Robert Burton and the Problems of Polymathy[1]

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I Introduction

In a collection of signatures, dedications, and entries in *libri amicorum* now in the Bodleian Library, there is a little noticed memorial to Robert Burton, written on the flyleaf of a book he had left to a friend. The hand is probably that of Edward Meetkerke, Professor of Hebrew at Christ Church, Oxford – Burton's college – from 1620-1626. The inscription reads: 'Legatum φιλομαθεστάτου simul et πολυμαθεστάτου, nec non amicissimi, Magistri Roberti Burton [*sic*], S.Th.B. 25 Januar. 1639, stylo Angliae defuncti' ('a bequest of the most philomathic and also most polymathic, and indeed the most dear Master Robert Burton, S[anctæ].Th[eologiæ].B[accalaureus]., who died 25 January 1639, English style').[2] For Meetkerke, the most salient features of his friend, along with his amiability, were his polymathy and his philomathy, his breadth of and ardour for learning.

The praise was apt: Burton's writing was centrally concerned with an ethos of polymathy. This essay places *The Anatomy of Melancholy* in the context of contemporary genres of general learning, and examines Burton's struggle to establish a polymathic persona against contemporary threats to this ethos. Burton's valorization of polymathy was not unusual for his period: '[b]y the seventeenth century', Mordechai Feingold

[1] I would like to thank Nick Hardy, Christopher Johnson, Oliver Thomas, Abigail Shinn, Angus Vine, and the anonymous reader for their comments on drafts of this essay.

[2] Bodleian MS Rawl D1387, fol.86. John Dewey noted this in his unpublished Ph.D. thesis (with slight errors in transcription), and identified Meetkerke on the basis of a monogram. Dewey claims it was 'inscribed on a memorial volume'; 'legatum' however suggests a flyleaf in a volume bequeathed by Burton. See John Dewey, 'Robert Burton and the Drama', Princeton University, 1968, 11. For a bequest to Meetkerke in Burton's will, see Nicolas K. Kiessling, 'Robert Burton's Will: Holograph Copy', *Review of English Studies*, 41 (1990), 94-101, here 100.

suggests, 'the ideal of the general scholar had reached its apogee'.[3] Meric Casaubon, who had been at Christ Church from 1614-1626, and whose tutor was Meetkerke, wrote a treatise on 'generall learning' in 1668, which nostalgically recalled the early part of the century as the highpoint of a decayed ideal.[4] But Burton's approach to the issue, as this essay argues, is idiosyncratic: the *Anatomy*, although manifestly the result of heroic feats of reading, is less a work of learned scholarship than a performative exhibition of its problems.

Conveniently, the *Anatomy* supplies the *OED* with its first citation for 'polymath' or any of its cognates. The passage in which it appears suggests the encroachments against which Burton tried to establish this ideal persona:

> 'Tis most true, ... *there is no end of writing of bookes*, as the Wise-man found of old, in this scribling age, especially wherein *the number of Bookes is without number* (as a worthy man saith) *Presses be oppressed*, and out of an itching humor, that every man hath to shew himselfe, ... he will write no matter what, and scrape together it bootes not whence. *Bewitched with this desire of fame, etiam mediis in morbis* to the disparagement of their health, and scarce able to hold a pen, they must say something, have it out, *and get themselves a name*, saith *Scaliger* .... To bee counted writers, ... to bee thought and held *Polumathes* and *Polihistors*, ... to get a Paper-Kingdome: ... in this præcipitate, ambitious age, ... ('tis *Scaligers* censure) they that are scarce Auditors, *vix auditores*, must be Masters and Teachers[.][5]

[3] Mordechai Feingold, 'The Humanities', in Nicholas Tyacke (ed.), *The History of the University of Oxford*: *Seventeenth-Century Oxford* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 211-357, here 218, and more generally, 218-42.
[4] Meric Casaubon, *Generall Learning*, ed. Richard Serjeantson (Cambridge: RTM Publications, 1999).
[5] Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, eds. Thomas C. Faulkner, Nicolas K. Kiessling and Rhonda L. Blair, 6 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989-2000), i.8-9. Subsequent references are given in the text. Burton's '*Polumathes* and *Polihistors*' is a quotation from Johann Valentin Andreae's *Menippus* (1618), a satirical dialogue on scholarship. 'Polyhistor' reached English earlier but was subsequently more associated with Central Europe. See Anthony Grafton, 'The World of the Polyhistors: Humanism and Encyclopedism', *Central European History*, 18 (1985), 31-47; Herbert Jaumann, 'Was ist ein Polyhistor? Gehversuche auf einem verlassenen Terrain', *Studia Leibnitiana*, 22 (1990), 76-89.

Print has flooded the market with pretenders to polymathy, whose aim is only fame. In 'this scribling age', Burton implies, the ethos of the scholar must be established with difficulty amid threats of confusion, and true polymaths distinguished from mere seekers of a paper kingdom. Burton highlights the ironies in his double reference to 'Scaliger': first to Joseph Justus, but three lines later to his father, Julius Caesar. '*Etiam mediis in morbis*', a marginal note tells us, comes from Baronius – not, however, the famous Cardinal, author of the enormous *Annales ecclesiastici* (1588-1607), but Justus Baronius, who changed his name from Calvin to honour the Cardinal on converting to Catholicism. Writers long '[t]o get themselves a name', says Burton, quoting Scaliger *fils*: but names and identities, even of the greatest scholars, are confounded in the chaos of printed matter.

The expansion of print posed another problem: the sheer volume of reading the polymath might be expected to master. Casaubon's account of the general scholar founds polymathy on universal reading:

> the title doth not belong unto any man, who hath not made a competent progresse in all sciences[;] ... who hath not read all ancient authors, Greeke, ... & Latin[;] ... who is not able ... to give a rationall account of any place in any such author, scared or prophane, if he be consulted about it: or not able to judge of styles[.] ... As for late authors, or wryters, I conceive that many must be read[.] ... Hee that doth aspire to be a generall schollar, must be ignorant of none, as neere as he can.

Casaubon acknowledges the implausibility of such a scope: 'Some men may thinke it impossible, that soe many bookes should be read; but it is strange ... what can be done, in

this kind, by industrie'.[6] But, as Burton complains, the burden of such industry in the 'scribling age' increased exponentially, with '[n]ew bookes every day. Pamphlets, Currantoes, Stories, whole Catalogues of Volumes of all sorts, new Paradoxes, Opinions, Schismes, Heresies, Controversies in Philosophy, Religion, &c.' (i.5). As Cambridge Act Verses, distributed in 1637, argued, 'Multitudo librorum est studiorum impedimentum': the multitude of books hinders studies.[7] 'What a Catalogue of new bookes all this yeare', Burton despairs: 'wee shall have a vast *Chaos* and confusion of Bookes, we are oppressed with them, our eyes ake with reading, our fingers with turning' (i.10-11).

In the *Anatomy*'s second partition, however, this becomes an opportunity for the relief of melancholy:

> what a world of bookes offers it selfe, in all subjects, arts, and sciences, to the sweet content and capacity of the Reader? ... [T]heir names alone are the subject of whole volumes, we have thousands of Authors of all sorts, many great Libraries full, well furnished, like so many dishes of meat, served out for severall palates, and he is a very blocke that is affected with none of them. (ii.85-6)

The proliferation of books is thus a boon and a bane, the enabling medium of the polymath and a threat to his status. Burton oscillates between the anxiety and the pleasures of learned variety. As Ann Blair has observed, complaints at *multitudo librorum* were often coupled with rejoicing in *copia librorum*.[8] The headword 'study' in Burton's index to the *Anatomy* is a flagrant exhibition of this ambivalence: 'Study overmuch cause

[6] Casaubon, *Generall Learning*, 117-18.
[7] Bodleian Library, MS Wood 276a, f.CCCCXXXIX.
[8] Ann Blair, *Too Much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information before the Modern Age* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 55 and 280n.195. See also Kathryn Murphy, 'The Anxiety of Variety: Knowledge and Experience in Montaigne, Bacon, and Burton', in Yota Batsaki, Subha Mukherji, and Jan-Melissa Schramm (eds.), *Fictions of Knowledge: Fact, Evidence, Doubt* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 110-30.

of mel. [...] study good against mel.' (iii.462). Melancholy is both triggered and salved by the disparate intellectual stimuli of 'information overload'.[9]

This essay explores Burton's engagement with these twin problems of polymathy: the difficulty of establishing a learned voice and persona amid the clamour of fame-hungry scribblers and pretenders to learning, and the practical problem facing the scholar of managing the ever-expanding 'world of bookes', both delightful and daunting. Each section sets Burton's polymathy against other early modern modes of being copious. Section II examines Burton's construction of a polymathic persona against foils of intellectual quackery, and the notion of 'polypragmatism'. The conflicted concept of 'encyclopaedia' is the subject of Section III, while Section IV places Burton in the context of scholarly debates over the value of miscellaneous literary compendia, such as polyantheas, designed to bring coherence to the confusion of books. The final section turns to the connection in the *Anatomy* between scholarly persona, compendious genres, Erasmian copia, and style.

II Polymathy and Polypragmatism

Burton was engaged with polymathy long before he began to write the *Anatomy*. One of the characters in *Philosophaster*, Burton's academic comedy, performed at Christ Church in 1618, is called 'Polumathes'.[10] The play shows the antics of several pseudo-philosophers, led by a Jesuit, Polupragmaticus, who arrive at the newly founded University of Osuna hoping for financial gain. Chaos ensues, as these philosophasters corrupt the youth of

[9] On 'information overload', see the special issue of the *Journal of the History of Ideas* 64/1 (2003), and Blair, *Too Much to Know*, *ad indicem*. On melancholy and copious scholarship, see Angus Gowland, *The Worlds of Renaissance Melancholy: Robert Burton in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 121-2.
[10] The name appeared earlier in English in academic dialogues: see *e.g.* Thomas Morley, *A Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke* (1597). For a discussion of anti-Jesuit tropes in *Philosophaster*, see Kathryn Murphy, 'Jesuits and Philosophasters: Robert Burton's Response to the Gunpowder Plot', *Journal of the Northern Renaissance* 1 (2009), <www.northernrenaissance.org>.

the town, garble Aristotle, and persuade scholars to abandon the academy for lucrative benefices and private tutoring. Into this confusion arrives a true scholar, Polumathes, with his companion, Philobiblos, whose name means lover of books; horrified, Polumathes unmasks the intellectual quacks to the Duke of Osuna, and sees them banished.

Polymathy, in the play's allegory, is thus Burton's ideal counter to contemporary threats to scholarship and the university. The confrontation of Polupragmaticus and Polumathes presents two versions of claims to compendious learning, which work to distinguish Burton's polymathic ideal from its debasement in faked disciplinary copiousness. Polupragmaticus lays claims to general learning: 'bilingual, ambidextrous, and omniscient ... I know every language, art, science'. Asked what he specializes in, he declares his mastery of all things: he is 'a grammarian, a rhetorician, a geometrician, a painter, a wrestling coach, augur, rope-walker, physician, magician. I know it all'.[11] The list slides from the trivium to the fairground. Verbal facility and omnifariousness are Polupragmaticus's identifying characteristics.

The name 'Polupragmaticus' has a venerable tradition. 'Πολυπραγμοσύνη', or being a busybody, had social resonances in ancient Greece, as seditious behaviour disruptive to the state, lampooned on the comic stage.[12] Plutarch's essay 'Περὶ Πολυπραγμοσύνης' warns against curiosity about trivialities, and tries to reorient attention towards proper objects of knowledge.[13] The uselessness of Polupragmaticus's wrestling, augury, and funambulism recall the ancient association of πολυπραγμοσύνη

[11] Quotations from the translation in Robert Burton, *Philosophaster*, trans. Connie McQuillen (Binghampton, NY: Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, SUNY, 1993). Here 43, 47.
[12] See Matthew Leigh, *From Polypragmon to Curiosus: Ancient Concepts of Curious and Meddlesome Behaviour* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), which also discusses the presentation of polymathy in Plato and other ancient writers at 171-5.
[13] Burton refers to this essay at the beginning of the *Anatomy*: see i.1, corresponding to *Moralia* 516E. For a summary, see Leigh, *From Polypragmon to Curiosus*, 12-14.

with merely curious and pointless learning.[14] Similar resonances are struck by Polupragmaticus's claim that he is related to Hippias of Elis – his sister's eightieth grandson, to be precise.[15] A contemporary of Socrates, Hippias was a sophist, who taught for a fee, and, like Polupragmaticus, claimed expertise in all fields. '*Hippias the omniscient*', as described in Apuleius's *Florida*, is Erasmus's third example of *copia rerum* in *De copia*.[16] Apuleius praises Hippias not for learning but for curious ingenuity, in fashioning his own garb and accoutrements. He ends by wishing he had Hippias's ingeniousness, but applied not to worldly crafts but learning and oratory.[17] His main sources are Plato's *Hippias Maior* and especially *Minor*, comic dialogues in which Hippias's certainty and flashy sophistry oppose Socrates's humble and ironic questioning.

Just as Hippias finds a foil in Socrates, so Polupragmaticus has Polumathes, reprising the ancient division between sophistry and philosophy. The obvious and immediate contrast is etymological. If 'Polupragmaticus' is one who is busy about many things, meddlesome, 'Polumathes' is one who has learned much. He is devoted to study for its own sake. In contrast to Polupragmaticus's boastful appropriation of all the arts, Polumathes claims '[i]n almost every field of knowledge there are many things about which I am uncertain and which I want to have resolved as soon as possible'.[18] He makes inquiries in various disciplines: astronomy, Pythagorean harmony, law, etymology, physics, geology, geometry. While Polupragmaticus sets himself up as a didactic authority who deceives or confuses his listeners with cant, Polumathes – like Socrates – humbly asks questions. Polupragmaticus and Polumathes thus represent, with their shared prefix, different modes of intellectual variety.

[14] See Leigh, *From Polypragmon to Curiosus*, 170-83.
[15] Burton, *Philosophaster*, 47.
[16] Erasmus, *De Copia/De Ratione Studii*, trans. Betty I. Knott, in *Collected Works of Erasmus*, ed. Craig R. Thompson, vol. 24 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), 573, 583.
[17] See Apuleius, *Florida* 9.24; for a translation, see Apuleius, 'Florida', trans. John Hilton, in *Rhetorical Works*, ed. Stephen Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 123-76, here 149.
[18] Burton, *Philosophaster*, 83.

This distinction was not universal. It is instructive to compare Burton's opposition with the first work to use 'polymathy' in its title, published three years before Burton began work on *Philosophaster*. Joannes Wower's *Tractatio de polymathia* (1603) defined polymathy as 'knowledge of various matters, drawn from all kinds of studies ... ranging freely through all the fields of the disciplines, as far as the human mind, with unwearied industry, is able to pursue them'.[19] Wower equates polymathy with a range of synonyms, including philology, erudition, literature, philomathy, polyhistoria.[20] He also incorporates πολυπραγμοσύνη within this ambit. For Wower, it is marked by interest less in literature than in curiosities and natural history. Nonetheless, it too finds its place under the broad banner of polymathy.[21]

What is at stake for Wower is the elevation of the arts course and the humanist study of ancient texts and artefacts from the status of propaedeutic (to divinity, medicine, law, or service of the state), to a master discourse encompassing all learning which deals with the particulars of history, literature, language, and the natural world. He reserves knowledge of causes and the nature of things to *philosophia*, but otherwise the world of learning belongs to the polymath.[22] In the engraved title-page to the 1665 Leipzig edition, the humble polymath is the Atlas of learning: he bears on his shoulders the whole globe,

[19] 'Perfectam Polymathian intelligo, notitiam variarum rerum, ex omni genere studiorum collectam …. Vagatur enim libero & effreni cursu per omnes disciplinarum campos.' Joannes Wower, *De polymathia tractatio* (Basle: 1603), 16-17. Translations my own.
[20] See Wower, *Polymathia*, 15-16; Luc Deitz, 'Ioannes Wower of Hamburg, Philologist and Polymath: A Preliminary Sketch of His Life and Works', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 58 (1995), 132-51, here 148; more generally on polymathy, 142-51. Burton owned a work by Wower, but not the *Polymathia*: see Nicolas K. Kiessling, *The Library of Robert Burton* (Oxford: Oxford Bibliographical Society, 1988), catalogue #1728.
[21] Wower, *Polymathia*, 16-17.
[22] Wower, *Polymathia*, 18-19; Deitz, 'Ioannes Wower', 150. *De polymathia* – which the subtitle calls an ἀποσπασμάτιον, or little fragment – establishes a complex division of knowledge, but despite branches for *scientia*, and, under *doctrina*, for each of the seven liberal arts, Wower only treats his capacious notion of *grammatica* extensively. See Deitz, 'Ioannes Wower', 146; also Klara Vanek, 'Antike Grammatik und kritische Philologie: Johannes Wower über die Methode der Textverbesserung in der *Tractatio de polymathia* von 1603', in Denis Thouard, Friedrich Vollhardt and Fosca Mariani Zini (eds.), *Philologie als Wissensmodell/La Philologie Comme Modèle De Savoir* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 109-38, here 113-14 and 133-4.

including the trivium and the three higher faculties of law, medicine, and theology. [Figure 1]

For Wower, then, πολυπραγμοσύνη is compassed within a world of learning for which polymathy is the general term. Burton's polymathy, however, is established through opposition, not comprehension. Polupragmaticus acts as a foil against which claims to true polymathy can be distinguished, through the opposition of the traditional with the modish, the learned with the curious, disinterest with greed, and study of literature with engagement with the political world and matters of fact.

Philosophaster is of course entertainment: a comedy, not a dissertation. But the same contrast also appears in the *Anatomy*. Burton's Polumathes is often taken as a forerunner of Democritus Junior.[23] Indeed, Burton gives polymathy as his reason for choosing Democritus as a pseudonym: he was

> wholy addicted to his studies ... A great Divine, ... an expert Physitian, a Politician, an excellent Mathematician ... He was much delighted with the studies of Husbandry ... He knew the natures, and differences of all Beasts, Plants, Fishes, Birds ... In a word hee was *omnifariàm doctus,* a generall Schollar, a great student[.] (i.2)

Democritus is the ideal foil because of his general learning and his Solomonic knowledge of nature. Wower likewise cites Democritus as a 'Philosophus πολυμαθὴς', quoting Cicero's comment that 'nihil enim excipiebat': he omitted nothing.[24] But Burton quickly tarnishes the polymathic ideal:

[23] See *e.g.* Gowland, *Worlds*, 7.
[24] Wower, *Polymathia*, 21.

> out of a running wit, an unconstant, unsetled mind, I had a great desire ... to have some smattering in all, to be *aliquis in omnibus, nullus in singulis*, ... *not to be a slave of one Science, or dwell altogether in one subject ... but to rove abroad*, centum puer artium, *to have an Oare in every mans Boat, to tast of every dish, and sip of every Cup* ... This roving humor ... I have ever had, & like a ranging Spaniell, that barkes at every bird he sees, leaving his game, I have followed all, saving that which I should, and may justly complaine, & truly, *qui ubique est, nusquam est.* (i.3-4)

The sentences enact their own complaint: unable to keep to a single subject, language, or source, like a ranging spaniel they spring more fowl than they can chase down.[25] Wower's ideal of polymathy as 'ranging freely' becomes frenzied disorder. Burton borrowed 'To have an Oare in every mans Boat, to tast of every dish' from the definition of 'Fretillon' in Cotgrave's dictionary; a 'frétillon' is a meddler. As Leigh has indicated, the omnifarious attention of the scholar is also the mark of the busybody polypragmatist.[26] If Polumathes lies behind Democritus Junior, so too does Polupragmaticus.

III: Encyclopaedia

Wower repeatedly equated polymathy with '*peritia* τῆς κυκλοπαιδείας' ('experience of the cyclopaedia', or acquaintance with comprehensive learning), and devoted a whole chapter of the *De polymathia* to Ἐγκυκλοπαιδεία.[27] Encyclopaedism has likewise long been a central category in critical discussions of the *Anatomy*. The tradition was inaugurated by Northrop Frye in his *Anatomy of Criticism*: a title which indicates the adoption of the

[25] On Burton's spaniel, see Karl Josef Höltgen, 'Literary Art and Scientific Method in Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*', *Explorations in Renaissance Culture*, 16 (1990), 1-36, here 8.
[26] See Leigh, 64-5.
[27] See Wower, *Polymathia*, 16, 17, and chapter 24 (208-13).

Anatomy as a generic paradigm.[28] For Frye, the *Anatomy* is the archetype of what he variously calls 'encyclopaedic satire', 'encyclopaedic form', and 'encyclopaedic farrago'.[29] It has been claimed that encyclopaedism is the *Anatomy*'s 'most profound feature', though most critics suggest that the *Anatomy*'s disorder make its encyclopaedism failed or ironic.[30]

A basic objection to this critical trend is that Burton would not have intended the *Anatomy* as 'an' encyclopaedia, successful or otherwise. 'Encyclopaedia', as a count noun, was not, as Ann Blair has observed, an 'actor's category' in the period.[31] The earliest citation I have found in this sense in English dates to 1642, in a translation of Comenius which refers to a work which 'PETER LAURENBERG sets out under the Title of *Pansophia*, an *Encyclopaedia*, or generall comprehension of all the arts'.[32] The usage relies on familiarity with one of the most popular works which bore that title, *Encyclopaedia septem tomis distincta* (1630) by Comenius's teacher Alsted.[33] The sense of 'encyclopaedia' as a book was slow to catch on: the *Bibliotheca Eliotae* defines 'encyclopaedia' in 1542 as 'that lernynge whiche comprehendeth all lyberall scyences and studies'; 140 years later,

[28] Northrop Frye, *The Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (1957; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 311-12.
[29] Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 55-6, 311. Frye's 'encyclopaedia' is a redubbing of Menippean satire.
[30] Samuel G. Wong, 'Encyclopedism in *Anatomy of Melancholy*', *Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance et Réforme*, 22 (1998), 5-22, here 5. See also Christopher Grose, 'Theatrum Libri: Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* and the Failure of Encyclopedic Form', in Jennifer Anderson and Elizabeth Sauer (eds.), *Books and Readers in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia, PN: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 80-96; Jonathan Sawday, 'Shapeless Elegance: Robert Burton's Anatomy of Knowledge', in Neil Rhodes (ed.), *English Renaissance Prose: History, Language, Politics* (Tempe, AZ: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1997), 173-202.
[31] See Blair, *Too Much to Know*, 12. On the anachronism of calling Pliny's *Historia naturalis* an encyclopaedia – though contradictorily happy with the term for Bacon's *Instauratio magna* – see Aude Doody, *Pliny's Encyclopedia: The Reception of the Natural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univeristy Press, 2010), 1-6.
[32] Jan Amos Comenius, *A Reformation of Schooles designed in two excellent treatises*, trans. Samuel Hartlib (London: 1642), 64. Laurenberg's *Pansophia, sive pædia philosophica* was published in 1633.
[33] On Alsted, see Howard Hotson, *Johann Heinrich Alsted, 1588-1638: Between Renaissance, Reformation, and Universal Reform* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). On early examples of encyclopaedias, see William West, *Theatres and Encyclopedias in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 15-18, and Ulrich Dierse, *Enzyklopädie: Zur Geschichte eines philosophischen und wissenschaftstheoretischen Begriffs* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag Herbert Grundmann, 1977).

the definition offered by Blount's *Glossographia* is almost identical.[34] A late seventeenth-century squib on a drunken scholar emphasises the word's new-fangledness: '*Encyclopaedia*, with it's mighty sound, / What is't, quoth he, but when the Brain turns round?'[35]

The ancient sense of encyclopaedia as general or comprehensive learning, however, was common.[36] The turning of the drunk scholar's brain highlights an etymological misunderstanding, which associated *enkuklios paideia*, in which '*enkuklios*' meant general or 'in the round', with the metaphor of the circle.[37] Examples likely to have been known to Burton stress this: the popular handbook of logic by his Oxford contemporary Robert Sanderson contains a chapter entitled '*De circulo disciplinarum*' – 'On the circle of the disciplines' – which explains that 'the universe of disciplines is called "the circle", or "circular studies", like some sort of circle and orb which contains within its ambit everything worth knowing: encyclopaedia'.[38] In 1643, the University of Oxford published its arts curriculum, optimistically according to the Laudian Statutes, under the title *Encyclopaedia, & cyclus seu orbis literarum* ('Encyclopaedia, and the circle or world of letters'); the same information had been printed five years earlier in circular form.[39]

For Burton and his contemporaries, then, 'encyclopaedia' was not a genre or a book. It retained the etymological and ancient sense of 'paedeia': comprehensive education in a range of disciplines, usually the seven liberal arts, and suitable for the

[34] Thomas Elyot, *Bibliotheca Eliotae/Eliotis Librarie*, (London: 1542), Oiv; 'that learning which comprehends all Liberal Sciences; an Art that comprehends all others, the perfection of all knowledge': Thomas Blount, *Glossographia*, *or, A dictionary interpreting all such hard words of whatsoever language now used in our refined English tongue*, 2nd ed. (London: 1661), P4r.
[35] C.D., *Bacchanalia, or, a Description of a Drunken Club* (London: 1680), 7.
[36] See Richard Serjeantson, 'Introduction', in Casaubon, *Generall Learning*, 1-78, here 13-21.
[37] See L. M. De Rijk, '[Enkuklios Paideia]: A Study of Its Original Meaning', *Vivarium*, 3 (1965), 24-93; for sceptical correction, Dierse, *Enzyklopädie*, 7-8; also Robert L. Fowler, 'Encyclopaedias: Definitions and Theoretical Problems', in Peter Binkley (ed.), *Pre-Modern Encyclopaedic Texts* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 3-29, here 14-15, 27-9.
[38] 'Vniversitatem Disciplinarum τὸν κύκλον vocant, sive τὰς ἐνκύκλας παιδείας, quasi Circulum quendam & Orbem omnia scitu digna intra suum ambitum continentem; *Encyclopaediam*.' Robert Sanderson, *Logicae artis compendivm* [1618], ed. E.J. Ashworth, (Bologna: 1985) 343 [facsimile 101].
[39] *Statvta selecta e corpore statutorum vniversitatis Oxon* ... (Oxford: 1638). On the arts course, see Feingold, 'The Humanities'.

training of participants in the governing of society, rather than for scholarship. It was thus an inculcation in ethos more than a supply of information. The *Anatomy* is thus doubly excluded from designation as 'an' encyclopaedia: on the one hand by anachronism, on the other because it does not try to survey the disciplines, or supply basic knowledge belonging to them. Indeed, its two most prominent themes are medicine and divinity, two of the three higher university faculties, approached by those who had already covered the 'encyclopaedia' of the arts course.

Though the *Anatomy* is thus not an encyclopaedia, then, it is nonetheless useful to consider it in the light of early modern 'encyclopaedic ambition' or 'encyclopaedic drive'.[40] As with polymathy, encyclopaedia is fraught with tensions between the scholar and the smatterer which shape the *Anatomy*'s ambivalence. Wower wrote to J.J. Scaliger in 1602 querying Aristotle's use of 'enkuklia'. Troubled by commentators who took it to mean common or basic, Wower wanted 'encyclical' writings to mean those which 'encompassed the whole circle of philosophical topics'; in *De polymathia*, he took that sense for granted.[41] The slippage from one sense to the other, Thomas Fuller suggested, was the 'generall cavill against generall learning', expanding the calumny in a phrase we have already seen in the *Anatomy*: '*aliquis in omnibus est nullus in singulis*. He that sips of many arts, drinks of none.'[42] Like Burton's structural contrast between polymathy and polypraxy, 'encyclopaedia' equivocates between deep comprehension and shallow miscellany.

Burton's sole use of the word predictably foregrounds the polymathic sense preferred by Wower, in the context of contemporaries' failure to value true scholarship:

[40] See Blair, *Too Much to Know*, 12.
[41] See Deitz, 'Ioannes Wower', 144; Anthony Grafton, *Joseph Scaliger: A Study in the History of Classical Scholarship*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983-1993), 493-4, and nn.13-14.
[42] Thomas Fuller, *The Holy State* (Cambridge: 1642), 72; see Feingold, 'The Humanities', 218-19; Serjeantson, 'Introduction', in Casaubon, *Generall Learning*, 16; and cf. Richard Whitlock's *Zootomia* (London: 1654), 259-60.

> [Great men] are more beholden to Schollers, then Schollers to them; but they undervalue themselves, and so by those great men are kept downe. Let them have that *Encyclopædian*, all the learning in the world, they must keep it to themselves[.] (i.310)

Burton marks 'encyclopaedia' as learned through italics and the retention of the Greek accusative ending. To have it is not to own a book, but to possess, in person, 'all the learning in the world'. It is the purview of the polymath, and characteristic of the ethos of the general scholar. As we saw in the introduction, however, attaining 'all the learning in the world' is an ever-receding fantasy in the 'scribling age'. This is on one level a practical issue: how to manage the range of sources, or describe the manifold symptoms of melancholy, or find a method for the book's structure. But it becomes a trope of wider reach, as Burton oscillates between moments of synoptic vision and images of the confusions of illimitable variety of texts and sources of information.

As Democritus Junior, Burton claims that he writes from a position 'in *Minerva's* Towre ... in some high place above you all' (i.4). This recurs in the tables which anatomize each partition, or in the opening of the '*Digression of the Ayre*', where Burton 'mount[s] aloft to ... æthereall orbes and celestiall spheres' (ii.33), or in the delight he takes in maps: 'Me thinkes it would well please any man to look upon a Geographicall Map, ... to behold ... all the remote Provinces, Townes, Citties of the World, and never to goe forth of the limits of his study' (ii.86). But the possibility of comprehensive perspective is continually threatened by disintegration into the '*incredibilis rerum varietas*' (ii.86) – the unbelievable variety of things – that a map or synopsis should encompass. The compulsive conclusion of lists with '&c', or of subsections with phrases such as 'examples are infinite' (i.378), brings synopsis up against inexhaustible copiousness.

Burton's attempts to confine the profusion have the effect of bathos: having stressed the 'infinite varieties' of melancholy, Burton insists he 'will adventure yet in such a vast confusion and generality, to bring them into some order, & so descend to particulars' (i.396). Despite the 'stupend, vast, infinite Ocean of incredible madnesse and folly' of religious melancholy, in which 'parties affected are innumerable almost, and scattered over the face of the earth, farre and neere, and so have beene in all precedent ages, from the beginning of the world to these times', he nonetheless 'reduce[s] them to a twofold division' (iii.331, 337).

The problem of encyclopaedia thus presents itself both as a practical problem of the limits of the individual scholar, and as a metaphysical problem of reconciling the many and the one. Jan Ámos Comenius made this explicit, declaring that his *Pansophia* was directed to 'making out of all things some one [...] [A] very gradation requires that particular things be contracted into summes, and summes into a summe of summes'.[43] Burton's *Anatomy*, in its pendulum swings of perspective, foregrounds the elisions in such *summa summarum*, exposing an aporia in the aspiration to 'all the learning in the world'.[44]

IV: Polyanthean Helps

Comenius's call for a summary of summaries was a frequent plea in the period. The Cambridge Act Verses entitled 'Multitudo librorum est studiorum impedimenta' conclude that 'I do not wish to be a smatterer [*lit.* 'little'] in many books, but to be great in a few'.[45] Thomas Browne recorded a 'melancholy *Utinam*' – an if-only – that

[43] Jan Amos Comenius, *The Patterne of Universall Knowledge*, trans. Jeremy Collier (London, 1651), 56.
[44] For a contrast of Burton's 'indecision about particularities' and 'frenzy' of surface detail with an underlying 'clearly understood theory': Christopher Tilmouth, 'Burton's "Turning Picture": Argument and Anxiety in *the Anatomy of Melancholy*', *Review of English Studies*, 56 (2005), 524-49, here 525.
[45] 'Multis non peto paucus esse libris: | In paucis volo multus esse libris.'

> there were a generall Synod … for the benefit of learning, to reduce it as it lay at first in a few and solid Authours; and to condemne to the fire those swarms and millions of *Rhapsodies*, begotten onely to distract and abuse the weaker judgements of Scholars, and to maintaine the Trade and Mystery of Typographers.[46]

Comenius had read and commended Browne's advice, and in his *Patterne of Universall Knowledge*, he correspondingly proposed 'that a Booke should be compiled, for the containing all things which are necessary to be knowne and done [...] *viz.* an entire narration of those things which we know already, with an exact Index of such things as we are ignorant of'.[47]

Such summary required the reduction of the incredible variety of things to be known to abridged essentials. Comenius's response was to devise strategies of intellectual triage, which would reduce this plural matter to a manageable quantity, and act as a solution to the unmanageable scope of learning in the 'scribling age'.[48] Burton himself registers the need for such reductions, calling for a 'speedie reformation' to 'restraine this libertie' of the press, which would otherwise 'run on *in infinitum*' (i.10). But more striking in the *Anatomy* is a mistrust of such projects of abbreviation. The idea of epitome leads to an *auctio ad absurdum* of infinite expansion. His tic of *et cetera* invokes the inexhaustible stock of particulars which remain unenumerated; his repeated references to 'Catalogues of Volumes' imply the ironic condition of works which, in listing literature, add to it.

[46] Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici and Other Works*, ed. L.C. Martin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 25.
[47] Comenius, *Patterne of Universall Knowledge*, 4. On Comenius's quotation of Browne, see Kathryn Murphy, 'The Best Pillar of the Order of Sir Francis: Thomas Browne, Samuel Hartlib, and Communities of Learning', in Murphy and Richard Todd (eds.), *A Man Very Well Studyed: New Contexts for Sir Thomas Browne* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 273-92, here 286-91.
[48] See Christopher D. Johnson, 'Making the "Round of Knowledge" in Bacon's Wake: Naudé, Comenius, and Browne', *Society and Politics*, 5 (2011), 9-31, here 15-19.

Comenius himself supplies a listed compendium of compendia which evokes some of Browne's complaint at the 'swarms and millions of *Rhapsodies*', and of Burton's irony:

> *Encyclopedias, Polymatheias, Panepistemonas, Artes Cyclognomicas, Syntaxes Artis mirabilis, Instaurationes magnas, Transformationes Scientiarum, Theatra Sapientiæ humanæ*, *Omniscientias Christianas, Pansophias, Panangias, Panarchias, Pancosmias*, and many other intituled in the like manner.[49]

The provision of such proximate helps raised protests by scholars that such abbreviations rotted the memory, ruined scholarship, and encouraged intellectual dishonesty. Burton similarly complains, in his discussion of the 'Misery of Schollers', of those ignoramuses who

> judge of a Schollers worth, that know not what belongs to a students labours, that cannot distinguish between a true scholler, & a drone[,] or [between] him that by reason of a voluble tongue, a strong voice, a pleasing tone, and some trivantly *Polyanthean* helpes, steales and gleanes a few notes from other mens Harvests, and so makes a faire shew, and him that is truely learned indeede. (i.318)

Burton repeats the key trope of the opposition between Socrates and Hippias, philosophy and sophistry, Polupragmaticus and Polumathes. Mordechai Feingold has

[49] Comenius, *Reformation*, 70-1.

associated this passage with the scholarly response to Ramism.[50] The student vogue for Ramist techniques and textbooks in the late sixteenth century became a flashpoint for scholarly hostility towards the culture of abbreviation and summary, which humanist scholars saw as 'undermining the very foundation of their ascendancy within the *respublica litterarum*'.[51] While the Clarendon edition points to Domenico Nani Mirabelli's *Polyanthea*, a printed work of literary excerpts keyed by topic, Feingold identifies Burton's striking phrase 'trivantly *Polyanthean* helpes' as a moment of satirical anti-Ramism: '[n]owhere was the correlation of Ramist ideas and intellectual impoverishment more pronounced than in the realm of petty compendia … Such manuals became the scourge of learning.'[52] Another account proposes, contrarily, that the butt of Burton's ire in this passage was, as in *Philosophaster*, Catholic or Jesuit scholarship.[53]

With his jibe at '*Polyanthean* helpes', Burton is certainly again concerned with the danger to learned polymathy from philosophasters. But there is a more directly topical reference in the passage than either Ramism or Catholicism, which amplifies Burton's concern with the defence of general learning. It appears shortly after complaints against those who 'out of that insatiable desire of filthy lucre ... spoile Parsons of their revenewes ... *and that maintenance on which they should live*: by meanes whereof, Barbarisme is increased, and a great decay of Christian Professors[.]' Burton supplies a reading list as remedy: 'I would all our Symoniacall Patrons, and such as detaine Tithes, would read those judicious Tracts of S[r] *Henry Spelman*, and S[r] *James Sempill* Knights; those late elaborate and learned Treatises of D[r] *Tilslye*, and M[r] *Montague*' (i.315-16).

[50] See Mordechai Feingold, 'English Ramism: A Reinterpretation', in Mordechai Feingold, Joseph S. Freedman and Wolfgang Rother (eds.), *The Influence of Petrus Ramus: Studies in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Philosophy and Sciences* (Basel: Schwabe & Co AG Verlag, 2001), 127-76, here 159.
[51] Howard Hotson, *Commonplace Learning: Ramism and Its German Ramifications, 1543-1630* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 51.
[52] Feingold, 'English Ramism', 159. Nani's *Polyanthea* was first published in 1503 (not 1603, as suggested in the Clarendon notes to this passage: *Anatomy* iv.340). On Nani and polyantheas, see Blair, *Too Much to Know*, 125-6, 174-88, *et ad indicem*. J.B. Bamborough notes that Burton did himself not use 'polyanthean helpes': 'Introduction', *Anatomy* iv.xii.
[53] Dewey, 'Robert Burton', 188.

Though Spellman's treatise was earlier, James Sempill's *Sacrilege Sacredly Handled* (1619), Richard Tillesley's *Animadversions upon m. Seldens history of tythes* (1621), and Richard Montagu's *Diatribæ on the Historie of Tithes* (1621) were all published in response to John Selden's *Historie of Tithes* (1618). Selden's *Historie* was a study of ancient precedents for the practice of tithing, concluding that it was not instituted by divine law, but by custom. Though Selden protested that he did not intend to deprive clergymen of their livelihoods, he was not believed.

Selden's *Historie* also offended by impugning clerical learning. Thomas Fuller reported a story – which G.J. Toomer dismisses as a 'contemporary canard' – that 'Selden wrote the book in revenge for the performance before King James at Cambridge in 1614 of the play *Ignoramus*, which ridiculed the common lawyers'.[54] True or not, what was at stake in the responses was not only tithing, but the conduct of scholarship. Selden began his *Historie* both defensively and provocatively, protesting that it was nothing but

> a meer Narration, and the *Historie of Tithes* ... Nor was any piece of it stolne from any other mans notes. ... [I]t is not of the Pitch of the Doctrine of the Breuiarie, or within the compasse of Pocket-learning. Nor will it, I think, looke like what were patcht vp out of *Postils*, *Polyantheas*, common place books or any of the rest of such excellent Instruments for the aduancement of Ignorance and Lazinesse.[55]

Selden contrasts writing that derives from diligent and laborious reading, and the 'patcht vp' product of polyantheas: the opposite of the advancement of learning.

[54] G.J. Toomer, 'Selden's *Historie of Tithes*: Genesis, Publication, Aftermath', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 65 (2002), 345-78, here 346. See further G.J. Toomer, *John Selden: A Life in Scholarship*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), i.257-310, and N.J.S. Hardy, 'Impartiality and the Early Modern *ars critica* in John Selden's *Historie of Tithes* (1618)', in Kathryn Murphy and Anita Traninger (eds.), *The Emergence of Impartiality* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 289-303.
[55] John Selden, *The Historie of Tithes* (London: 1618), a3v, I, II.

Despite claims of pure historical endeavour, Selden lays barbs for the clergy in his phrase the 'Doctrine of the Breuiarie'. The responses cited by Burton are the counterblast from divines and their supporters. Before engaging with Selden's arguments on tithing, Richard Montagu took up the issue of the practice of scholarship. He began by noting Selden's renown as

> a great Scholer: a various Linguest, a curious Critick, an excellent Antiquary ... [H]e neuer shooke hands with *lazy ignorance*, or *Patient idlenesse*, the common customers of the Clergy: ... One that maketh more than ordinary flights, beyond the pitch of the *Doctrine of the Breuiary*, without the compasse of *Pocket-learning*, which those Kestrills cannot fly vnto, that sore but with the Buzzard-wings of *Polyanthean* Collections.[56]

Montagu first picks up Selden's 'polyantheas' here; over the subsequent thirty pages, responding to Selden's first three, he repeats the word nine times. That the word itself was provocative is confirmed by other responses: Stephen Nettles ironically called himself a 'polyanthean predicant' against Selden's 'grand polymathist and predominant Philologer'.[57] Ventriloquizing Selden, Montagu calls '*Postils, Breuiaries, Polyantheaes*' '*Excellent Instruments of Knowing nothing*', before casting the accusation back. 'Philologers' and 'humanitians' also have recourse to 'polyanthean helpes':

> [...] they are not our *suppellex* alone, *Philologers* haue as good stuffe in their house as we haue any. Κέρας Ἀμαλθείας. *Copiacornu, Dictionaries* of all sorts: *Glossaries: Florilegies: Indices in poetas*, to a word, to tell them how often *Et* is in *Horace:* there

[56] Richard Montagu, *Diatribæ Vpon the First Part of the Late History of Tithes* (London: 1621), 1-2.
[57] See Nettles, *An Answer to the Jewish Part of Mr Selden's History of Tithes* (Oxford: 1625), 124.

> *Thesauros Criticos, Miscellanea, Præcidanea, Schediasmata, Verisimila, Aduersaria:* there *suspiciones, coniecturas, Lectiones nouas, Lectiones antiquas, Nouantiquas Lectiones, Syntagmata, Commentaria, Scholia*, vpon all Authors whatsoeuer. To most of which helpes of *Lazinesse* and *Ignorance*, that are not so disposed of themselues, the *Pseudothyron*, or backedoore of an *Index*, is as good an *Inlet* for any *Philologer*, or *Humanitian*, as is a *Polyanthea* for a *Diuine*.[58]

Like Comenius, Montagu registers the proliferation of ancillary genres in lists of books on books, the technical resources of the humanist scholar.[59]

Montagu stops short of suggesting that Selden relies on such florilegia. He does however imply more drastic intellectual dishonesty, picking up Selden's claim that his history was not 'stolne from other mens notes':

> were you afraid to bee challenged for *plagiarisme*? ... [Y]ou are vehemently suspected to steale other mens Children, and send them into the world for your owne. Is all your owne which your History representeth? I can say no ... [T]o driue away without leaue, other mens cattell out of their grounds: for a man to employ them, or sell them in markets as his owne: to alter or embezell the markes of them, as *Sisyphus* & *Autolycus* vsed of old, to draw them backeward into dens and caues with *Cacus* by the tayles: and last of all, which is worst of all, to deny them vpon enquiry and demand, this is not Thrift, but theft, this is, as I take it, flat Felony: is it not, in Law?[60]

[58] Montagu, *Diatribæ*, 29; also 23-4, 26.
[59] Feingold cites similar passages in which Montagu disparages Ramist '*Systemaes, Syntagmas, Synopseis* [...] Handmaids and Mistresses of Arts': Feingold, 'English Ramism', 163.
[60] Montagu, *Diatribæ*, 24.

Montagu protests two forms of intellectual dishonesty: the outright theft of plagiarism, and the use of 'helpes of *Laziness* and *Ignorance*' to lay claim to learning not earned by labour.

Both Montagu and Selden exploit a metaphorical field that associates intellectual labour and its abuses with the practice of tithing. For Selden, there is an implicit parallel between tithing and polyantheas, which supply clergymen the condensed fruits of others' labour to use as if their own. For Montagu, of course, the expropriation is effected by those who would deprive the clergy of tithes. He sharpens the parallel, using imagery of the theft of livestock, and placing Κέρας Ἀμαλθείας and *Copiacornu* – symbols of harvest plenty – at the head of his list of kinds of compendia. Burton makes the implicit metaphor even more explicit: the user of polyanthean helps 'steales and gleanes a few notes from other mens Harvests'.

The most immediate context of Burton's protest against the pseudo-scholar who fakes learning by means of '*Polyanthean* helpes' is thus Selden and Montagu's squabble. Though tithing was the subject of the dispute, Montagu's grounds of protest were methodological, defending clerical learning against secular humanism, and thus touched precisely on the issues of scholarly persona which, as we have seen, were a central concern for Burton. The dispute raised topical issues of personal concern – the clergy's entitlements, and the honour of university and clerical scholarship – and set traditions of ecclesiastical learning in collision with scholars operating outside established institutions. But beyond such demarcation disputes, what snags Burton's attention is the role ancillary genres play in the quarrel. These both navigate *copia librorum* and exacerbate *multitudo librorum*. '*Polyanthean* helpes' enable the polypragmatist to pass as a polymath, without the necessary labour of scholarship. They thus activate some of Burton's central themes: how can the true scholar be distinguished from the philosophaster? And how can the polymath compass the 'vast *Chaos* and confusion of Bookes'?

V Polymathic Style

Ironically, the *Anatomy* itself was sometimes used as a polyanthean help, in what David Lloyd called in 1668 'an aftergame of learning'.[61] The style of the *Anatomy*, and Burton's method of expansion, encourage this excerptibility. Sentences are composites of phrases and quotations which often repeat the same idea in different articulations. Burton anticipates that the reader 'will infer, that this is *actum agere*, an unnecessary worke, *cramben bis coctam apponere*, the same againe and againe in other words' (i.8), in phrases which both deplore and perform pleonasm. In order to lament the repetitiousness of Erasmian copia, Burton invokes the Erasmian adage '*crambe bis posita mors*' (twice-served cabbage is death), used to condemn 'an utterly boring speech which has to be listened to over and over again'.[62] In the first book of *De copia*, Erasmus famously provided a 'practical demonstration' of almost 150 variations of the phrase 'Your letter pleased me mightily', and 200 of 'As long as I live, I shall remember you'.[63] Burton frequently exemplifies such inventive glee, as in a list of misogynous epithets which expanded from 30 items to 120 between the first and last editions.[64] As there, Burton's expansions often happen within lists, or as insertions into the middle of sentences, sometimes lasting several pages before the original sentence resumes. Rarely does the new material add a new idea; instead, it

[61] Cited in Mary Ann Lund, *Melancholy, Medicine, and Religion in Early Modern England: Reading the Anatomy of Melancholy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), with further examples of readers (196-9); see also Gowland, *Worlds*, 295-9.
[62] Erasmus, *Adages Ii1 to Iv100*, trans. Margaret Mann Phillips, *Collected Works of Erasmus*, ed. R.A.B. Mynors, vol. 31 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), I.v.38 (417-18).
[63] Erasmus, *De copia*, 348-65. For Burton's approval of such combinatorial antics, see ii.92 and ii.94.
[64] See iii.164. Burton owned and annotated *De copia*: see Rosalie L. Colie, 'Some Notes on Burton's Erasmus', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 20 (1967), 335-41, though for caution in suggesting direct influence, see Mary Murphy Schmelzer, *'Tis All One: The Anatomy of Melancholy as Belated Copious Discourse* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 71. Colie's discussion is also tempered in Kiessling, *Library*, #537. Erasmus's influence is otherwise obvious: the *Adagia* are most often cited (c.75 times), and the *Encomium moriæ* has frequently been observed as a source: see *e.g.* Gowland, *Worlds*, 19, and Rosalie L. Colie, *Paradoxia Epidemica: The Renaissance Tradition of Paradox* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966).

amplifies the same thing, again and again, in other words. The *Anatomy* expanded from 353,369 to 516,384 words between its first and its posthumous sixth edition.[65] But Burton wrote when the vogue for Erasmian *copia* was at a wane, and its prolixity had come to seem 'meretricious and deceptive'.[66] He thus also regrets such illimitable expansion. In every edition, Burton confessed a 'maine fault': that he had 'not revised the Copie, and amended the stile' of his work (i.16). Burton apologizes both for failing to correct faults in the printer's copy, and for not remedying his dubious copiousness.[67]

The *Anatomy* is also a collage of quotations and paraphrase: the same again and again in others' words. It thus threatens to be mistaken for a product of polyanthean helps. Copious quotation is at once the badge of the polymath, demonstrating his learning, and the disguise of the patched-up polyanthean. Burton displays anxiety that his words are not his own, equivocating between positive and negative images of a patchwork text. On the one hand, compilation is studious diligence: 'As a good hous-wife out of divers fleeces weaves one peece of Cloath, a Bee gathers Wax and Hony out of many Flowers, and makes a new bundle of all ... I have laboriously collected this *Cento* out of divers Writers' (i.11).[68] On the other, in an image which recalls the etymology of 'polyanthea', 'wee ... pick the choyce Flowers of [others'] tild Gardens to set out our owne sterill plots' (i.9), plundering the garden like a plagiarist. The humanist image of digestion is invoked: '[that] which nature doth with the aliment of our bodies, incorporate, digest, assimulate, I doe' – 'which *Seneca* approves', Burton insists (i.11). But less savoury corollaries are also present: 'our Poets steale from *Homer*, he spewes, saith *Ælian*, they licke it up' (i.11); the *Anatomy* is a 'Rapsody of Rags gathered together from severall Dung-hills, excrements of Authors ... confusedly tumbled out' (i.12).

[65] See J.B. Bamborough, 'Textual Introduction', in *Anatomy* i.xxxviii.
[66] On the shift see Betty Knott's 'Introductory Note' to Erasmus, *De copia*, 283.
[67] See, on copy and *copia*, Terence Cave, *The Cornucopian Text: Problems of Writing in the French Renaissance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 3-5.
[68] On the *Anatomy* as *cento*, see Gowland, *Worlds*, 22-6.

If the pseudo-scholar performs words gathered from polyanthean helps in 'a voluble tongue, a strong voice, a pleasing tone', the humble polymath threatens to be drowned out by the voices of others. This is another version of the problem of encyclopaedism: the multiple voices of compilation have a centrifugal, dissipating force, which the polymath struggles to keep in consort. The title-pages of the first two editions of the *Anatomy* carried a phrase from Macrobius: '*Omne meum, Nihil meum*', all mine, none mine. Burton repeatedly highlights the dilemma: 'I must usurpe that of *Wecker è Terentio*, *nihil dictum quod non dictum priùs, methodus sola artificem ostendit*, we can say nothing but what hath beene said, the composition and method is ours onely, and shewes a Schollar' (i.11). Burton's claim that originality is impossible is, inevitably, a paraphrase of a quotation of a quotation. The idea is soon repeated, in an ancient commonplace which Burton sharpens to a paradox: 'It is most true, *stylus virum arguit*, our stile bewraies us, and as Hunters find their game by the trace, so is a mans *Genius* descried by his workes' (i.13).[69] In the now familiar ambivalence of polymathy, Burton's copious style both betrays him, as his scribbling pen – his *stylus* – runs out of his control, and shows forth his scholarly persona in his 'stile'.

This essay has addressed Burton's presentation of a central dilemma of polymathy in the 'scribling age': how is the polymath to have 'encyclopaedia', all the learning in the world, when the 'vast *Chaos* and confusion of Bookes' makes that learning of impossible scope and incorrigibly plural? Anthony Grafton has referred in a pungent mixed metaphor to the 'pullulating stew of erudition' in the learned literature of the period.[70] Burton labours to digest that sprouting stew, attempting to compass and mediate the field of literature on melancholy, and much besides. But the *Anatomy* also exemplifies pullulation, in its clamour of contradictory voices, disciplinary diversity, and

[69] Cf. Geoffrey Hill, 'Keeping to the Middle Way', in *Collected Critical Writings*, ed. Kenneth Haynes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 297-315, esp. 297-8, 301.
[70] Grafton, 'World of the Polyhistors', 40.

constantly expanding bulk. The tension between the performance of polymathy and of its problems marks Burton's relationship to all the issues discussed in this essay: polypragmatism, encyclopaedia, and polyanthean helps. It is also what makes the *Anatomy* distinctive. Burton is no Scaliger, Casaubon, or Selden, and the *Anatomy* is not a great work of humanist scholarship. It is also not, however, just a bloated satire on scholarship, a parody of philology. Burton's copiousness of words and matter is both a partial answer to the polymath's dilemma, and an exhibition of the impossibility of resolving it.