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978-1-107-04165-3 - Writing Metamorphosis in the English Renaissance 1550–1700

Susan Wiseman

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WRITING METAMORPHOSIS IN THE ENGLISH RENAISSANCE

Taking Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as its starting point, this book analyses fantastic creatures including werewolves, bear-children and dragons in English literature from the Reformation to the late seventeenth century. Susan Wiseman tracks the idea of transformation through classical, literary, sacred, physiological, folkloric and ethnographic texts. Under modern disciplinary protocols these areas of writing are kept apart, but this study shows that in the Renaissance they were woven together by shared resources, frames of knowledge and readers. Drawing on a rich collection of critical and historical studies and key philosophical texts including Descartes' *Meditations*, Wiseman outlines the importance of metamorphosis as a significant literary mode. Her examples range from canonical literature, including Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*, to Thomas Browne on dragons, together with popular material, arguing that the seventeenth century is marked by concentration on the potential of the human, and the world, to change or be changed.

SUSAN WISEMAN is Professor of Seventeenth-Century Literature at Birkbeck College, University of London. She is the author of *Conspiracy and Virtue: Women, Writing, and Politics in Seventeenth-Century England* (2006), *Politics and Drama in the English Civil War* (1998) and *Aphra Behn* (1996; second edition 2007). She has co-edited *The Nice Valour* for *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works* (2007).

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University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

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It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.orgInformation on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107041653

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First published 2014

Printed in the United Kingdom by Clays, St Ives plc

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library**Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data*

Wiseman, Susan.

Writing Metamorphosis in the English Renaissance : 1550–1700 / Susan Wiseman.

pages cm

Includes index.

ISBN 978-1-107-04165-3 (hardback)

1. English literature – History and criticism. 2. Animals, Mythical, in literature.

3. Metamorphosis in literature. 4. Monsters in literature. I. Title.

P149.A7W58 2013

820.9/3620903 – dc23 2013039526

ISBN 978-1-107-04165-3 Hardback

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Acknowledgements

For reading drafts, discussing, sharing ideas, giving me references, and having fun I am very grateful to Erica Fudge, Paul Salzman and above all Tim Armstrong. I am grateful to Tom Healy for reading related materials published in *Renaissance Transformations*. I am very grateful to the two anonymous readers who read the materials for Cambridge University Press and who gave constructive and engaged suggestions which changed the shape of the book. Remaining errors are my own.

For references, sharing work and advice I am grateful to Anthony Bale, Anke Bernau, Luisa Calè, Daniel Carey, Stephen Clucas, Isabel Davis, Patrizia diBello, John Drakakis, Jessica Dyson, Catherine Edwards, Anne Goldgar, Linda Grant, Margaret Healy, Tom Healy, Judith Hudson, the late Ann Jennison, Kevin Killeen, Esther Leslie, Gordon MacMullan, the late Kirsty Milne, Michelle O'Callaghan, Louise Owen, Edward Paleit, Emily Senior, Erica Sheen, Adam Smyth, John Stokes and Colin Teevan. For support at key moments Anthony Bale, Luisa Calè, Hilary Fraser, Anne Janowitz. At Birkbeck, thanks to Catherine Catrìx, Shabna Begum, Mandy-Shay Riggins and Anne-Marie Taylor. Thanks too to the School of Arts Research Fund for financial support for illustrations. For further support for illustrations I am very grateful to the Marc Fitch Fund.

I have given talks derived from this work at many places, starting with the Outsiders conference in Stirling, and, to name but two more, University College Galway and the SEDERI conference in Huelva, at the invitation of Zenon Martinez. I am grateful for these opportunities and for the conversations that ensued.

I am grateful to the staff at the British Library, particularly to staff in Rare Books; London Metropolitan Archives; National Archives, Kew.

At Cambridge University Press Sarah Stanton's willingness to consider the topic and her precise and constructive critical engagement made this

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Acknowledgements

monograph possible. Rebecca Taylor, Sarah Roberts and Samantha Richter (in sequence) and Penny Wheeler have been patient and helpful.

Above all, Nicholas Wiseman and Tim Armstrong, who have lived with this and, worse, with me, deserve better. Thank you both.

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A note on texts

The text follows the spelling and punctuation of pre-modern texts and editions used. Where editions using modernised spelling have substantial advantages those have been used. Golding's use of Roman numerals is followed but other Roman numerals are usually changed.

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<i>AHR</i>	<i>American Historical Review</i>
<i>CSPD</i>	<i>Calendar of State Papers</i>
<i>EHR</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
<i>ELH</i>	<i>English Literary History</i>
<i>ELR</i>	<i>English Literary Renaissance</i>
<i>HLQ</i>	<i>Huntington Library Quarterly</i>
HMC	Historical Manuscripts Commission
<i>JHI</i>	<i>Journal of the History of Ideas</i>
<i>MLR</i>	<i>Modern Language Review</i>
<i>NQ</i>	<i>Notes and Queries</i>
<i>OED</i>	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
<i>RES</i>	<i>Review of English Studies</i>
<i>SEL</i>	<i>Studies in English Literature</i>
SP	State Papers
<i>SQ</i>	<i>Shakespeare Quarterly</i>