"The glass, the school, the book": *The Anatomy of Melancholy* and the Early Stuart University of Oxford

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For robert burton, as a librarian, bibliophile, and academic, the library was almost literally his life, at least in his own assessment. In the engagingly motley index that follows *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, the entry he wrote for himself—"Burton, Robert"—instructs the reader that on this subject they may also see the entry "Libraries." The changes the University of Oxford underwent during the Stuart reign, while Burton was there writing and rewriting his encyclopedic work, were dramatically reflected by the growth of the university's libraries, especially by the Bodleian, founded the year before James Stuart ascended to the throne in 1603. The small "chained library" of the university's clerical medieval past was transformed during the early modern period into not only one of the most famous repositories of knowledge in Europe but also into a major node of exchange between university and court, with the university relying on the court for benefactions and the court relying on the university to provide educated servants to the state, as well as to reproduce Royalist ideology.

Burton's own sequestration to libraries is one he sometimes compares in *The Anatomy of Melancholy* to a positive kind of imprisonment, one that functions more to keep the world out than to keep him in, and one he imagines in terms of liberty as much as limitation, a paradoxical argu-

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ment predicated on a valuing of intellectual freedom over other forms of mobility, whether physical, social, or economic—an argument that is ingenuous to varying degrees as the book unfolds Burton's frustration with his own lack of preferment. But this assertion of the value of intellectual over practical liberty as well as his frustration with his own practical situation combine to make a sustained critique of Oxford's changing character. The commitment to intellectual freedom, and the concomitant rejection of the use of scholarship as a means to achieve advancement within the university or court, is one of his book's main statements, and Burton's own fraught relationship with some noble and politically ambitious students whom he probably served as a tutor is reflected by the shifting comments on patronage and ambition he makes throughout his book. His lamentation about the reason "why the Muses are Melancholy" is answered with the proposed cure of intellectual breadth—a breadth that characterized his own library, one of the most important and heterogeneous collections ever contributed to the Bodleian Library.

Due to Burton's own position within the system he criticized, and his reliance on that system for any advancement of his own, his critique remains largely subtextual, expressed as much in the book's form as in his occasional invectives against the institution's specific ills. Indeed, the school's secularization and growing service to the practical politics of the Stuart court ensured that Oxford's seditious currents would remain contemplative rather than active like those of its rebellious sister Cambridge, which forfeited the crown's support with its more overt puritan and parliamentary leanings. Kenneth Fincham has shown that as Oxford became more intertwined with the court, benefactions from the Crown were exchanged for institutional loyalty (179). These benefactions included endowments to the university's famous library, and Bodleian historian Ian Philip notes that Archbishop Laud made the largest contribution of books in the library's history (39). Another major contributor in Bodleian history was of course Burton, whose bequeathal of his personal library transformed the library's collection of English literature (Philip 33). Burton's own collection represents books that Bodley himself would have rejected; the annotations made in these books by Burton are in direct contrast with such intellectual hierarchism, the same valuation of breadth so clearly present in *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (Philip 33). This value is in conflict not only with Bodley's own guidelines for his library but also with some of the changes in the purposes of education which Burton laments at length in the section of *The Anatomy of Melancholy* called "Miseries of Schollers, or why the Muses are Melancholy," an invective describing

how the competition for preferment between scholars stood in the way of scholarly integrity.

As Angus Gowland has explained in relation to Burton, humanism's original motivating principle was that learning could be used to create a better state, rather than simply for detached contemplation, but by the time of James's accession—and in part due to it—this principle had (in the eyes of humanists like Burton) been manipulated to serve the ends of absolutism and political-military opportunists who used scholarship to ornament and support rather than to guide and counsel power or to ensure a wiser, more just ruler. The kind of pointless, contentious speculation for argument's sake that the humanists had rejected as ignoble had become the norm at the universities, especially Oxford, in part due to the competitiveness bred by the large numbers of university scholars and small number of positions available to them (Gowland 22). Burton's Latin play *Philosophaster* satirizes this development when a traveler visits Oxford only to find false philosophers running the show and any remaining true philosophers chained to their desks in the library. In effect, humanists like Burton felt relegated to the impotent sphere of purposeless speculation that humanism had set out to dispel, in favour of virtuous action through counsel; it seemed by James's time that this active role had been perverted into a kind of temporal, opportunistic political ambition that ran directly counter to the original principle of the wise, well-counseled ruler.

Burton uses the metaphors of both imprisonment and burial in *The Anatomy of Melancholy* to describe the position of scholars who must serve their better-connected fellows. This lack of clarity about who was or should be teaching whom or who was equipped to teach, both in the university and in the larger sphere of the state, is a main point of Burton's humanist critique, and his quotation of Lucrece's plea to Tarquin to remember that "Princes are the glass, the school, the book, / Where subjects' eyes do learn, do read, do look" suggests the breakdown he saw in his institution as a result of courtly appropriations of scholarship and the degradation of philosophy's consolatory and enriching functions through its use in the pursuit of military and political power (Shakespeare quoted in Burton 1:70).

Given this clear concern within his book, it is interesting to consider that Burton probably tutored some of these same students he criticizes, in the early modern tutor's main role as a guide in both reading and conduct and, further, that he sought patronage from some of these same well-born students, precluding a direct or localized critique (O'Connell 10, Bamborough xv, Curtis 79–81, 107–14). It is also interesting to consider his own

life of books alongside his institutional roles and the role as librarian that combined both his personal and professional callings, as he assumes the position in his own book as a different kind of reading-guide to his reader, in a forum controlled by him rather than the institution. Both the frustrated progress and entrapment he felt in his sequestration to the library is palpable in the book's pages, but the work is also the act of a librarian and reader performing what he knew best, and for his own ends, and in this latter quality it represents a kind of freedom. The book's insistent listing may seem at times to mirror the author's sense of getting nowhere, but it also promotes the pleasures of intellectual breadth in contrast to opportunistic or narrowly goal-oriented education.

The paradoxical trope of practical constraint as both limitation and liberty is nowhere clearer than in the book's digressions, which in their wandering trajectories exemplify Burton's use of paratactic strategies such as the pleonasm and the list. The "Digression of the Miseries of Schollers" formally enacts its subject of burial at the university through embedded Latin invective, as Michael O'Connell has discussed (25–30). The expansive survey called "Digression of the Ayre" that interrupts the section "Exercise Rectified" illustrates Burton's theme of exercising mental freedom in the face of both practical and intellectual constraints and makes a statement against overly selective reading, a statement which also is present in the annotations and lists he wrote in the margins of his own books. The contrast between the Bodleian Library of his time and Burton's private library illuminate both Burton's comments on the Oxford he saw as well as some of *The Anatomy of Melancholy*'s most compelling formal strategies.

I. "A singular ornament to the university": The Bodleian Library

In his own words, Robert Burton was "brought up a Student in the most flourishing Colledge of Europe, Augustissimo collegio," with libraries as good as "the renowned libraries of the Vatican" (Burton, Faulkner et al. 1: 3, and Jackson 1.17).[1] He was the librarian at Christ Church, calling himself "Keeper of our Colledge Library," but it was the Bodleian he writes of most, as a witness to that library's foundation and dramatic growth from 1602 until his death (1:3). He goes on to explain that given the unusual calibre of these library resources, he does not want to waste them "by

1 All references to *The Anatomy of Melancholy* are to the edition edited by Faulkner, Kiessling, and Blair, except for some Latin passages translated by Holbrook Jackson from his edition.

living as a Drone" (Burton 1:3, O'Connell 8). *The Anatomy of Melancholy* is a testimony to his use of Oxford's libraries, and any critical discussion of Burton's life and work must begin with the libraries that fostered both, just as Burton begins his book by acknowledging them. Despite his unwillingness to become a drone, he admits that he did not apply himself to the pursuit of any one field of study but, instead, became a generalist; this is an at least seemingly modest way of introducing his reader to the astonishing breadth of his reading:

> This roving humor (though not with like successe) I have ever had, & like a ranging Spaniell, that barkes at every bird he sees, leaving his game, I have followed all … and may justly complaine … that I have read many Bookes, but to little purpose, for want of good method, I have confusedly tumbled over divers Authors in our Libraries, with small profit for want of Art, Order, Memory, Judgment. (1:4)

These images of tumbling breadth demonstrate on one hand the book's expansive terrain, while on the other hand they also hint at the massive effort toward *consolidation* that the book represents: the summary of a lifetime of reading and the assembly of 1,250 authors in a single book. In this assembly, his book is like the library where he worked, with a difference; his textual library was meant not for a select community of scholars but for a general audience of sufferers: as Burton writes in his introduction, "Democritus Junior to the Reader," his main purpose in writing the book is what he calls "the commodity or common good that will arise to all men by the knowledge of it" (1:23). Despite its erudition, the book's tone is conversational, not didactic, and the author aligns himself with the reader as a fellow-sufferer, writing as much to alleviate his own symptoms as those of the reader. Perhaps in part due to this willingness of the author to engage his audience, and due to the fact that the subject he chose was widely considered the most common affliction of the time, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* became highly popular and was one of the first bestsellers for Oxford University Press (Faulkner xl–xliii, Knight 51).

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As a storehouse of accumulating knowledge that can never be collected with any finality, the library has served as a model for conceiving of Burton's encyclopedic book and the epistemological skepticism it has suggested to many critics. Scholars including E. Patricia Vicari, Michael O'Connell, and Liliana Barczyk-Barakonska have considered the library as virtually constitutive of Burton's life and writing. Probably the more important details of Burton's intellectual biography, and his biography

in general, as his was a life of the mind, are the facts that Burton spent his life in libraries, that one of these, the Bodleian, was quickly becoming one of the most richly endowed and important in Europe, and that during Burton's lifetime centuries of thought became available in a single place. But the social and political reasons for the library's rapid expansion, and for Burton's sense of being more or less stuck there—in his words, "left behind, as a Dolphin on shore, confined to my Colledge, as *Diogenes* to his tubbe"—have not yet been fully explored as a context for the work with specific reference to these changes effect on libraries and reading (Burton quoted in Faulkner et al. xiv). In addition to the use of the library in general as an abstract metaphor for Burton's skepticism, the specific libraries at Oxford in Burton's time also bear examination. These collections reveal much about the social changes in the larger institution of Oxford during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, changes that were a major factor in the book's having been written at all and that are essential to any consideration of its most deeply entrenched themes.

The contrast between the material resources available to Oxford students in medieval and early Stuart England illustrates the extent to which the economic and intellectual revolutions of the centuries between the two periods reshaped the English relationship to knowledge and the reasons this knowledge was thought worth having. As V.H.H. Green describes in her *History of Oxford University*, the medieval undergraduate lacked the learning aids enjoyed by his successors. The medieval libraries of Oxford were small collections referred to as "chained libraries":

> What libraries there were, were mainly confined to colleges. Each book was secured by a staple to a chain, and the chain was attached to a cross bar which ran underneath the desk or lectern which housed the books, some 30 at a maximum. Fellows usually possessed a key to the room, but they were not permitted to remove the books, mainly heavy folios in manuscript, from the library itself.... The student was unlikely to have possessed more than a small number of well-thumbed text-books. The current value of books is demonstrated by the extent to which they were used as guarantees or *cautiones* for loans from the university chest. (Green 13)

As the limited scope of these libraries suggests, the aim of the course in arts, and of university education in general, was to develop the students' skills in argumentation, reason, and oral disputation, which emphasized the use of knowledge in debate, *in locus* at the school, as opposed to the accumulation of knowledge which could be taken away from the school.

The "chained library," a poetic phrase itself, however literally and materially it signifies here, may be borrowed as a metaphor for thinking about the purposes of medieval university education. The abilities fostered by the curriculum, with its focus on lectures, on debates, and on local engagement with knowledge, as opposed to the accumulation of knowledge to be applied in the secular world, reveal that the notion of the university education as portable—something to be taken away and used somewhere else—which defines our modern understanding of the university, did not yet exist. The gradual shift from locality to portability was governed by a dramatic change in the character of the university from clerical to secular. Oxford was originally an institution devoted to training clergy, and its scholars were primarily poor, but during the early modern period this changed radically.

The first of these small chained libraries at Oxford was founded by Thomas Cobham, Bishop of Worcester, in the fourteenth century, and it was not updated until the following century saw the first wave of humanism sweep the university, challenging the scholastic curriculum. One of the major proponents of humanism, Duke Humphrey of Gloucester, was also a patron of the university, endowing it with books and money in the first half of the fifteenth century (Green 33). The Tudor court under Henry and then Edward helped groom the institution that would provide the nation with clergymen. However, underlying the Crown's appreciation for the university, as serviceable to the state and the maintenance of the established order, was a fear inspired by the political tensions and debate at the universities which showed itself to be founded by the time of the revolution in the following century; even that early, Edward instituted a Visitation, to make sure the universities followed the new order and to stress that the colleges had been founded for the education of the poor (Green 43). During one of these Visitations, ideological weeding of the small and already declining library began, hastening the final dispersal of Cobham's chained library: Ian Philip records Anthony Wood's note that books in Oxford libraries "that treated of controversial or scholastic Divinity were cut loose from their chains" (Wood quoted in Philip 6). So while the expanding English government resulted in the universities' growing population by ambitious young men in training for political offices, this concentration of what Mark Curtis calls "angry young men" was recognized even during the reformation as a potential threat to order (Curtis 28).

Postreformation, the reconsolidated university of Elizabeth's reign needed a library that would reflect its new strength and character. By

the end of the sixteenth century the library at Oxford had again fallen into ruin. It was onto this empty stage that the most important figure in the library's history stepped. Sir Thomas Bodley brought the institution thoroughly up to date, not only through his own bequests but by creating a vogue for donation to the library among nobles and those wishing to share in the caché of the newly ennobled institution. Ian Philip shows that Bodley's plan for building the library's collection was based on a "store of honourable friends," many of whom he had met while doing Royal service in the Netherlands (9). Bodley's legacy in turn created its own subsidiary economy of tribute to Oxford's great patron. John Ayliffe, in *The Antient and Present State of the University of Oxford* of 1714, participates in this tradition of tribute, describing the nothingness from which Bodley conjured a library that would marry transcendent learning with the plenty and ornament befitting it:

> This was the State of Things when Sir Thomas Bodley Knt. Consider'd the Damage which Learning had sustain'd, and the great Use that a publick Library would be to the Students.... Sir Thomas had all the Qualities of a Mecenas, he was an excellent Scholar himself, a Lover of Learning in others, and the Proprietor of a very plentiful Estate. After a mature Deliberation, he desir'd Leave of the University to furnish Duke Humphrey's Library once more, with Desks, Seats, and Books, at his own Costs and Charges; which being gain'd, he acquitted himself beyond all Expectation. He procur'd Benefactions from very many of the Nobility and Gentry both in Books and Money. (458)

In addition to replacing the necessary furniture of the library, and stocking it with books, Bodley also diagnosed the problem that had caused the demise of the old library and hit upon a strategy that would allow the library to perpetuate itself rather than repeatedly fall into disrepair. Bodley's correspondence with the library's first librarian is chiefly concerned with the encouragement of benefactions. As Bodley wrote in a letter to Oxford's vice-chancellor in 1597: he intended to "stirre up other mens benevolence to help to furnish it with bookes," to make the library "a notable Treasure for the multitude of volumes, an excellent benefit for the use and ease of Students, and a singular ornament to the University" (quoted in Morris 62–63). Bodley's strategy of ornamentation was designed to attract further benefactions to the university and to render the library self-renewing.

Bodley's efforts to make donating books to the library a vogue were so successful that its collection grew from two thousand volumes in 1602 to six thousand volumes in 1605. As Michael O'Connell puts it, "the library's fame was such that nobles, churchmen, lawyers, and merchants vied to enrich it" (14). That this dramatic expansion occurred during the first years of James's reign is no coincidence, as James's scholarly inclinations bolstered the university's status and the ties between school and court grew stronger over the course of his reign. When the second library catalogue was printed in 1620, a year before Burton published his first edition of *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, the library possessed over sixteen thousand volumes (O'Connell 14). This same year, in fact, King James himself presented a new edition of his own works to the university, which was received in an elaborate ceremony. The King followed his book to the Bodleian during a royal visit to Oxford the following year. Burton describes this visit in *The Anatomy* and quotes from the speech James made there:

> King James 1605, when he came to see our University of Oxford, and amongst other Ædifaces, now went to see that famous Library, renued by Sr Thomas Bodley, in imitation of Alexander, at his departure brake out into that noble speech, If I were not a King, I would be an University man; *And if it were so that I must be a Prisoner, if I might have my wish, I would desire to have no other Prison then that Library, and to be chained together with so many good Authors et mortuis magistris* [dead teachers]. (2:88)

Indeed, James's desire to be both a king and a university man showed itself in his involvement with Oxford, the English university that was more willing to celebrate the blending of these two sides of James's identity. Burton's use of this same metaphor of imprisonment in the library is an ironic suggestion of the way James's academic bent limited at the same time that it seemed to promote scholarship. Burton directly follows this quotation from James's speech with a reference to the Dutch librarian, Heinsius, who was "mewed up in [the library] all the yere long," and paraphrases Heinsius as saying "I no sooner … come into the Library, but I bolt the doore to me excluding lust, ambition, avarice and all such vices" (2:88–89). Burton's juxtaposition of James's own dichotomy between withdrawal into the private world of the library and his public life with Heinsius's statement of the library door as a bar against vice works to subtly imply the vices of the courtly sphere, and how they should be kept from the sphere of scholarship.

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The Stuarts' preference for Oxford over Cambridge was evident from early in James's reign. As historian Kenneth Fincham writes, James "took much satisfaction in the elaborate ceremony with which the university received his published works, in 1620, in comparison to the more perfunctory attitude of Cambridge, and claimed he had always preferred Oxford to Cambridge" (182). Fincham describes the sharp incline of Royal involvement with the university after 1603, noting that while Elizabeth had made two state visits to Oxford in forty-five years, "her successors each visited twice in half that span" (182). The connection between the university and the Stuart court grew more and more complex until the summit of Oxford's close but strained relationship with Archbishop Laud; this relationship was often made visible and public through the library, a sub-institution that was a node of material exchange and therefore a market in which allegiance could be traded; in fact in 1636, Charles's secretary of state Sir John Coke made an oration to the university citing Laud's gifts of manuscripts and books to the Bodleian as evidence of his worth, before concluding with a command that the heads of the colleges subscribe to Laud's new statutes. In return for corporate privileges from the Crown, the Crown expected Oxford scholars "to defend its claims, for example against Rome over the oath of allegiance controversy, or to collaborate in Royal projects, most conspicuously the Authorized Version of the Bible." The university depended upon the court for benefactions to its library and colleges and for advancement within and beyond the university (Fincham 179).

Indeed, even Bodley himself limited the scope of his own library in some ways in order to maintain its noble image and to attract benefactions from nobles, as Ian Philip and Paul Morgan describe. Although technically a "publick library," non-members of the university were usually only admitted if they were "likely to be men of influence or benefactors" (Philip and Morgan 669). Along with limiting the kinds of people who entered the library, Bodley also doubted if books in the vernacular could be worthy of inclusion in the collection; Michael O'Connell notes that as per Bodley's statutes, "no playbooks, almanacs, popular books of marvels or jests were allowed in" (14). In *The Library of Robert Burton*, Nicholas Kiessling notes that Bodley was uninterested in ephemeral publications. He quotes from Bodley's own guidelines for making library acquisitions:

> Some little profit may be reaped (which God knows is very little) out of some of our play-books, [yet] the benefit thereof will nothing near countervail the harm that the scandal will

> bring upon the Library, when it will be given out that we stuffed it full of baggage books." (ix)

The literary rather than active nature of Burton's life ensures that mentions of him in even the large *History of the University of Oxford* are few and brief, but one of these references is to the substantial gap filled by Burton's donation of his own personal library to the university library when he died in 1640. One of the most surprising things about Burton's library is its currency. As O'Connell puts it, "the impression of Burton as an antiquarian in his literary interests is simply wrong" (16). In fact, "his interests were in modern phenomena," as Kiessling observes, and 74 percent of his library was published during his own lifetime (xxxi). He owned works of literature, history, medicine, politics, and geography, along with jest books, cony-catching pamphlets, quartos of popular plays, contemporary satires, pamphlets and books describing oddities, marvels, and the fantastic (O'Connell 17). O'Connell also points to the curious fact that in the pages of Thomas Dekker's cony-catching pamphlet *The Belman of London* is a glossary he compiled himself of terms from the dialect of London low life, a dictionary of thieves and beggars' parlance with translations (19; Kiessling xxxiii). Kiessling describes Burton's habit of making lists in his books, on subjects ranging from alchemy, cities, and laughter to philosophy, rhetoric, and government. His penchant for lists suggests a paratactic bent to Burton's mental life that fits with the rejection of passive, narrow, or naïve reading practices that is also conveyed by his annotations: Beside a conclusion occurring early in a book on astrology, he wrote in the margin, "What alreadie?" And beside John Eliot's claim in a book on France that Paris has "many millyons" of people Burton rejects in the margins with the single word "mentitur" (Kiessling xxxiii). The kind of active reading and questioning of textual authority present in Burton's marginalia is the main theme of "The Digression of the Ayre." This digression also contains evidence of the frustrating history of Robert Burton's own meager preferment, which it is speculated he may have gained in service as a tutor to other, well-born scholars.

II. "Burton, Robert, noble friends' acquaintance of"

In his book *Oxford and Cambridge in Transition*, historian Mark Curtis notes that although it was not a new thing that well-educated men were employed by the Elizabethan court, the numbers in which gentlemen were attending university in late Tudor and early Stuart England were nothing less than revolutionary (63). He observes that a combination of expanding government and a process of secularization resulted in "a new attitude

towards Oxford and Cambridge which began to be considered as agencies to prepare men not only for ecclesiastical or political-ecclesiastical careers but for strictly civil or political pursuits," and that this "brought gentlemen to Oxford and Cambridge in steadily rising numbers" (Curtis 76). Robert Burton was himself the son of a landed family, but he was a younger son without means (O'Connell 4). In 1599 he was named a student at Christ Church, Oxford, where he would remain for the rest of his life.

In the early seventeenth century, Burton observed around him an increasingly socioeconomically diverse population of students, with well-born scholars finding more places at Oxford as the Stuart era progressed. Mark Curtis cites the research of J.H. Hexter, who has studied the registers of Oxford to show the early modern demographic changes at the universities, where by 1603 sons of gentlemen outnumbered plebian graduands "in the proportion of six to five" (quoted in Curtis 59). Robert Burton was one of these sons of gentlemen, but as a younger son he depended for financial support upon opportunities available to scholars with limited means: Nigel Wheale describes how such men got by as "sizars or servitors, servants for dons or their richer contemporaries, or else with the support of scholarships" (37). Curtis supplements Hexter's findings with a look at the changing numbers at Caius College, Cambridge, where by the 1620s, when Burton wrote his first edition of *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, 42 percent of graduands were the sons of noblemen or gentry (60). Nigel Wheale points out that "the window of opportunity for advancement through the universities diminished significantly after the 1630s, when the proportion of gentry in the student body increased" (37). So while Burton began writing his opus before the decisive demographic shift at Oxford away from a plebian-dominated student body in the 1630s, the trend had begun, and the book's evolution in the second quarter of the seventeenth century shows the growing disillusionment of the author who spent his life working as a university librarian. The humane resistance the book represents in the face of growing control of the university and scholarship itself by the Crown is reflected by Burton's turning loose of what he does have, despite his self-identified material lack. "I live still a Collegiat Student," he writes. But if he is to be confined to the library, "I will spend my time and knowledge, which are my greatest fortunes, for the common good of all" (1:8).

In contrast with Burton's traditional clerical path at Christ Church, George Berkeley would have made a good living exemplum for writers like William Harrison and Roger Ascham who warned against the moral dangers faced by young men traveling to Italy; his extravagant spending

of his fortunes resulted in enormous debt, threatening his political career (Warmington). Two years after the first edition of *The Anatomy of Melancholy* was published, George Berkeley graduated MA from Christ Church; despite Burton's dedication to his noble fellow scholar, it took ten years for Berkeley to bestow a benefice along with its modest income upon him (O'Connell 25–26). Now famous as a great patron of literature, it remains unclear if Berkeley's patronage was bestowed anywhere near as frequently as it was sought; the wording of Webster's dedication to Berkeley in the *Duchess of Malfi* shows that his was a position of supplication rather than thanks. Michael O'Connell and J.B. Bamborough both hypothesize that Berkeley's eventual patronage of Burton, along with the fact that Berkeley was a slightly younger contemporary of Burton's at Christ Church, suggests that Burton may have been Berkeley's tutor there, just as it has been suggested that he tutored Robert Smith, son of the countess of Exeter, from whom he received the living of Walesby in 1624 (O'Connell 10; Bamborough xv; Curtis 79–81, 107–14). In Burton's capacity as tutor, his primary responsibility would have been helping scholars through their readings in both Latin and the vernacular. He would have advised on what to study, how to study, and what to read and would also have provided moral and social guidance (O'Connell 10, Curtis). Burton's clearly anxious desire to nourish these relationships must have been in friction with his equally clear frustration with the ambition and temporal concerns of students like Berkeley.

Mark Curtis describes this historical moment in his article "The Alienated Intellectuals of Early Stuart England." On the one hand, Curtis explains, this period saw a great increase in the numbers of educated men in England, but, on the other hand, this same period also saw a decrease in employment opportunities for these same men, which led inevitably to a fragmented community of intellectuals who were financially and socially alienated. Curtis debates the full extent to which this alienation contributed to the revolution mid-century but is clear about the shortage of financial means and social purpose that left many men feeling buried at the same institution that had seemed to promise (for some) advancement and opportunity or (for others) a quiet but meaningful and valued life. While at Cambridge this alienation bred a kind of active sedition, at Oxford an even more fraught relationship emerged between the institution and its alienated intellectuals; Oxford's closer ties with the Stuart court meant sedition was generally incubated at the submerged level of contemplative, philosophical socio-political critique rather than the active rebellion in taverns or parliament for which Cambridge is known.

As Burton writes (in Latin, possibly again in an attempt to cloak his resentment): "[O]ur annual university heads as a rule pray only for the greatest possible number of freshmen to squeeze money from, and do not care whether they are educated or not, provided they are sleek, well-groomed, and good-looking, and in one word, men of means" (1:327). As university education gained a new kind of secular social status, and came to signify mobility more than modesty, many more men arrived at the schools than there were opportunities. Resentment of the wealthy students for their seemingly (or actually) unearned advancement and decadence was a commonplace and had been since Elizabeth's reign, when it found expression in writings by the like of Roger Ascham, who criticized the tradition of young scholars traveling to Italy for its weakening of discipline and virtue. This sentiment was echoed with greater bitterness and resignation in William Harrison's *Description of England*, which makes clear that young scholars no longer needed to leave the university at all to find a culture of materialism. There was a sense on the part of some witnesses of this university culture, who saw its participants advance within the university and often later in court, while they were left behind, that they were being *buried* in the university; they were highly educated, but they were stuck, lacking both financial means and a sense of social purpose.

Complaints about the stinginess of patrons are as common in early modern literature as dedications themselves, but in Burton's case this resentment is carried to unusual formal and thematic lengths due to the extent to which he was isolated and disenfranchised by his lack of preferment. He was not given the main living of his life until he was fifty-five, when Lord Berekely gave him the rectory of Seagrave. Burton had dedicated *The Anatomy* to Berkeley almost ten years previously, from the very first edition, and much of the sense of frustrated progress that permeates the work's very structure seems to derive from Burton's growing feeling that he would never be preferred for his work. In the second edition, Burton made adjustments to his dedication page to Berkeley, adding Berkeley's knighthood, which he had forgotten in the first edition's dedication (Faulkner et al. xxxvii). Also in the second edition, Burton for the first time added his eccentric and highly readable index, which provides an interesting shortcut into the author's mental world, or at least what he wants to show of it. In this index he includes an entry for himself:

> Burton, Robert (Democritus Junior), silent, sedentary, solitary, i. 17; no traveler, 18; bold to imitate, 20; offended with M. [melancholy], 21, 22, 35; would willingly retract much, 31;

> noble friends' acquaintance of, 313; thought school a slavery, 333; bachelor, 417; friend who took hellebore, ii. 20; incumbent of Segrave, 63; grammar scholar at Sutton Coldfield, ib.; places known to, *ib*., 68; where born, 68; patrimony in Staffordshire, *ib*., kindness received at Walesby, *ib*.; lover of the country, 79; studies delighted in, 90; Gunter, his fellow-collegiate, 97; younger brother of an ancient family, 142; well pleased with fortune, 188; grateful to patrons, 189; well persuaded of physic, 211; drinks no wine, 246; his mother skilled in chirurgery, 250; a novice, but not inexpert in love, iii. 184. See Geniture; Libraries. (3:524).

This entry shows both how hopeful he was at this early stage that his patrons would recognize him for his work and how much that work defined his life. Phrases like "well-pleased by fortune" and "grateful to patrons" become strained as complaints about the university and his lack of preferment grow up around them as the editions accumulate. As Burton wrote and rewrote his book, it became a palimpsest in which frustration with the university and the system of patronage upon which it operated became visible.

One of the most extraordinary features of Burton's book is the fact that he never finished writing it. Just as he talks with wonder in the "Digression of the Ayre" about the strange discoveries of seashells and other marine objects dug up in hills or mountains, so can traces of past editions of *The Anatomy* be found in the final edition—traces that are sometimes humorous in their incongruity with the continuous project, such as his promise from the third edition of 1628, "I will not hereafter add, alter or retract; I have done," a promise which he followed up with three more editions, and 39,529 more words by the time of the sixth edition. Burton seems not to have anticipated either how popular the book would be or how much the writing of it had come to define his life, but at any rate he seems to have been unable or unwilling to stop writing it, and he published six ever-larger editions. From its first edition in 1621 of 353,369 words, the book grew to 516,384 words by the time of its final, posthumously published edition in 1651, eleven years after his death, which was supplemented by "severall considerable Additions" that Burton left before he died with his publisher Henry Cripps—a man who, as Anthony Wood wrote, "got an estate by" the book (Faulkner xxxvii–xxxix; quoted in Bamborough xxxi).

One of the most significant formal qualities of *The Anatomy*, rhetorically related to its ever-expanding editions, is its distinctive use of the pleonasm—its author's dizzying spinning out of synonyms. He apologizes

for this habit in his preface, asking the reader to help him edit: "I require a favourable censure of all faults omitted, harsh compositions, pleonasmes of words, Tautological repetitions" (1:19). However, his editing expanded more than pared, and the pleonasms remain a dominant formal device. A relatively restrained but topical example is the following: "Let them run, ride, strive as so many fishes for a crum, scrape, climb, catch, snatch, cosen, collogue, temporize and fleir, take all amongst them, wealth, honour, and get what they can, it offends me not" (2:189).

Indeed, Burton's use of the pleonasm enacts the very rejection of ambition from which he divorces himself in this passage. Instead of traveling toward a final point, or even many different points, the reader comes away from the book with the sense that, for all its words, the book makes just a few discernable points, illustrated in a countless variety of ways, and that the positions Burton does take are neutralized in the end by contradiction. This expansive, inconclusive formal strategy mirrors the unusual breadth and heterogeneity of Burton's own library, in contrast with the pointed striving he laments in his fellows. This paratactic habit of mind determines the collected form of the book as a whole and becomes pronounced within these collected sections in Burton's rejection of narrow-minded thinking and reading within two of the book's expansive digressions.

The sense of frustrated progress is bound up with despair at the university's changing relationship to its own scholarly resources and disciplines.

III. "Buried in the University"

Among Burton's enumerated "Causes of Melancholy" in the first of the book's partitions is a subsection called "Love of Learning, or Overmuch Study." This section considers scholarship as a cause of melancholy, beginning with the strain of overwork and gradually anatomizing the poverty that Burton says has haunted all scholars, from the humblest student to the Muses themselves, whom he suggests (with tongue in cheek) never got married because they couldn't afford to—perhaps like Burton himself.

This traditional complaint of a ragged but shared lot for all scholars, to which Burton seems resigned, is subsumed by a digression on the *contemporary* plight of the poor scholar and the fact that his poverty was now ensured not only by a traditional lack but by a new university system in which some scholars were *not* poor: a competition for limited financial opportunities between the poorer and well-born students which often resulted in a struggle for patronage, or even simply for financial survival, and which made the search for preferment a necessary focus of university life, often at the cost of intellectual and scholarly breadth and integrity. The sense of frustrated progress is bound up with despair at the university's changing relationship to its own scholarly resources and disciplines. A

difference between this relationship to learning and Burton's own is borne out not only here but also by Nicholas Kiessling's comparisons of Burton's personal library with that of his average fellow student.

Just as Burton describes the way the higher born students have infiltrated the university, wearing away at its very humanistic and philosophical fiber, this subsuming invective—called "Digression of the Miseries of Schollers" in the synopsis, and marked by its bitter, disputative tone, encroaches on the more philosophical, objective tone of the "Overmuch Study" section, as though illustrating the petty conflicts and concerns on which the scholar has been reduced to spending his time. Even the word "melancholy" is too soft and contemplative to describe the more banal and tiring "miseries" for which Burton feels he must account. One of the early signposts that alerts the reader to the shift in tone and subject is a passage that describes how economic competition and patronage had corrupted the disciplines themselves, affecting scholars' choice of what studies to pursue and the financial concerns that had come to govern how and why they studied:

> All which our ordinary students, right well perceiving in the Universities, how unprofitable these Poeticall, Mathematicall, and Philosophicall studies are, how little respected, how few Patrons, apply themselves in all haste to these three commodious professions of Law, Physic, and Divinity, sharing themselves between them, rejecting these Arts in the meantime, History, Philosophy, Philology, or lightly passing them over, as pleasant toyes, fitting only table talke, and to furnish them with discourse. They are not so behovefull: he that can tell his mony hath Arithmeticke enough: he is a true Geometrician, can measure out a good fortune to himselfe; a perfect astrologer, that can cast the rise and fall of others, and mark their Errant motions to his owne use. The best Opticks are, to reflect the beames of some great men's favour and grace to shine upon him. He is a good Engineer that alone can make an instrument to get preferment. (1:311)

Those subjects that Burton complains are neglected by "ordinary students" have been shown by Kiessling to be more than ordinarily represented by Burton's library in comparison with the personal libraries of other university scholars at that time. The breadth of books that "transformed" the Bodleian collection upon Burton's death makes the average scholar's library seem narrow by comparison:

> [A] typical library of a fellow at Oxford or Cambridge … might be thirty per cent theology, twenty per cent philosophy, fifteen per cent language and grammar, twelve per cent literature, and seven per cent rhetoric. Burton's library is twenty-four per cent theology; twenty per cent literature; sixteen per cent history; nine per cent medicine; six per cent government; five per cent geography/travel; three per cent each astronomy/astrology and encomia; two per cent each, law, marvels, philosophy, and science; and one per cent each, agriculture, conduct and mathematics. (Kiessling xxxi)

In his metaphorical critique above, Burton sharpens the narrow efficiency of his fellow students' studies into objects, strategies, or instruments, applies precise tools applied ironically incongruously to vain, elevated goals of advancement rather than to learning. The reduction of broad fields such as "Arithmeticke," astrology, or "Opticks" into counting money, predicting others' errors, or reflecting the favour of the great suggests Burton's repeated association between the lack of opportunity for committed and rigorous scholars due to their subordination to the ambitious and the decline of scholarship in general is the two-fold state of affairs that he says explains "why the Muses are Melancholy" in the final Latin passage of the "Miseries of Schollers" digression.

As his invective becomes increasingly vitriolic, Burton switches from English to Latin, eventually closing out the section with three solid pages of Latin, its italicized fluidity on the page expressing the heat of anger—and perhaps a final insult to the well-born scholars, implying by his choice to write in Latin that the men whose graces he is forced to seek will not have the skills to translate his criticism of their positions in the university. One of the final passages from this Latin section describes the sense of burial in the university that the buried invective performs as a protest against the perceived buriers:

> Meanwhile learned men, graced with all the distinctions of a holy life, and who bear the heat of the day, are condemned by a hard fate to serve these men, content perhaps with a scanty salary, without any titles to their names, humble and obscure, though eminently worthy, and so, needy and unhonoured, they lead a retired life, buried in some poor benefice or imprisoned forever in their college chambers, where they languish in obscurity. (Burton, Jackson 1:330)

Michael O'Connell notes that although one would expect this passage to have been added in a later edition, in fact it was present from the first edition unchanged through to the sixth. This nugget of direct critique represents the bitter core of Burton's growing collection of melancholy's causes. The "Digression of the Ayre" may be read as its curative counterpart in the book's next partition, which is a collection of cures for melancholy. The second digression reverses the subterranean trajectory of the burial trope in the "Miseries of Schollers" through an enactment of intellectual and readerly breadth through the trope of flight.

IV. "Digression of the Ayre"

The "Digression of the Ayre" invites the reader away from the larger work into flight. The first sentence works through a poetical hawking metaphor to catalyze this thought experiment:

> As a long-winged Hawke when he is first whistled off the fist, mounts aloft, and for his pleasure fetcheth many a circuit in the Ayre, still soaring higher and higher, till he bee come to his full pitch; and in the end when the game is sprung, comes down amaine, and stoopes upon a sudden: so will I, having now come at last into these ample fields of Ayre, wherein I may freely expatiate and exercise my selfe for my recreation a while rove, wander about the world, mount aloft to those ætheriall orbes and celestiall spheres, and so descend to my former elements againe. (2:33)

The stated purpose of this flight is to make a survey of the entire world, but it is soon clear that it is the world of textual authority it wishes to test. "I will first see whether that relation of the Friar of *Oxford* be true, concerning the Northerne parts under the Pole," it begins, and goes on to catalogue and compare a veritable library of exploratory and scientific writings. From assertions by Cardan, Scaliger, Mark Ridley, "Dr. Gilbert, and "Nicholas Cabeus the Jesuit" about magnetism to Gesner's theory of the winter dormancy of mice compared with the prior Peter Martyr's claim that mice "follow the Sunne," Burton shows the pleasures of broad and curious studies (2:33–35).

> Burton's inclusion of the "Digression of the Ayre" in the midst of his section on the cures of melancholy has led Annie Chapple to call the imaginative flight tacitly therapeutic. Indeed, the author's own statement that he writes it "for pleasure," sug-

> gests that it is meant as a temporary relief of the author's own melancholy as well as of the reader's. Jonathan Sawday notes that as Burton changed the book throughout his six editions, he always left the interruptions as they were, and that Burton uses interruption to draw the reader's attention to his or her perception not only of his text, but also of how we assemble our view of the world (Sawday 178).

The argument at the digression's summit for the existence of a plurality of worlds is also an argument for a plurality of versions of the world.

This digression illustrates an awareness of perception in general, and textual perception in particular, as part of melancholy's cure. Burton suggests the dangers of passive reading throughout the "Digression of the Ayre," perhaps most boldly when he writes that he "would censure all Pliny's, Solinus', Strabo's, Sir John Mandeville's, Olaus Magnus', Marcus Polus' lies," a statement that echoes his own library's marginal note "mentitur" beside John Eliot's suspicious claim about Paris's population (2:40). The "Digression of the Ayre" also recalls the many lists Burton made in the pages of his own books. Here, he presents the reader with a series of geographical and scientific reports and theories, all from the books in the libraries around him, which works though its very copiousness to suggest the foolishness of accepting the ideas of particular authorities while in ignorance of others. His listing leads not to resolution, but dissolution, as his lists of things become lists of questions. His exhaustive catalogue of the causes and cures of melancholy can be interpreted as a similar defense against ignorance about the disease, and further, as a statement that breadth of knowledge itself is a cure of melancholy, in its prevention of a naïve, centered worldview.

The argument at the digression's summit for the existence of a plurality of worlds is also an argument for a plurality of versions of the world. Although the digression in the end collapses into indeterminacy, this is not so much melancholic skepticism as it is a pleasurable cure for the melancholy of the reader, the author, and what Burton calls the melancholy Muses. While Burton seems in some ways to look back to an Oxford of the past, his reading life was only made possible by the uniquely modern accretion of printed material at the Bodleian Library and in his own library. *The Anatomy of Melancholy* created a readerly consolidation of this learning that redistributed its wealth in a form meant to facilitate not scholarly gain but personal consolation. In this function, Burton's work resurrected the humanist commitment to use learning for betterment of mind and soul rather than of fortunes, from which he believed the University of Oxford had moved dangerously far away.

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