, even people and things. As a result, many literary critics have recently grown interested in allegory as a medium for reflecting on the marketplace’s influence on the human *psyche*.

Crawford is apparently not among them. He has written a learned and absorbing study of allegory in theory and practice, but his neglect of what might appear to be the most clearly topical of the genre’s concerns is surprising, and slightly disappointing. *Allegory and Enchantment* is undoubtedly a valuable addition to scholarship on the subject. The introduction rehearses Max Weber’s theory of disenchantment fluently and insightfully, though without dwelling on Weber’s description of “the spirit of capitalism.” The first chapter traces allegory’s origins back to Plato’s cave, following the genre’s progress through Origen’s biblical exegesis, to Augustine’s relegation of the pagan deities to the realm of fiction, before demonstrating the Christological inspiration behind Prudentius’s *Psychomachia*. These two sections are perspicacious, meticulous, and significant contributions to our understanding of allegory’s history. When we arrive in early modern England, however, the eloquent absence of economic themes starts to appear peculiar. The works of William Langland, John Skelton, Edmund Spenser, John Bunyan, and others are treated in isolation from their historical contexts, and the ideological process of disenchantment is wrenched away from any dialogue with wider social discourses.

It would surely have surprised these authors to find their work discussed without mention of what we think of today as “economic” phenomena. Each of them treats the psychological impact of the marketplace as crucial to their allegorical form. Langland’s *Piers Plowman* (1370–90) depicts the reification of the self in the figure of Lady Mede, who is described as inseparable from “marchandise.” Although he quotes this line, Crawford seems to miss its implications, dismissing it as “a rather unassuming metaphor” (101). Skelton’s *The Bowge of*

*Courte* (1499) criticizes the transition from the feudal to a commercial worldview, in which the courtier is himself commodified. Spenser's *The Faerie Queen* (1590) portrays the Cave of Mammon as the primal source of allegorical figuration, while Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) gives us the famous conceit of Vanity Fair, where the "merchandizers" fail to grasp that the pilgrims are "strangers in this world," and persecute them for their rejection of the fair's commodities. None of these episodes is discussed in any detail here. Apart from a brief, depoliticized mention of Walter Benjamin, neither is the copious critical tradition that shows how allegory expresses the impact of commodification and reification on modern subjectivity.

It seems symptomatic that Crawford translates the term "allegory" simply as "other-speaking." He operates on the assumption that allegory is a purely literary device that can be separated from other forms of discourse. At times, this book's neglect of economic and political context is so complete as to seem almost pointed, but if the purpose really was polemical, it would surely have been better served by making an explicit case for the omission of such concerns. After all, the authors dealt with in this book treat the relation between economics and aesthetics in great depth and detail. That relation is not peripheral; it is central to the development of allegory in the English Renaissance, and to study these texts without taking it into account will result in a partial understanding of their purport. Furthermore, the reflections of early modern allegorists on the market's imposition of symbolic exchange-value upon substantial use-value are particularly significant today, when the impact of finance on aesthetics and psychology is both more obvious and less benign than in early modernity. Today it is impossible to ignore the effects of the marketplace on art, or on the minds from which art emerges. It was, surely, also impossible in the early modern period. The idea that the "economic" and the "aesthetic" constitute discrete fields of human activity that can be studied in isolation from each other is specifically modern. Its dominance extends from the start of the eighteenth century to the end of the twentieth. But its obsolescence in postmodernity is palpable, and ought to be acknowledged by economists and literary critics alike.

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JUSTIN DU RIVAGE. *Revolution against Empire: Taxes, Politics, and the Origins of American Independence*. Lewis Walpole Series in Eighteenth-Century Culture and History. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017. Pp. 371. \$40.00 (cloth).  
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In the standard narrative of American independence, the colonies broke from Britain because Parliament tried to tax them without their consent. In his book, *Revolution against Empire*, Justin Du Rivage suggests something rather different. Challenging the enduring libertarian image of the American colonists, he suggests instead that independence resulted from a civil war within the British Empire between parties with competing visions of imperial state power.

Du Rivage is part of a growing group of historians of capitalism working to put politics back in economics. These scholars rightfully insist that government and business are inseparable, that there is nothing "natural" about money and markets, and that politics is partly about who controls and distributes fiscal resources. By focusing on ideas about political economy in general and the issue of taxation in particular, this study highlights the role that ideology plays in economic debates. In the eighteenth century, ideological divides over the shape of the imperial economy literally broke the British Empire.