Robert Burton and his *Anatomy of Melancholy*: Some New College Musings

If you walk east down the central aisle of Christ Church Cathedral, you will find on your left-hand side, facing west, a monument to Robert Burton, the author of one of the most famous of English books, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (Oxford, 1621). It is not immediately obvious that the monument is to Burton, as the inscription—which Burton himself probably wrote—memorialises someone called 'Democritus Junior', that is to say the literary persona who addresses the reader in *The Anatomy*: 'Democritus to the reader'. It is a striking translation of literary artifice into funereal fact: Burton was so confident of his reputation and authority in his college and his chapel that he could design a monument not to himself, but to his literary *alter ego*.

 The Anatomy of Melancholy is the most bookish of books: its author remained in Christ Church for his whole adult life—'I have lived a silent, sedentary, solitary, private life, *mihi et musis* in the University'—and he travelled the world 'but in a Mappe or Card'. From 1624 until his death he also served as his college's librarian, a post which in other colleges tended to rotate. It was this library, his own library, and the Bodleian library upon which he chiefly drew when compiling his encyclopedically learned *Anatomy*. Upon his death his own personal library of at least 1700 titles was split between the Bodleian and his college, and almost all of these books survive today. You usually know when you are holding a Burton book because he tended to write on the title-page in a little triangle three 'r's, from the three in his name, 'RobeRt buRton', to indicate his ownership.

 Yet Burton makes it quite clear in his book that he also visited friends around Oxford in order to peruse their own private libraries and to borrow medical books. 'To do myself good', Burton wrote, 'I turned over such physicians as our libraries would afford, or my private friends impart'. He then stated in his margin who these 'private friends' were: 'M. Joh. Rous, our Protobib. Oxon. M. Hopper, M. Guthridge, &c.' Now 'Rous' is John Rouse, Bodley's Librarian, who was a fellow of Oriel and who left books to Oriel's library; and 'Guthridge' is John Goodridge of Wadham, who would in time donate most of his books to his college too, where they may still be consulted.[1] Thomas Hopper was a New College physician, and he bequeathed almost three hundred medical books to his college.[2] It is nice to think that Burton's famous book was not just constructed in the depths of Christ Church and the Bodleian, but was augmented by some browsing along the bookshelves of Burton's more clubbable friends in Oriel, Wadham, New College, perhaps elsewhere. Burton himself was no solitary melancholic: the Oxford antiquary Anthony Wood spoke to old men who had known Burton at Christ Church, who told him that Burton's 'company was very merry'. The old story that Burton hanged himself in his rooms in

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[1] On Rouse's own books: Rouse is listed in Oriel College's Benefactors Register as someone who 'gave' (*dedit*) as opposed to 'bequeathed' (*legavit*) a list of fourteen works to his college library (Oriel College Archives, Library Benefactors Register, p. 14). Additionally, or perhaps conversely, his will states that he left twenty books to Oriel's library (and £20 to the Bodleian; The National Archives, PRO, PROB11/221, fol. 326v). Yet my examination of all the books mentioned in the Register and locatable in Oriel today has not managed to identify any of these as demonstrably from Rouse's own collection, and whether the books listed and the books bequeathed overlap or are distinct has accordingly not been established. My thanks to Marjory Szurko for assistance tracking these books down in Oriel. For Goodridge, see my *Wadham College Books in the Age of John Wilkins* (2014), pp. 55-6.

[2] Hopper's books, still in the library, are listed in New College, Benefactors' Register, under 1623[/4] (pp. 66-77).

Christ Church—communicated to posterity by Wood's friend John Aubrey—has no truth in it.

The Anatomy of Melancholy was an Oxford book, and it is a sign of its popularity that its first six editions were printed in Oxford, not London—1621, 1624, 1628, 1632, 1638, 1651. Indeed, printers at Edinburgh attempted to cash in on the book's success, and the 1638 edition actually comprises a book half-printed at Edinburgh, seized and suppressed before it was completed, carried unfinished as it was to London, and then sent to Oxford where the remainder was printed—and the result bound up and sold as an 'Oxford' book![3] Burton expanded his book massively in his lifetime, i.e. to the fifth edition, from about 350,000 to over 515,000 words. That is in modern terms about six doctoral theses back to back.

It is also notable that various fragments of the proof sheets of Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy have been found used as waste paper in the bindings of several books in Oxford, especially of the fourth, 1632 edition. There are pieces of the fourth edition marked up by Burton himself with corrections in the binding of an All Souls book, a Queen's book, two books in Oriel, two in St John's—and one in New College.[4]

So it seems reasonable to suppose that one Oxford binder had in his workshop a stack of proof sheets printed off in 1632 for Burton's fourth edition, sent to and then marked up by Burton at Christ Church, returned to Litchfield's Oxford press (this was located roughly where the Radcliffe Camera is today), and then sold as waste to a local binder once Burton's many corrections had been implemented and the corrected edition printed off. It is interesting too that all the fragments come from later on in Burton's book, with a preponderance clustering around roughly p. 400. It is tempting to assert the sequence of binding by the sequence of fragments—but then a binder was under no obligation to keep his waste paper in order, and he may well have turned the pile over and started at the end. There may also have been a hiatus in using Burton's proof-sheets for binding, as one of the St John's books can only have been bound at least eighteen years after Burton was mulling over his proofs, as the book between his sheets was only printed in 1650.[5] At any rate, what we have here is a rather striking survival across five colleges and seven books of a series of proof sheets for a truly major book corrected in the hand of the author himself. Such survivals from the period are exceptionally rare.

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[3] Madan, Oxford Books, vol. 1, p. 204. Everything up to p. 346 was printed in Edinburgh; everything after that in Oxford.

[4] All Souls (pp. 481-84, used as end-papers for Richard Knolles, The Generall Historie of the Turkes, 4th ed. (London, 1631)); two Oriel books (pp. 495, 502, in Benedictus Pererius, Opera theologica quotquot extant omnia (Cologne, 1620); and pp. 503, 504, 509, 510, 514-15, in Gregorius Thaumaturgus, Opera omnia (Paris, 1622)); a Queen's College book (pp. 496, 501, in Joannes Philoponus, tr. Corderius, In cap. i Geneseos, de mundi creatione, libri septem (Vienna, 1630)); two St John's books (pp. 629-30, in Meric Casaubon, De quatuor linguis (London, 1650); pp. 546, 547 (misprinted '548'), in Nicephorus Callistus Xanthopulus, Ecclesiasticæ historiæ libri duodeviginti (Paris, 1630)); and finally in a New College book (pp. 352, 357, 418, 419) in Johann Heinrich Alstedius, Encyclopædia (Herborn, 1630), 2 vols., these in vol. 1). These were all first noticed by Paul Morgan when revising entries for the Short-Title Catalogue, and then catalogued in J. K. Moore, Primary materials relating to copy and print in English books of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Oxford, 1992); they are discussed briefly in the Oxford edition of the text (1989-), vol. 1, pp. lvii-viii. They appear in Peter Beal's online Catalogue of English Literary Manuscripts (CELM), as BuR 1.1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. BuR 1 is in fact a fragment of Burton's proof sheets from his first edition of 1621, found in a Christ Church book.

[5] The 1650 St John's book was not always in that college, however: it came from the bequest of the notable bibliophile Nathaniel Crynes in the eighteenth century.

The New College fragments of Burton's proof-sheets occur, as noted, at the front and the back of the first volume of our copy of Johann Henrich Alsted's famous *Encyclopædia* (Herborn, 1630) (BT3.187.3, 4). This set is in two folios, with a purchase inscription in the first: 'Alstedij Encycloped. 2^{bus} volum^{bus} Pret: 1^1 – 16^s. Octob. 26. 1633°.' (The waste in the second volume is not from Burton.)[6] The placing of the purchase inscription is also rather useful, as, being placed on an end-paper coming just before the Burton fragments at the front of the book, it must post-date the act of binding, and therefore it is obvious that the books were bound first and then sold to the college for that sum; the inscription was presumably made by the purchasing librarian, and so we know to the very day when the college acquired this copy of the major encyclopaedia of the age. Nor was this a donation, the most obvious way in which the college would acquire a book—this was purchased corporately as exactly the kind of reference work the college ought to be providing to its scholars in the 1630s.

Burton's proof-sheets show that the press actually made quite a hash of typesetting this book. He strikes through with pen incorrect letters and writes the correct one in the margin; he uses a swirl sign like an '@' to indicate type that has been inserted upside-down, he notes where upper- and lower-case letters have become confused, and he notes where gaps have crept in within, or have been missed out between, words. This is all very much as any academic has to do today, and it is strangely comforting to find this classic author drudging over his proofs like the rest of us. It is also obvious that similar-looking letters could get confused when the type was being sorted back into the case, as the typesetter has evidently gone for the box containing 'c' but has picked up several 'e's sorted there by accident, and vice versa. What is most obvious, though, is that Burton's extensive side-notes in Latin caused his compositors the most difficulty—over a dozen corrections in the one margin fully visible in our fragment. This is suggestive evidence that the Oxford compositors of the time were not in practice as comfortable in the learned tongue as they were in theory supposed to be. We can even see Burton revising his own text slightly as he goes—translating from a Latin text on how all senses can produce pleasure, but only the eyes and ears can detect 'grace' and 'vertue', Burton scans his Latin side-note, realises that the original terms he is quoting were *gratia* and *pulchritudo*, and so adjusts 'vertue' to the more accurate 'beauty'.[7] You can see all of these in the illustration below.

Burton must have slaved over these proofs—there are about thirty corrections to the p. 418 alone in our waste. Now this edition contained 722 pages, excluding prefatory material and the index. If—admittedly a very big 'if'—this is a typical

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[6] Indeed the printed waste used in the second volume has nothing to do with either Burton or Oxford at all. I have identified it as from an octavo edition of a Latin schoolbook, the *Confabulationum puerilium formulae*, of the sixteenth-century Neo-Latin stylist Herman Schottenius. For a fascinating study of this book, see Peter Macardle, *Confabulations: Cologne life and humanism in Hermann Schotten's Confabulationes tironum litterariorum (Cologne, 1525)* (Manchester UP, 2010). There was no English printed edition, so this waste originated from overseas; moreover, the only recorded editions are all rather early, and so we must imagine an Oxford binder with a stock of unwanted printed material which had not only originated far away, but long ago too. Recorded editions in British libraries are: Antwerp, 1537; Nuremberg, c. 1540; Augsburg, 1551; [no place given], 1556; Copenhagen, 1576. I have not established which exact edition this waste derives from, but it would not be hard to do.

[7] His actual correction to the proof, however, is that all of 'vertue' except the 't' should be struck out and those letters replaced with 'beauy' (see below)—a rather scrupulous way of indicating the desired emendation!

number of compositorial botches per page, then poor Burton was facing around 21,600 corrections in all, enough to make any author melancholy.
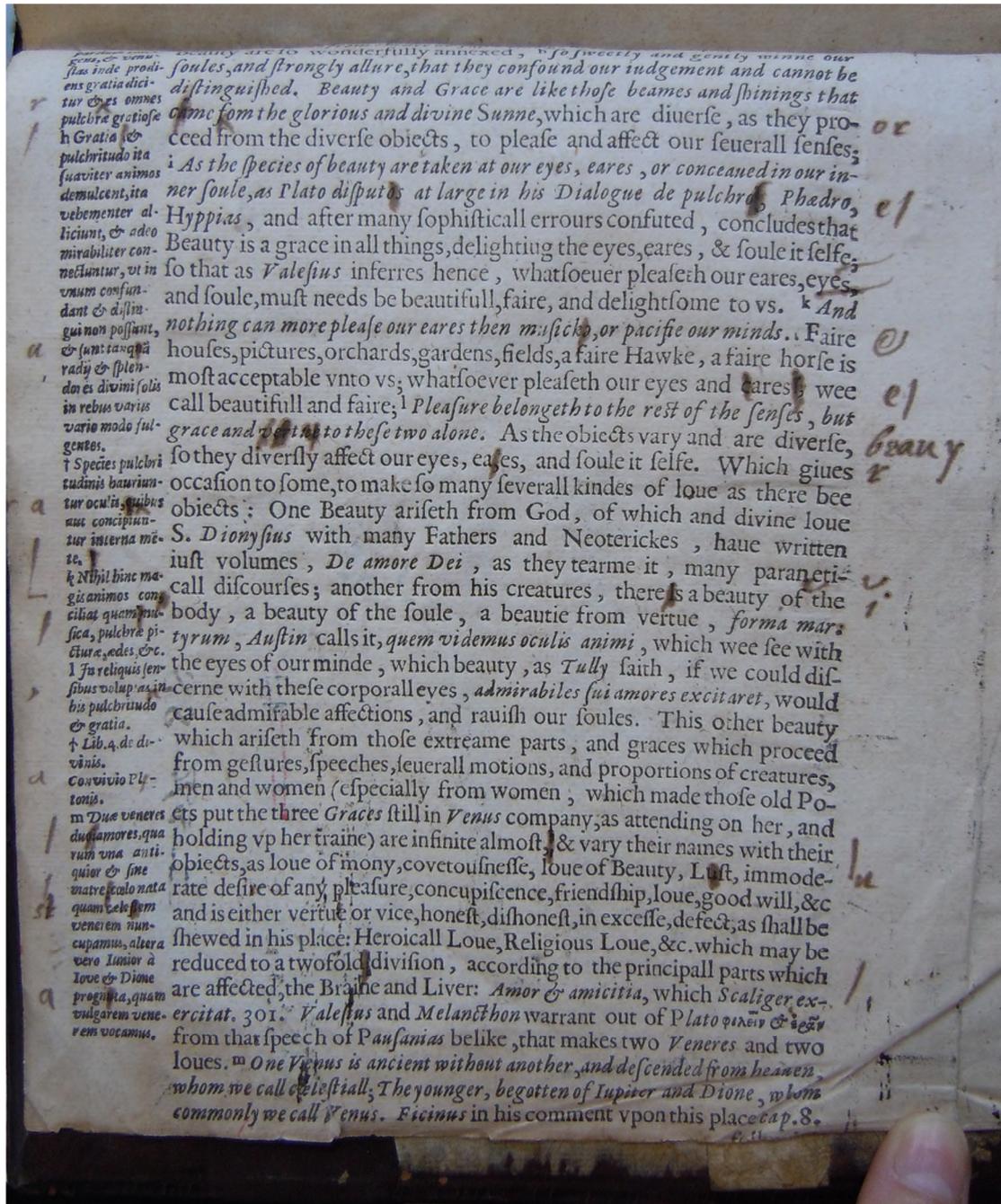
William Poole
Fellow Librarian

Fig. 1: Proof-sheet of p. 418 of Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, 4th ed. (Oxford, 1632), from the binding of New College, BT3.187.3, a copy of Johann Henrich Alsted, *Encyclopædia* (Herborn, 1630), with purchase inscription: 'Alstedij Encycloped. 2[bus] volum[bus] Pret: 1[l] – 16[s]. Octob. 26. 1633[o].'