

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-12376-1 - Humanism, Machinery, and Renaissance Literature

Jessica Wolfe

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

HUMANISM, MACHINERY, AND RENAISSANCE LITERATURE

This book explores how machinery and the practice of mechanics participate in the intellectual culture of Renaissance humanism. Before the emergence of the modern concept of technology, sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century writers recognized the applicability of mechanical practices and objects to some of their most urgent moral, aesthetic, and political questions. The construction, use, and representation of devices including clocks, scientific instruments, stage machinery, and war engines not only reflect but also actively reshape how Renaissance writers define and justify artifice and instrumentality – the reliance upon instruments, mechanical or otherwise, to achieve a particular end. Harnessing the discipline of mechanics to their literary and philosophical concerns, scholars and poets including Francis Bacon, Edmund Spenser, George Chapman, and Gabriel Harvey look to machinery to ponder and dispute all manner of instrumental means, from rhetoric and pedagogy to diplomacy and courtly dissimulation.

JESSICA WOLFE is Assistant Professor in the Department of English at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-12376-1 - Humanism, Machinery, and Renaissance Literature

Jessica Wolfe

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

HUMANISM, MACHINERY,
AND RENAISSANCE
LITERATURE

JESSICA WOLFE

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
 978-0-521-12376-1 - Humanism, Machinery, and Renaissance Literature
 Jessica Wolfe
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
 Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,
 São Paulo, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo

Cambridge University Press
 The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
 Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521123761

© Jessica Wolfe, 2004

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
 and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
 no reproduction of any part may take place without the written
 permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2004
 Third printing 2006
 This digitally printed version 2009

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data
 Wolfe, Jessica.

Humanism, machinery, and Renaissance literature / Jessica Wolfe.
 p. cm.

Based on the author's thesis (Ph. D., Stanford University).

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0 521 83187 3

1. English literature – Early modern, 1500–1700 – History and criticism. 2. Humanism in literature.
 3. Machinery in literature. 4. Mechanics in literature. 5. Renaissance – England.
 6. Humanists – England. I. Title.

PR428.H8W65 2004

820.9'384 – dc22 2003055396

ISBN 978-0-521-83187-1 Hardback
 ISBN 978-0-521-12376-1 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or
 accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in
 this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is,
 or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-12376-1 - Humanism, Machinery, and Renaissance Literature

Jessica Wolfe

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

To my parents

“pregnant rules avail much, but visible examples amount incredibly . . .”

Gabriel Harvey

Contents

<i>List of illustrations</i>	<i>page</i> viii
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	x
Introduction: Subtle devices: Renaissance humanism and its machinery	1
1 Automatonpoesis: machinery and courtliness in Renaissance Urbino	29
2 Artificial motions: machinery, courtliness, and discipline in Renaissance England	56
3 Inanimate ambassadors: the mechanics and politics of mediation	88
4 The polymechany of Gabriel Harvey	125
5 Homer in a nutshell: George Chapman and the mechanics of perspicuity	161
6 Inhumanism: Spenser's iron man	203
Conclusion	236
<i>Notes</i>	242
<i>Index</i>	301

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-12376-1 - Humanism, Machinery, and Renaissance Literature

Jessica Wolfe

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Illustrations*

- 1.1 Cesare Ripa, *Nova Iconologia . . . Nella Quale si Descrivono diverse Imagini di Virtù, Vitti, Affetti, Passioni humane, Arti, Discipline, Humeri, [e] Elementi* (Padua: Pietro Paolo Tozzi, 1618), “Artificio,” p. 38. Reproduced with permission of Duke University Library. page 30
- 3.1 Albrecht Dürer, *Institutionum geometricarum libris, lineas, superficies, & solida corpora tractavit [Unterweisung der Messung]* (Paris: Christian Wechel, 1532), sig. aiiiv. Reproduced with permission of Duke University Library. 99
- 4.1 John Blagrave, *The Mathematical Jewel* (London: Walter Venge, 1585), second title-page with MS notes of Gabriel Harvey (BL C.60.0.7). Copyright British Library. 135
- 4.2 John Blagrave, *The Mathematical Jewel* (London: Walter Venge, 1585), working paper astrolabe (BL C.60.0.7). Copyright British Library. 144
- 4.3 E. G., *The Storehouse of Industrious Devices. Benefitiall to all that delite in the mathematicall sciences* (London, 1620?), Plate 19. Copyright British Library. 149
- 5.1 John Harington, *An Anatomie of the Metamorphos-ed Ajax* (London: Richard Field, 1596), Liiii^v–Lv^R. This item reproduced with permission of the Huntington Library, San Marino, CA. 194
- 5.2 Roberto Valturio, *De re Militari Libris XIII* (Paris: Christian Wechel, 1535), Book 10, p. 252 (sig. X6v). This copy reproduced with permission of the Rare Book Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. 200
- 5.3 Roberto Valturio, *De re Militari Libris XIII* (Paris: Christian Wechel, 1535), Book 10, p. 239 (sig. V6v). This

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-12376-1 - Humanism, Machinery, and Renaissance Literature

Jessica Wolfe

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*List of illustrations*

ix

- copy reproduced with permission of the Rare Book
Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. 201
- 6.1 Flavius Renatus Vegetius, *De re Militari Libri Quatuor*
(Paris: Christian Wechel, 1535), Book 1, p. 13 (sig. Br).
This copy reproduced with permission of the Rare Book
Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. 227
- 6.2 Roberto Valturio, *De re Militari Libris XIII* (Paris:
Christian Wechel, 1535), Book 10, p. 255 (sig. Y2r). This
copy reproduced with permission of the Rare Book
Collection, University of North Carolina at
Chapel Hill. 234

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-12376-1 - Humanism, Machinery, and Renaissance Literature

Jessica Wolfe

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Acknowledgments

The contours of this book have been shaped by dogs and the people who love them. The project was born in 1995, in the eaved study of a San Francisco Victorian house shared by Catherine Magid and Blackjack, who each in their own way provided a perfect antidote to the prospect of writing a dissertation. I made my final revisions in December 2002 while huddling by the fire during the aftermath of an ice storm, insulated by many blankets, my husband, and our two dachshunds, Tilly and Ginger.

Over the course of those seven years, my skills and my sense of purpose as a scholar have grown from the wisdom and kindness of many teachers, colleagues, and friends. At the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, an exceptional group of Renaissance scholars, including Alan Dessen, Ritchie Kendall, Megan Matchinske, Peter Kaufman, Lance Lazar, Mary Pardo, Michael Cole, Barbara Harris, Lucia Binotti, and Dino Cervigni have been generous with their advice and encouragement. John Headley deserves special mention for having fortified me with extraordinary support for my work as well as with camaraderie over kir *ordinaire*. An exemplary scholar, a conscientious citizen of the University of North Carolina community, and a devoted friend, Darryl Gless has helped me to complete this book in so many different ways, though none more delightful than companionship over a plate of *lardo*. As past and present chairs of the University of North Carolina English Department, Bill Andrews and James Thompson have both worked to cultivate the ideal conditions for making a happy and productive scholar and teacher out of me, and I am thankful to them and to the department as a whole for having confidence in me.

At Stanford University, David Riggs taught me to wear my love of the archive with pride, while Seth Lerer demonstrated how exemplary teaching and superlative scholarship can and do come in the same package, particularly when both are nurtured by an unabashed enthusiasm for the life of the mind. Thanks are also due to Ron Rebholz, Patricia Parker, Jennifer Summit, Ania Loomba, Suvir Kaul, Terry Castle, and Bliss Carnochan, to

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-12376-1 - Humanism, Machinery, and Renaissance Literature

Jessica Wolfe

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Acknowledgments*

xi

my fellow graduate students in English and Comparative Literature, and last but not least to Stephen Orgel. I am very grateful to Norman Fiering and the entire staff at the John Carter Brown library, where I was a doctoral fellow during fall of 1996, for the opportunity to tinker with working paper astronomical instruments and to enjoy the crisp tranquility of a Providence autumn, where I also had the pleasure of discussing my discoveries with Karen Newman and Stephen Foley.

Thanks to a Mellon Dissertation Fellowship, a travel grant from Stanford University, and John Kimbell, I was able to spend many months at the British Library at the beginning of this project; towards the end, thanks are also due to Nigel Smith and Kate Flint for the use of their home in Oxford, which allowed me to get to know Henry Savile and John Dee when the Bodleian was open, and the delights of Great Tew and the Vale of the White Horse when it was closed. On this side of the Atlantic, family and friends have offered plenty of love and wisdom to offset the challenges of writing this book. Michael and Belinda McFee, Al and Janet Rabil, and Tom and Margaret Stumpf have all helped make Carolina feel like home, while Erin Carlston, George Lensing, Tom Reinert, Jane Thraikill, Rashmi Varma, and Joe Viscomi have offered with their friendship a healthy balance of incisive critique and frivolous diversion. I am also grateful to my editors and anonymous readers at Cambridge University Press for their valuable advice and careful work on the typescript, and especially for their much-needed urging to trim the book of its gratuitous bulk and its infelicities of style, much too much of which, I am sure, still remains despite my efforts. Most of all, I am grateful to my family, who taught me the value of keen analysis, carefully crafted prose, and lively debate, and who have been proud and supportive of my academic successes since the early days of gold stars and fingerpainting.

This book simply would not exist without the love, exuberance, erudition, and occasional cajoling of one extraordinary person, Reid Barbour, who has proven not only to be an ideal intellectual companion, but also the most sympathetic, dedicated, and downright fun husband I could possibly have imagined. From our shared interest in Cistercian abbeys, Lucretian atomism, and the poetry of Herrick to our mutual love of Slurpees and carnival rides, life with you brings back the Renaissance spirit of the *gioco-serio*. Our life together has been, and will continue to be, a recreation in the fullest, seventeenth-century meaning of the term.

Jessica Wolfe

Durham, North Carolina, April 2003