

SKEPTICISM IN EARLY MODERN ENGLISH LITERATURE

This ambitious account of skepticism's effects on major authors of England's Golden Age shows how key philosophical problems inspired literary innovations in poetry and prose. When figures like Spenser, Shakespeare, Donne, Herbert of Cherbury, Cavendish, Marvell, and Milton question theories of language, degrees of knowledge and belief, and dwell on the uncertainties of perception, they forever change English literature, ushering it into a secular mode. While tracing a narrative arc from medieval nominalism to late seventeenth-century taste, the book explores the aesthetic pleasures and political quandaries induced by skeptical doubt. It also incorporates modern philosophical views of skepticism: those of Stanley Cavell, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Roland Barthes, and Hans Blumenberg, among others. The book thus contributes to interdisciplinary studies of philosophy and literature as well as to current debates about skepticism as a secularizing force, fostering civil liberties and religious freedoms.

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LITERATURE

The Problems and Pleasures of Doubt

ANITA GILMAN SHERMAN

American University



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