Shakespeare

ISSN: 1745-0918 (Print) 1745-0926 (Online) Journal homepage: http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rshk20

Pyrrhonist uncertainty in Shakespeare's sonnets

Amanda Ogden Kellogg

To cite this article: Amanda Ogden Kellogg (2015) Pyrrhonist uncertainty in Shakespeare's sonnets, Shakespeare, 11:4, 408-424, DOI: 10.1080/17450918.2013.879604

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17450918.2013.879604

Shakespeare, 2015
Vol. 11, No. 4, 408–424, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17450918.2013.879604

Pyrrhonist uncertainty in Shakespeare's sonnets

Amanda Ogden Kellogg*

University of North Texas, English, Denton, Texas, USA

While some criticism of early modern skepticism has suggested that skeptical thought was a source for anxiety or instability that early modern authors sought to overcome, this article examines the generative influence of Pyrrhonist skepticism on Shakespeare's sonnets. Pyrrhonist skepticism regards the acknowledgment of multiple interpretive possibilities as an essential step toward suspending judgment and, ultimately, reaching a state of tranquility. A similar practice exists in Shakespeare's sonnets, where ambiguity enables readers to accept the existence of multiple perspectives and to see the uncertainty they experience as a source of pleasure. In this way, Shakespeare diverges from the Petrarchan convention of using metaphors as a source for epistemological certainty (where, for instance, the heart is visible in the eye or on the page). Shakespeare deploys many such Petrarchan metaphors, but in a way that renders their meaning unstable and therefore creates uncertainty. Out of this uncertainty, generated by fragmented and conflicting metaphors, Shakespeare creates a sublime experience of the unknown, representing knowledge as both constructed and malleable.

Keywords: Petrarchanism; skepticism; philosophy

Over the past 30 years, scholars have written extensively on early modern epistemology, focusing to a large extent on Shakespeare and his response to the problem of knowledge. Stanley Cavell argues that Shakespeare's plays "find no stable solution to skepticism, in particular no rest in what we know of God" (3). Paul Kottman argues that "reflection on the inadequacy of our inherited ways of making sense of our shared words and deeds" leads an audience "to learn, through the endurance of suffering, just what it means to live with the breach, with an irreparable split" (14). And Robert Watson chronicles the late-Renaissance search for an "epistemological solution" to the philosophical crisis spurred by the reintroduction of the skeptical writings of Sextus Empiricus, an "ancient ghost who returned to haunt the Renaissance with rumors of a death of meaning" (28, 20).[1] In such commentaries, scholars consistently represent responses to skepticism as attempts to resolve the problem of knowledge by re-stabilizing, by searching for ways to repair the "irreparable split." While these and similar works on skepticism have made readers particularly sensitive to the epistemological anxiety in Shakespeare's corpus, the continued critical emphasis on skepticism as a problematic, destabilizing philosophy is inconsistent with the original practices of Pyrrhonism that Shakespeare also deploys.[2]

To regard skepticism merely as an epistemological problem, a source of anxiety that prompts resistance, is to overlook the constructive possibilities of Pyrrhonist philosophy in Shakespeare's works. Like the Pyrrhonists, Shakespeare believes that epistemological uncertainty can be a productive state, in which individuals, confronted with the

*Email: amandaogden@my.unt.edu

limitations of their own knowledge, may work together to construct new realities absent of empirical truth, a process of meaning-making.[3] Shakespeare's emphasis on the meaning-making potential of uncertainty is particularly apparent in his sonnets. Readers of the sonnets may acknowledge the imperfection of human expression and interpretation; however, Shakespeare demonstrates that imperfect understanding can still be a source of creativity, intimacy, and pleasure.

Epistemological uncertainty in the sonnets is not a problem to be solved or an unstable foundation from which to seek refuge; it is the basis from which meaning-making begins. In what follows, I offer a brief description of Pyrrhonist philosophy, outlining the early modern engagement with its understanding of epistemological uncertainty as a productive state. In order best to appreciate Shakespeare's divergence from the Petrarchan tradition (a divergence, I argue, that correlates with Pyrrhonist philosophy), I describe Petrarchan resistance to skepticism by examining the metaphors of epistemological certainty frequently employed by sonneteers. Having established the conflict between the skeptical and Petrarchan bases for Shakespeare's sonnets, I conclude by showing how Shakespeare complicates metaphors of epistemological certainty in the sonnets, inviting readers to recognize the existence of multiple perspectives so that the sonnets can ultimately demonstrate the constructive, meaning-making potential of uncertainty. Pyrrhonism not only enables a more complex reading of Shakespearean skepticism, but it also offers a new perspective on Shakespeare's response to the Petrarchan tradition and complicates narratives about the contrast between the young man and the dark lady sonnets.

The ghost of Sextus Empiricus

The Renaissance experienced a revival in the Greek philosophy of Pyrrhonist skepticism, a field named after the philosopher Pyrrho of Ellis and first formulated into a theory by Aenesidemus circa 100–40 BC. The only surviving work of the Pyrrhonian movement, that of Sextus Empiricus, was available in Latin translations starting in 1562, with English translations printed in 1590 or 1591 (Popkin xv, 19). Sir Walter Ralegh translated a portion of Sextus' work into English (Bertram 27); William Hamlin suggests that Ralegh's *The Sceptick* may have been the translation available to English readers in 1591 (35–36). The Pyrrhonist works were also popular with English writers, such as Thomas Nashe (Cox, *Seeming Knowledge* 8), and continental thinkers like Michel de Montaigne, who carved sayings from Sextus' work into the rafters of his study (Popkin 43). Given Shakespeare's voracious reading habit (McDonald 145–62) and his familiarity with Montaigne's writing, the influence of which scholars have noted in *The Tempest* (Harmon 988) and *King Lear* (Muir 206), Shakespeare is likely to have encountered the Pyrrhonian model, possibly having read Sextus' work. At the very least, as Hamlin argues, there is a "synchronic affinity" between the Pyrrhonian elements in the works of Montaigne and Shakespeare ("Nexus" 29). Scholars have argued for Sextus' direct influence over Shakespeare's works (Cox, *Seeming Knowledge* 228). Anita Gilman Sherman suggests that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* likely includes a paraphrase of Sextus' fifth mode for suspending judgment (Sherman 5–6), and Kent Cartwright finds in the ambiguity and uncertainty that pervades *Macbeth* echoes of Pyrrhonist argumentation (220). Shakespeare's interest in multiple perspectives probably derived in part from his study of rhetoric – from, for instance, the practice of arguing *in utramque partem*, or both sides of a contentious argument – but the popularity of Pyrrhonist skepticism among early modern thinkers, as well as the distinctly

Pyrrhonian style of suspending judgment that pervades Shakespeare's theatrical and poetic works, suggests that the philosophies of Sextus may have been available to Shakespeare.

Pyrrhonists argue that, because multiple perspectives exist on many issues and none can be definitely proved correct, individuals should avoid claims about the truth of their own beliefs.[4] In order to come to such a revelation about truth, the Pyrrhonists instruct their readers to seek equipollence, "equality with regard to being convincing or unconvincing: none of the conflicting accounts takes precedence over any other as being more convincing" (Sextus 5). Adopting such a philosophical mindset leads Pyrhonnists "first to suspension of judgment and afterwards to tranquility" (Sextus 4). Having a skeptical mindset did not necessarily result in anxiety; rather, it offered the potential for a tranquil acknowledgment that truth is subjective.

The Pyrrhonists distinguished themselves from philosophers who regarded the truth as entirely unknowable. In his writing on skepticism, Sextus draws a distinction between the Pyrrhonist philosophical outlook and that of Academic skeptics. Where the Academics (a school Sextus associates with Clitomachus and Carneades) argue that truth "cannot be apprehended," the Pyrrhonist skeptics are "still investigating" (Sextus 3). Sextus regards Pyrrhonist skepticism as significantly different from the New Academy and Medical Empiricists, because, he argues, both of these groups make "affirmations about the inapprehensibility of unclear matters" (Sextus 62). Because it discourages definitive claims about unknowability, the model touted by Sextus does not inspire the kind of panic-inducing epistemological anxiety invoked by descriptions of skepticism as "corrosive" (Buford 76). Shakespeare's predilection for creating uncertainty in his audience would suggest that his engagement with skepticism included not only academic skepticism (in which the individual asserts that nothing can be known for certain), but also Pyrrhonist skepticism, which responds to uncertainty by suspending judgment.

In addition to focusing too narrowly on anxious responses to the skeptical revival, critics frequently generalize about skepticism, not only collapsing different schools of skeptical thought (Academic and Pyrrhonist skepticism, for instance), but also collapsing skepticism with other patterns of thought, such as pragmatism and constructivism (Carson 140). Modern conceptions of skepticism are filtered through the work of Descartes, who, like an Academic skeptic, begins from a position of doubt (Carson 141). However, Pyrrhonist skepticism takes the opposite stance, where "instead of doubting every position imaginable, the investigative Pyrrhonist entertains them all at once ... balancing knowledge claims against one another in such a way that we can neither assent to nor deny any of them" (Carson 152). By overwhelming his audience with a multitude of viable solutions or attitudes, the Pyrrhonist encourages the cultivation of doubt: if a number of theories exist as possibilities, then no single theory can be obviously and undeniably true. Montaigne, whom Richard Popkin rightly deems "the most significant figure in the sixteenth century revival of ancient skepticism," thoroughly engaged Pyrrhonism in his writing (Popkin 42). Like Shakespeare's, some of Montaigne's writings use fragmented, conflicting images to evoke a Pyrrhonist response in the reader.

Montaigne capitalizes on the insufficiency of a single impression in order to create sublime experiences of images in collaboration. As David Sedley explains, Montaigne develops an experience of the sublime by creating a paradox, in which the grandeur of an object is expressed through its inexpressibility, through the inability of any descriptor sufficiently to describe its grandeur (42). This strategy is at work in *Journal de voyage*, where, Sedley argues, by using an extensive catalogue of metaphors and descriptors to

communicate the concept of Roman ruins to his reader, Montaigne generates an experience of their inexpressible sublimity (42). In Sedley's reading of Montaigne, skepticism does not constitute merely an absence of knowledge or an immobilizing awareness of the imperfections of human understanding and communication. Instead, the insufficiency of any single image used in the past to reconstruct the glory of ancient Rome drives Montaigne to an array of images that generates a new and productive experience. Montaigne does not reconstruct the ruins for his reader, but he does appeal to "the sublime through a series of impasses to grandeur erected by skepticism" (Sedley 42). Like Montaigne, Shakespeare recognizes this aesthetic value of skepticism in his sonnets, where jumbled metaphors (inherited from his Petrarchan forbears) may prevent the reader from developing a static, coherent understanding of the subject in favor of an emotionally charged, dynamic response to the sublime. Shakespeare has a talent for revealing the existence of multiple viable perspectives; acknowledging and recording such a variety of perspectives enables poet and reader to generate new experiences and understandings. Informed by Pyrrhonist philosophy, Shakespeare rejects the traditional sonnet-writing practice of employing metaphors of epistemological certainty in favour of an overarching, multi-image experience.

Epistemological certainty in early modern literature

Scholars have long noted that Shakespeare's sonnets include a critical response to the Petrarchan tradition, and I am building on such analysis by demonstrating how Shakespeare's engagement with Petrarchan conceits offers a criticism of the metaphors of epistemological certainty many sonnets contain. Shakespeare is particularly interested in critiquing the sonnet's inherited traditions, but these critiques – as Stephen Booth and Joel Fineman argue – are built into the sonnet tradition. Booth aptly describes the sonnet tradition as one of indecorum, suggesting that "in all stages of its development, the courtly love tradition relies upon a reader's sense of the frame of reference in which the writer operates and the writer's apparent deviation from that pattern in a rhetorical action that both fits and violates the expected pattern" (20).[5] Readers of Shakespeare's sonnets use their knowledge of the tradition as a frame of reference through which to make meaning, and Shakespeare's divergence from the tradition is a source of pleasure and fascination. Pyrrhonist skepticism provides a useful context for understanding Shakespeare's unique response to the sonnet tradition and readers' continued interest in his poetry.

The idea that a person's body can be read as an indicator of his or her mental, emotional, or moral state continues to be a common trope in literature, and it had particular influence over the sonnet tradition. In Petrarch's sonnet 78, for instance, Laura, "in her appearance ... seems humbled, / and her expression promises peace" (78). This hope for or belief in epistemological certainty is one of the driving forces of the Petrarchan tradition. It led sonneteers to adopt and develop a variety of metaphors that use the body to think about empirical truths: Philip Sidney sees "Virtue's great beauty in [Stella's] face" (25.13), for example, while Thomas Wyatt, imitating Petrarch, complains that his "fear and hope" cause him to "burn and freeze like ice" (80). The impulse to identify external traits as markers of internal states points to a desire to know the truth about other people completely and with certainty. In one particularly familiar epistemological metaphor, the poet speaker imagines the eyes as windows to the heart or soul.[6] For example, in Wyatt's poem "That the Eye Bewrayeth Always the Secret Affections of the

Heart," the speaker disputes with a friend who – upon offending the speaker with a harsh look – argues that the expression does not reflect any negative feelings about him. Although the speaker accepts his friend's explanation ("But I your Friend shall take it thus, / Since you will so, as stroke of chance"), he undercuts the truce by ending the stanza, "but for my part, / My eye must still betray my heart," and uses the final stanza to advise his friend:

> And of this grief ye shall be quit,
> In helping Truth steadfast to go.
> The time is long that Truth doth sit
> Feeble and weak, and suff'reth woe;
> Cherish him well, continue so;
> Let him not fro' your heart astart;
> Then fears not the eye to shew the heart. (236)[7]

The speaker describes Truth as located directly within the heart, where it has been held captive. He implies that the subject has long suppressed his true feelings, so that suffering truth has become "feeble and weak." While the speaker urges his friend to help and cherish truth, he also argues that one may only prevent displays of truth by keeping it captive, so that it may not "fro' your heart astart." This conclusion reinforces the inevitability of physical displays of truth: though the friend has tried, as the speaker counsels, to conceal the truth, the poem itself is a response to the subject's inability to do so. The speaker imagines that there is no sure way to prevent truth from revealing itself through the eyes.

Wyatt's deployment of the popular eyes-as-windows metaphor is an example of literary attempts to manifest vice or virtue physically. The sonnet tradition is replete with such metaphors that endeavor to correlate an image or a description with the mind, as writers before Montaigne had attempted to describe the Roman ruins by providing a coherent representation of them. Like Montaigne, Shakespeare uses fragmentary images to create an experience for his reader, and he borrows many of these images from the sonnet tradition. Shakespeare's Pyrrhonist-like intervention into the sonnet tradition, therefore, destabilizes epistemologically stable metaphors both to invite reflection on Petrarchanism and to create a constructive skeptical response in his reader. By eschewing epistemological certainty, Shakespeare diverges from the sonnet tradition to examine other methods for making and communicating meaning.

Acknowledging multiple perspectives in the sonnets

Scholarly analysis of the sonnets has placed too much emphasis on locating in Shakespeare's poetry the epistemological certainty apparent in the work of his predecessors (Schiffer 45–48). Still among the preeminent accounts of epistemology in the sonnets, Joel Fineman's *Shakespeare's Perjured Eye* creates a narrative arc within the sequence that privileges the young man by associating him with identification and epistemological certainty. Fineman's efforts to label the representation of knowledge acquisition during the young man sonnets as distinct from (and seemingly superior to) that of the dark lady exaggerate the epistemological certainty of the sonnets to the young man.[8] For instance, Fineman describes Shakespeare's experience of moving from the young man to the dark lady sonnets as a shift from likeness to difference:

> As a result, but as a highly paradoxical result, no longer joined to a sameness which is the same as itself, the poet is joined instead to an irreducible difference, to an essential otherness, whose power consists in the way it thus disrupts the logic and erotics of unified identity and complementary juncture. The poet-lover of the dark lady in this way identifies himself with difference. He identifies himself – but how can this be? – with that which resists, with that which breaks, identification. (22)

Fineman reads Shakespeare's shift from the young man to the dark lady as a violent, traumatic break from idealized sameness to a difference that resists and destroys the process of identification and knowledge acquisition. While gender is certainly a significant and oft-remarked-upon source of identification or difference in the sonnets, it is not the only identity-making characteristic Shakespeare examines. In the young man sonnets, the speaker also recognizes the "otherness" of the young man, who represents youth to the sonneteer's age, success to the sonneteer's failures ("So I, made lame by fortune's dearest spite, / Take all my comfort of thy worth and truth" (37.1–4)), roving indifference to the sonneteer's devotion ("So true a fool is love that in your will, / Though you do anything, he thinks no ill" (57.13–14)), and beauty to the sonneteer's fading appearance ("'Tis thee, myself, that for myself I praise, / Painting my age with beauty of thy days" (62.13–14)). Moreover, the description of the young man in sonnet 20 (especially his status as "master-mistress" (20.2)) suggests that even his gender identity is ambiguous. Gender is unstable and not the only similarity from which identification can spring; the similarities and differences present across the young man and dark lady sonnets facilitate opportunities for both identification and uncertainty.

Additionally, while the speaker does frequently engage in the "logic and erotics of unified identity" (Fineman 22) in the young man sonnets, recognition of difference within these sonnets is also a source for pleasure. Describing his waning years in sonnet 73, for instance, the speaker suggests that it is specifically a difference in age that inspires affection in the young man: "This [the speaker's age and its effect on his appearance] thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong, / To love that well which thou must leave ere long" (13–14). The speaker and the young man may share their masculinity, but their relationship is nonetheless fraught with uncertainty and divisions. Because men in the early modern period conceived of differences along the spectrum of manhood, distinguishing men based on, for instance, age and social status (Shepard 15–17), gender should not be so overwhelmingly the characteristic through which scholars filter their reading of the sonnets. Such readings overlook the multi-faceted, meaning-making richness that comes from noticing all the forms of identity that not only separate the speaker from the young man, but also link him to the dark lady.

Despite her obvious femininity, the dark lady does not consistently represent "irreducible difference," as the speaker sometimes likens himself to the lady. For example, although positions within the love triangle are fluid, at times the speaker intimates that he and the dark lady compete for the affection of the young man as two (traditionally male) lovers would compete for their (traditionally female) beloved. Sonnet 134 in particular articulates the complexity of the speaker's identification with his subjects. Although the young man is "that other mine" (3), it is the dark lady – not the young man – who becomes the speaker's rival: the speaker describes the young man as being possessed by both himself and the dark lady – "he is thine" (1). In sharing their object of desire, the speaker and the dark lady share a significant characteristic. The speaker can identify with the dark lady's attachment to the young man, and the young man (the topmost point of the love triangle) maintains comparable relationships with the

speaker and the sonnet mistress, rendering them analogous as the two lower, relatively equal points on the love triangle.

Fineman's reading consistently distinguishes the dark lady and her sonnets from the homosocial sonnets to the young man, but the two are similar in their treatment of Petrarchan conceits, which Shakespeare depicts throughout the sequence as reliant on fictions of epistemological certainty. In the dark lady sonnets, especially sonnet 130, Petrarchan epistemological metaphors create false, inadequate representations, and the procreation sonnets suggest that Petrarchan metaphors are figuratively and biologically unproductive.[9]

Many of the sonnets to the young man read the attributes of his traditional Petrarchan beauty as symbolically significant, thereby linking them to the poetic impulse to seek epistemological certainty in appearance. Such is the case in sonnet 14:

> But from thine eyes my knowledge I derive,
> And, constant stars, in them I read such art
> As truth and beauty shall together thrive
> If from thyself to store thou wouldst convert.
> Or else of thee this I prognosticate:
> Thy end is truth's and beauty's doom and date. (14.9–14)

The speaker regards his beloved as a source for knowledge. The eyes are "constant stars," which can predict the future, but can also function as a guide. The speaker does, in this instance, imagine that the beloved's eyes are prophetic: he reads in them that the young man must "convert" his store by reproducing. If the young man fails to have children, the speaker predicts, truth and beauty will meet their doom. In this sonnet, Shakespeare, like other Petrarchan poets, imagines the eyes as a source for guidance and greater truths.[10]

Following this appeal to reproduce, which draws on a familiar epistemological narrative, Shakespeare completes the procreation series with three sonnets that correlate the physical reproduction of the young man to the speaker's production of sonnets. While sonnet 15 claims that the speaker can "engraft" the young man "new" (15.14), both 16 and 17 suggest that poetry is an inferior substitute, contrasting the unproductive sonnet with the reproductive potential of its subject. Although it is clear in phrases such as "my pupil pen" (16.10) that Shakespeare is exercising a degree of poetic humility, the final procreation sonnets link attempts at communicating truth through poetry with barrenness (16.4) and death. The sonnet "is but as a tomb / Which hides your life, and shows not half your parts" (17.3–4); the reference to the "parts" of the beloved invokes the blazon. Not only do the procreation sonnets represent the metaphors of certainty associated with the sonnet tradition as unproductive, but many other young man sonnets also expose the inability of such metaphors to signify reliably.

One of Shakespeare's most powerful methods for critically examining the epistemology of the epideictic tradition is to take up its popular metaphors and reimagine or problematize them. In sonnet 24, for instance, Shakespeare illustrates the difficulty in using metaphors to communicate abstract states-of-being. Shakespeare imagines the eyes not merely as the figurative entrance to the soul, but as the literal window into the shop of the speaker's heart. By literalizing the windows metaphor, Shakespeare complicates the fantasy of accessible knowledge, ultimately destroying the conceit by demonstrating – through a dizzying series of images – that knowledge of another person's soul is hard to discover, and that learning the empirical truth of a poem or poet is difficult.

> Mine eye hath played the painter, and hath steeled
> Thy beauty's form in table of my heart.
> My body is the frame wherein 'tis held,
> And perspective it is best painter's art;
> For through the painter must you see his skill
> To find where your true image pictured lies,
> Which in my bosom's shop is hanging still,
> That hath his windows glazèd with thine eyes.
> Now see what good turns eyes for eyes have done:
> Mine eyes have drawn thy shape, and thine for me
> Are windows to my breast, wherethrough the sun
> Delights to peep, to gaze therein on thee.
> Yet eyes this cunning want to grace their art:
> They draw but what they see, know not the heart.

The poem's reference to "perspective" in art (24.3) underscores the subjectivity of representation and perception. Perspective painting, while it may seem more lifelike from a single viewpoint, often seems misshapen or out of proportion from other views. This existence of multiple, more-or-less reliable viewpoints highlights the uncertainty of knowledge acquired through the senses. Though the speaker may feel that he has a complete understanding of the young man, the perspective from which he views the young man is only one of many viable perspectives. Its recognition of the existence of multiple perspectives allies this sonnet with the Pyrrhonist skeptical model. The speaker's willingness to regard his own understanding of the subject as a singular perspective, and one – as the final couplet indicates – that is perhaps incorrect, encourages readers to move toward a state of equipollence. Readers cannot know if their own perceptions, of either the subject as a beautiful, loving individual or the speaker as a faithful but inaccurate artist, are reflections of reality.

Sonnet 24's reference to perspective could also allude to the poet's role in constructing an identity for his subject. As Dympna Callaghan argues:

> As a genre, sonnets constitute the fruits of an encounter between the poet, or the poet's persona, and the object of his address on the one hand, and, on the other, the elusive identity of *the beloved*, the *inamorata* who conforms to the specifications of type precisely because she is *like no other*. The disjunction between "actual identity," even where such an identity is explicitly assigned, and the lyrical construction of the beloved reveals the poet's ... fantasy about the object of his adoration. (19)

Shakespeare frequently depicts this process of creating a literary identity, emphasizing that such an image is subjective, like a "painted counterfeit" (16.8), filtered through the experiences of the speaker, as in sonnet 31: "Their images I loved I view in thee" (31.13). In sonnet 24, Shakespeare's reference to framing emphasizes, as the Pyrrhonists do, that interpretation depends upon an individual's perspective. The speaker's assertion, "My body is the frame wherein 'tis held, / And perspective it is best painter's art" implies that the body is the context in which his representation of the young man is best understood. In Pyrrhonism, the concepts of framing and perspective emphasize the role of condition and individual perception in meaning-making and thereby encourage readers to acknowledge the existence of multiple viable interpretations. Sherman explains, Pyrrhonists "use frames, not as an instrument of mastery, but as a bracketing device conducive to perspective and multiple points of view" (17). In sonnet 24, the speaker constitutes only one frame through which to regard his subject, only one of the available

points of view. The image of the beloved is not etched in stone or marble, substances which, as sonnet 55 famously argues, are subject to more decay than the organic meaning-making process that takes place "in the eyes of all posterity" (55.11) and "in lovers' eyes" (55.14); Shakespeare's sonnets create malleable images, which engage in the process of bracketing or reframing.

Like the Pyrrhonists, Shakespeare encourages his readers to suspend judgment by engaging in reframing. Until the final couplet of sonnet 24, the speaker delivers a relatively cohesive argument, which benefits from the epistemological metaphors familiar to many readers. The final couplet, however, provides an entirely different frame of reference for the poem, one that urges readers to rethink the perspective they have held up to this point. If the poem is a painting that represents the heart, but paintings are insufficient media through which to draw the heart, then the image of the speaker's heart, invoked by the poem, is not reliable. By rebracketing the sonnet, Shakespeare denies his reader access to empirical truth about the nature of the beloved. Rather, the reframing enables a suspension of judgment that may ultimately lead to new, meaning-making opportunities. This rebracketing is also potentially a source for pleasure. The final couplet, like many voltas, gives the reader an unexpected conclusion. Such a surprise does not uniformly cause anxiety, even if it does destabilize and resituate the argument. Out of the uncertainty generated by the turn stems pleasure caused by reflecting on the nature of truth-making and truth-communicating in art, and in the sonnet in particular. Such invitations to rethink and reread exist throughout the sonnet sequence, where previous information may be filtered through new arguments or understandings. As he does with the opening line of sonnet 115 – "Those lines that I before have writ do lie" – Shakespeare often provides new interpretive possibilities that enrich the series and encourage reframed readings of previous poems.

Additionally, Shakespeare's revision of the windows metaphor in sonnet 24 complicates his readers' responses to the poem. The young man's eyes do not, in fact, provide a window to his own soul; instead, the speaker intimates, they "are windows to *my* breast" (emphasis added). Unlike, for instance, Sidney's description of Stella's eyes as "The windows now through which this heavenly guest / Looks o'er the world" (9.9–10), the young man's eyes offer a reflection of the speaker. This transposition complicates the common Petrarchan metaphor by denying its epistemological significance. The young man's eyes are not windows through which he is exposed, but mirrors by which his heart is concealed. Admittedly, Spenser offers a precedent for the mirror metaphor, declaring in his *Amoretti*, "Fayre eyes, the myrrour of my mazéd hart, / What wondrous virtue is contaynd in you" (7.1–2). While the relationship – a lover who sees his reflection in the eyes of his beloved, a beloved whose eyes have access to the heart or soul of the lover – is fundamentally the same, Spenser's sonnet does not break with the tradition of epistemological certainty because it privileges the speaker's ability to interpret the mistress's looks and the effects of their interactions:

> For when ye mildly looke with lovely hew,
> Then is my soule with life and love inspired:
> But when ye lowre, or looke on me askew,
> Then doe I die, as one with lightning fyred. (7.5–9)

Shakespeare presents a similar motif in sonnet 24, but differs from Spenser by offering no concrete interpretation. While Spenser reinforces that empirical truth derives from the

lovers' eyes, Shakespeare's transposition leaves its significance unexplained. Shakespeare diverges from the mirror trope in order to open up its interpretive possibilities and underscore the existence of multiple perspectives. The speaker sees inside his breast through the beloved's eyes; the beloved sees into the speaker's breast through the speaker's eyes, and the sun, also, peeps in. If each body, like the speaker's, is its own frame or context, then each set of eyes also holds a different and equally viable perspective.

Sonnet 24 creates a sensation similar to standing in between two mirrors that reflect increasingly smaller images from one another. The beloved's eyes reveal the soul of the speaker; inside the speaker's soul, the beloved's picture hangs upon the wall, whose small, painted eyes reveal a smaller soul. The two epistemological metaphors – seeking truth in the lover's eyes and finding the image or name of the beloved on one's heart – grate against each other, and they are further complicated by the new frame supplied by the final couplet. Because it incorporates so many devices that create and highlight uncertainty, sonnet 24 is one of the clearest representations of Shakespeare's affinity with Pyrrhonist philosophy. However, Shakespeare uses these Pyrrhonist devices throughout the sequence to deny readers access to empirical truths. The existence of multiple viable interpretations and unreliable Petrarchan tropes, for instance, is manifested in sonnets 92 and 93. The speaker concludes sonnet 92 with a revelation of his uncertainty, "Thou mayst be false, and yet I know it not" (92.14). Sonnet 93 begins by accepting this uncertainty ("So shall I live supposing thou art true"), acknowledging that Petrarchan sources of empirical truth – like the sweet appearance of the face (93.9–12) – do not always signify reliably. Confronted with such pervasive ambiguity, the reader must make meaning from the fragmented and conflicting information the speaker records. Instead of a consistent, biographical narrative about the speaker's devotion to his subject, readers are left with sublime impressions of the speaker's experiences, created out of the diverse images and arguments offered throughout the sequence.

Meaning-making in the sonnets

By creating new experiences for the reader out of isolated and conflicting descriptors, the sonnets become epistemologically generative, enabling readers to translate "errors ... To truths ... and for true things deemed" (96.7–8). The speaker undergoes this process himself, turning his confusion and uncertainty into emotional significance. Out of his confession that he has "looked on truth / Askance and strangely" (110.5–6) – a confession that highlights the possibility of multiple perspectives regarding truth – the speaker retrieves, not empirical certainty, but meaningful experiences nonetheless. The speaker believes that his strange and askance perspective "gave my heart another youth, / And ... proved thee my best love." Similar to the errors in sonnet 96, the speaker's interpretive difficulty in sonnet 110 is represented as an opportunity for knowledge acquisition, rather than a source for blame or anxiety.

The sonnets produce new knowledge, the significance of which is dependent in part upon the reader's unique reaction. As he does with the eyes-as-mirrors transposition in sonnet 24, Shakespeare utilizes metaphors to encourage new experiences of potentially familiar tropes, which necessarily hinge upon the reader's previous experiences with those tropes. For Shakespeare, this collaborative epistemology exists both between the author and his audience (it is the source for poetry's enduring legacy in sonnet 55) and

among the subjects of the sequence, whom Shakespeare frequently depicts in the process of making truth together.

Sonnet 138 offers one of the most suggestive representations of collaborative epistemology within and beyond the sequence; as the poem's subjects work to make their own truth, the audience must also generate meaning from a conflicted narrative. The sonnet interrogates the speaker's capacity for knowledge acquisition while also offering a critique of traditional Petrarchan conceits. It represents the uncertainty that stems from human separateness, deriding the existence of universal truths in favor of a model of collective meaning-making.

When my love swears that she is made of truth
I do believe her though I know she lies,
That she might think me some untutored youth
Unlearnèd in the world's false subtleties.
Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young,
Although she knows my days are past the best,
Simply I credit her false-speaking tongue;
On both sides thus is simple truth suppressed.
But wherefore says she not she is unjust,
And wherefore say not I that I am old?
O, love's best habit is in seeming trust,
And age in love loves not to have years told.
Therefore I lie with her, and she with me,
And in our faults by lies we flattered be.[11]

Shakespeare compels his readers to imagine an exchange between two lovers, where the speaker, presumably incited by jealousy or suspicion, has asked his lady to defend her honor. The readers enter a scene of which they have only limited knowledge: they can envision the exchange between the lovers, but they cannot discover what inspired it.

Shakespeare creates a paradox that requires the reader to acknowledge the impossibility of certainty. For the poem to function – for it, that is, to be comprehensible – the reader must accept the speaker's initial claim that he "believe[s] ... though I know she lies." From its outset, the poem asks its reader to accept one of the speaker's false claims as truth: either he does believe that the dark lady is faithful (and therefore does not know with certainty that she is lying) or he does not believe her because he knows, or suspects, for that matter, that she is false. To continue to read the poem is to accept both of the speaker's claims as truth although they cannot exist together. Unless the reader stops after the opening quatrain, therefore, they must experience a similar conflict to that of the speaker, believing what they know to be untrue. Accepting the impossible premise of the poem reminds readers of their own uncertainty about both the speaker and the exchange the poem records. Although they can have a similar experience to that of the speaker, they cannot know which, if any, of the speaker's statements are true. They must acknowledge the limits of their own perspective.

This sonnet, in which the speaker intentionally misreads his mistress or willfully believes her performance, also criticizes frequently deployed Petrarchan tropes which imply that a lady's virtue has external, physical signifiers. Even love, touted by so many poets (preceding and following Shakespeare) as an emotion that is visible on the physical body, is subject to the uncertainty that, for the Pyrrhonist, characterizes all social interactions. As he does in sonnets 93 and 138, Shakespeare frequently utilizes Petrarchan metaphors, but in a way that undermines their stability and authority. Helen Vendler argues that the speaker "is well aware of the received topoi of his culture, but he subjects

them to interrogation ... Shakespeare's awareness of norm is as complete as his depiction, in his speaker, of experiential violation of those norms" (29–30). Like the speaker of the procreation sonnets and sonnet 24, the dark lady avails herself of Petrarchan rhetoric. To plead her innocence, the dark lady suggests that she is "made of truth." The word "made" (in addition to punning on maid and thereby invoking the innocence of chastity) implies that her internal truth or faithfulness is apparent from her appearance: her body is made out of it, and, consequently, her beloved can witness it through his senses.

Although the claim that she is "made" from her virtue is jarring in the opening line of this poem, the dark lady's claim borrows from a long-standing poetic tradition. It was common practice among the sonneteers to describe the sonnet mistress as constructed out of parts that signify her virtue. In a blazon from Spenser's *Amoretti*, for instance, the beloved is:

> Fayre when the rose in her red cheekes appeares,
> Or in her eyes the fyre of love does sparke.
> Fayre when her brest lyke a rich laden barke,
> With pretious merchandize she forth doth lay (81.3–6)

Spenser employs metaphors such as the blush as a red rose and the fire of the gleaming eyes to signify the reciprocated affection of his mistress. They are the "sparke[s]" of her love. Spenser describes his mistress's breast as like a heavily laden ship, a simile that invokes not only the fullness of her breast, but also suggests her virtue: the "pretious merchandize" she carries is her heart. The mistress's body, therefore, is constructed out of the signs of her love and kindness – her rose cheeks, her nautical bosom – so that she is made of her virtue.[12] Shakespeare's dark lady wants to make similar claims for herself, offering her body as a physical sign of her fidelity. Sonnet 138, however, is a poem of habits and seems – of costume, that is – not a blazon that seeks epistemological certainty in the beauty and countenance of the beloved.

Sonnet 138 suggests that the tropes so often used by traditional Petrarchan poetry to describe the character of the sonnet mistress are not made of truth. They are merely constructed from pieces of evidence that must be interpreted and can, as the Pyrrhonists argue, be understood from multiple perspectives. Additionally, the sonnet's acknowledgement that "love's best habit is in seeming trust" suggests that intimate relationships function most successfully when the participants engage in such willful misunderstandings. Even the term "habit" demonstrates the constructed dynamic of human interactions: either "habit" refers to the attire or disguise worn by love (in which case, like any clothing, it is easily removed, changed, or worn out), or it refers to habits in the modern sense of commonly repeated actions. Either way, the poem argues that lovers must make a habit out of deception and being deceived.

Most significantly, sonnet 138 compels its readers to consider the very nature of truth and the process of meaning-making. Although the speaker and the dark lady are engaged in deception, the sonnet does not condemn them outright. Fineman suggests that the poetic self of sonnet 138 is "unambiguously unhappy," but the speaker and the dark lady have, in fact, developed a process that creates intimacy and offers an admittedly imperfect form of satisfaction for each (64). The final couplet has a sort of charm: the lovers lie *with* each other, and are happy, or at least gratified by being displayed, in spite of their faults, in a positive light ("flattered"). Shakespeare chooses twice to use the preposition "with" to describe the lying process, rather than the more apparent "to," suggesting that

entertaining others' perspectives, as the Pyrrhonists encourage, can be a source of pleasure. Additionally, the shift from singular pronouns that govern the entire poem ("I lie with her, and she with me") to first person plural ("... by lies we flattered be") in the couplet represents the union generated by deception. The lovers are not merely lying to each other; they are experiencing "the shared power of the performative" (Schalkwyk 57) by engaging in the collaborative process of meaning-making, as they lie together. The pun on the phrase "lie with," which implies a sexual act, suggests that deception generates intimacy for the couple, creating what Richard Strier calls "a kind of grim utopianism ... one that emerges in the poem's insistence on intersubjectivity and (if there is a difference) either cooperation or collusion" (83). While Strier is correct that sonnet 138 explores intersubjectivity, his descriptor "grim" is characteristic of an interpretive tradition that finds the dark lady's infidelity reprehensible. The sonnet does not depict a hypocritical or dysfunctional relationship; rather, sonnet 138 displays the uncomfortable intersection of human interaction with objective truth. The sonnet imagines the processes of manipulating or misreading appearance as a potentially edifying experience, one that can flatter and generate a kind of intimacy, a "seeming trust."

In suppressing simple truths, the two subjects of sonnet 138 work toward a Pyrrhonist understanding that one must seek to accept the world, rather than know it completely. In sonnet 24, the speaker concludes with the revelation that knowledge is limited by the senses, but other sonnets, including 110 and 138, embrace such uncertainty, imagining it as a potential source of pleasure and intimacy. In his reading of *King Lear*, Stanley Cavell posits a question that pertains to the sonnets as well: how do people come to understand that, rather than more knowledge, what they need is a willingness to accept unknowability? For Cavell, skepticism suggests, "that since we cannot know the world exists, its presentness to us cannot be a function of knowing. The world is to be *accepted*; as the presentness of other minds is not to be known, but acknowledged" (95). With the layers of uncertainty it creates for readers (How does the speaker know the lady lies? How can he believe something he knows to be false? What is the difference between belief and willful ignorance? What is "simple truth," and what takes its place when it is suppressed?), sonnet 138 encourages its readers to forgo knowledge or truth in favor of acceptance. This is the same process the speaker claims the lovers undergo. The complex and conflicting accounts of their love, their loyalty, and their identities serve as a foundation on which they can create.

Conclusion

By emphasizing the constructed nature of his relationships with the sonnet subjects, Shakespeare exposes the constructed nature of meaning. Callaghan argues that while the identities of sonnet subjects may be informed by historical figures, they are nonetheless literary inventions. She suggests "there was a pervasive belief that poetry might draw readers toward a higher order of truth, one that transcended the distinction between an objective reality and an imagined one" (14). Certainly, the sonnets I have discussed encourage readers to imagine information as constructed by creative processes in which the two lovers engage. Shakespeare diverges from the sonnet tradition by emphasizing the uncertainty that stems from this process, rather than providing his audience with "a higher order of truth." Instead of granting his readers access to transcendent truth, Shakespeare invites his readers both to be aware of skeptical uncertainty and to accept such uncertainty as a necessary and productive condition of human interaction.

Throughout his sequence, Shakespeare interrogates the Petrarchan tradition and the metaphors that belong to it. Cultures generate metaphors that connect a woman's body to her virtue or a beloved's eyes to his soul in order to cope with anxiety over the question of knowing. While Shakespeare is intensely interested in such metaphors, he recognizes that they are unreliable signifiers that create uncertainty, and he sees aesthetic potential in that uncertainty. Accepting the uncertainty of metaphor can inspire not only an equipollent state in which judgment is suspended, but also the pleasure of the unexpected and the unknown, which so many readers of the sonnets have experienced.

At a time when Pyrrhonist skepticism was becoming an increasingly common method for thinking about the world, Shakespeare capitalized on his knowledge of Pyrrhonism to encourage his readers to suspend judgment and experience the tranquility that can result from achieving a state of equipollence. While many scholars have noted the negative consequences of epistemological uncertainty, regarding skepticism as a source for anxiety or instability that authors sought to overcome, Shakespeare saw generative potential in the absence of empirical truths. Many other sonneteers try to avoid uncertainty by designing metaphors that close the gap between appearance and reality, but Shakespeare recognizes that such metaphors extend, rather than resolve, interpretive challenges. Ultimately, Shakespeare poses a Pyrrhonist resolution to epistemological uncertainty, urging his audience to forgo the pursuit of certain knowledge and accept the potential pleasure of imperfect understanding.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to Jacqueline Vanhoutte, Kevin Curran, Hella Bloom Cohen, and Lindsay Emory Moore for their advice and support.

Notes

1. Maus and Bell each situate Shakespeare's skepticism within its religious and juridical context. Meanwhile, Bertram (133–66) argues that the economic instability of the early modern period generated skepticism in the dramatic works of Marlowe and Shakespeare.
2. John D. Cox prefers to regard Shakespeare's epistemological response as suspicion, rather than skepticism, claiming that "the models Shakespeare's culture offered for suspecting human motives and actions were more pervasive, sophisticated, and compelling than contemporary skepticism, and the source of suspicion was not primarily skepticism but faith" ("Shakespeare's Religious and Moral Thinking" 43).
3. The similarities to Pyrrhonist skepticism I am identifying in Shakespeare's works are in some ways similar to Keats' concept of negative capability. Using Shakespeare as his example, Keats describes negative capability as "when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason ... with a great poet the sense of Beauty overcomes every other consideration, or rather obliterates all consideration" (60–61). Diverging from Keats' assessment, however, I argue that Shakespeare regards such uncertainties as a source for meaning and aesthetic value, rather than obstacles one accepts for the sake of beauty.
4. Lammenranta outlines three possible interpretations of the Pyrrhonian Problematic, ultimately suggesting that the dialectic interpretation (in which individuals cannot resolve disagreements without begging the question) is the most viable interpretation (9–22).
5. Fineman, meanwhile, argues that "the orthodox tradition of epideictic poetry controls in advance its own transgression, predetermining and, to some extent, anticipating the character of its own undoing" (3).
6. I have included the phrase "poet speaker" to acknowledge that Renaissance writers – as Anne Ferry demonstrates – did not have a hard and fast understanding of the difference between the poet and his persona (17). The inconsistency of the relationship between poet and speaker that

Ferry defines contributes to the multifaceted practice of identity-making that, I argue, Shakespeare illustrates in his sonnets.

7. Similarly, Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, describes his own desire manifesting on his face:

> Love, that doth reign and live within my thought,
> And built his seat within my captive breast,
> Clad in the arms wherein with me he fought,
> Oft in my face he doth his banner rest. (1–4)

8. Brian Boyd's recent work on Shakespeare's sonnets emphatically suggests a lack of narrative in the sequence. While in this respect he differs from Fineman, both create narratives about the writing and production of the sonnet sequence that characterize the young man sonnets as superior. In Boyd's case, for instance, the relatively unsuccessful dark lady sonnets serve as groundwork for the young man's: "... one imperfect solution may provide the elements and the impetus for much richer success" (82).
9. Richard Meek observes that, while sonnet 130 "seemingly rejects Petrarchan conventions and clichés," it "conspicuously fails to provide the reader with any explicit description of the woman herself: despite the impression that the sonnet creates of a real woman divested of the trappings of metaphor, she remains curiously absent" (60). While Meek is right to suggest that the mistress of 130 is "left for the poem's readers to imagine for themselves" (60), I would suggest that (rather than being divested of metaphor) she is constructed out of fragmented metaphors in a way that sacrifices empirical truth about the mistress in favor of a sublime experience of her.
10. For instance, Spenser describes his lover's eye as a source of guidance: "my Helice the lodestare of my lyfe / will shine again, and looke on me at last, / with lovely light to cleare my cloudy grief" (34.10–12).
11. Like Lars Engle's reading in *Shakespearean Pragmatism*, my reading pushes against Fineman's clear-cut division between the types of knowledge experienced in the young man sonnets and those of the dark lady series. Fineman argues that, "where the young man sonnets consistently develop a mute poetic anxiety out of their perception of the way true vision might be false, the dark lady sonnets instead develop, and very explicitly *say* that they develop, an account of a discursive speech that, speaking against vision, says both more and less 'than niggard truth would willingly impart'" (164–65). As Engle suggests, scholars should "avoid this dualistic contrast between nostalgically remembered certainty and an exciting but disconcerting new science of indeterminacy" (51).
12. Spenser's blazon is an excellent example of the traditional anti-feminist practices Phyllis Rackin describes: "The lady is typically objectified as an aggregate of impossibly idealized features, which dehumanize her and constitute an implicit rejection of the imperfect bodies of actual women" (5).

References

Bertram, Benjamin. *The Time is Out of Joint: Skepticism in Shakespeare's England*. Newark: U of Delaware P, 2004. Print.

Bell, Millicent. *Shakespeare's Tragic Skepticism*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2002. Print.

Booth, Stephen. "The Value of the Sonnets." *A Companion to Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Ed. Michael Schoenfeldt. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007. 15–26. Print.

Boyd, Brian. *Why Lyrics Last: Evolution, Cognition, and Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2012. Print.

Buford, Thomas O. *Know Thyself: An Essay on Social Personalism*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011. Print.

Callaghan, Dympna. *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007. Print.

Cartwright, Kent. "Scepticism and Theatre in *Macbeth*." *Shakespeare Survey*. Vol. 55. Ed. Peter Holland. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002. 219–36. Print.

Carson, Rob. "Hearing Voices in *Coriolanus* and Early Modern Skepticism." *The Shakespearean International Yearbook: Shakespeare and Montaigne Revisited*. Ed. Graham Bradshaw, Tom Bishop, and Peter Holbrook. Burlington: Ashgate, 2006. 140–69. Print.

Cavell, Stanley. *Disowning Knowledge in Seven Plays of Shakespeare*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003. Print.
Cox, John D. *Seeming Knowledge: Shakespeare and Skeptical Faith*. Waco: Baylor UP, 2007. Print.
Cox, John D. "Shakespeare's Religious and Moral Thinking: Skepticism or Suspicion?" *Religion & Literature* 36.1 (2004): 39–66. Print.
Ferry, Anne. *The "Inward" Language: Sonnets of Wyatt, Sidney, Shakespeare, Donne*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1983. Print.
Fineman, Joel. *Shakespeare's Perjured Eye: The Invention of Poetic Subjectivity in the Sonnets*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1986. Print.
Engle, Lars. *Shakespearean Pragmatism: Market of his Time*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1993. Print.
Hamlin, William M. "A Lost Translation Found? An Edition of *The Sceptick* (c. 1590) Based on Extant Manuscripts [with text]." *ELR* 31.1 (2001): 34–51. Print.
Hamlin, William M. "The Shakespeare–Montaigne–Sextus Nexus: A Case Study in Early Modern Reading." *The Shakespearean International Yearbook: Shakespeare and Montaigne Revisited*. Ed. Graham Bradshaw, Tom Bishop, and Peter Holbrook. Burlington: Ashgate, 2006. 21–36. Print.
Harmon, Alice. "How Great was Shakespeare's Debt to Montaigne?" *PMLA* 57.4 (1942): 988–1008. Print.
Keats, John. *Selected Letters of John Keats*. 2nd ed. Ed. Grant F. Scott. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2008. Print.
Kottman, Paul A. *Tragic Conditions in Shakespeare: Disinheriting the Globe*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2009. Print.
Lammenranta, Markus. "The Pyrrhonian Problematic." *The Oxford Handbook of Skepticism*. Ed. John Greco. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008. 9–33. Print.
Maus, Katharine. *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995. Print.
McDonald, Russ. *The Bedford Companion to Shakespeare*. 2nd ed. Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's P, 2001. Print.
Meek, Richard. *Narrating the Visual in Shakespeare*. Burlington: Ashgate, 2009. Print.
Muir, Kenneth. *The Sources of Shakespeare's Plays*. Abingdon: Routledge, 1977. Print.
Petrarch, Francesco. *Sonnets & Songs*. Trans. Anna Maria Armi. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1968. Print.
Popkin, Richard H. *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Spinoza*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1979. Print.
Rackin, Phyllis. *Shakespeare and Women*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005. Print.
Schalkwyk, David. *Speech and Performance in Shakespeare's Sonnets and Plays*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002. Print.
Schiffer, James. "The Incomplete Narrative of Shakespeare's Sonnets." *A Companion to Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Ed. Michael Schoenfeldt. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007. 15–26. Print.
Sedley, David L. *Sublimity & Skepticism in Montaigne and Milton*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2005. Print.
Sextus Empiricus. *Outlines of Scepticism*. Trans. Julia Annas and Jonathan Barnes. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994. Print.
Shepard, Alexandra. *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003. Print.
Sherman, Anita Gilman. *Skepticism and Memory in Shakespeare and Donne*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. Print.
Sidney, Sir Philip. *Sir Philip Sidney's* An Apology for Poetry *and* Astrophil and Stella*: Texts and Contexts*. Ed. Peter C. Herman. Glen Allen: College Publishing, 2001. Print.
Spenser, Sir Edmund. *Edmund Spenser's Poetry*. Ed. Hugh Maclean and Anne Lake Prescott. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1993. Print.
Strier, Richard. "The Refusal to be Judged in Petrarch and Shakespeare." *A Companion to Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Ed. Michael Schoenfeldt. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007. 73–89. Print.
Surrey, Henry Howard, Earl of. "Love, that Doth Reign and Live within My Thought." *The Broadview Anthology of British Literature*. Ed. Joseph Black et al. Vol. 2. Buffalo: Broadview, 2006. 118. Print.

Vendler, Helen. "Formal Pleasure in the Sonnets." *A Companion to Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Ed. Michael Schoenfeldt. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007. 27–44. Print.
Watson, Robert N. *Back to Nature: The Green and the Real in the Late Renaissance*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2006. Print.
Wyatt, Sir Thomas. *The Complete Poems*. Ed. Ronald A. Rebholz. New York: Penguin, 1978. Print.