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978-1-107-65996-4 - Melancholy, Medicine and Religion in Early Modern England:
Reading the Anatomy of Melancholy

Mary Ann Lund

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MELANCHOLY, MEDICINE AND RELIGION IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND

The Anatomy of Melancholy, first published in 1621, is one of the greatest works of early modern English prose writing, yet it has received little substantial literary criticism in recent years. This study situates Robert Burton's complex work within three related contexts: religious, medical and literary/rhetorical. Analysing Burton's claim that his text should have curative effects on his melancholic readership, it examines the authorial construction of the reading process in the context of other early modern writing, both canonical and non-canonical, providing a new approach towards the emerging field of the history of reading. Lund responds to Burton's assertion that melancholy is an affliction of body and soul which requires both a spiritual and a corporal cure, exploring the theological complexity of Burton's writing in relation to English religious discourse of the early seventeenth century, and the status of his work as a medical text.

MARY ANN LUND is Lecturer in Renaissance Literature at the University of Leicester. She has research interests in early modern prose, religion and medicine, and is the editor of volume 12 of *The Complete Sermons of John Donne*.

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*For my parents,
Clare and John*

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Abbreviations

- ODNB* – *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*
(www.oxforddnb.com)
- OED* – *Oxford English Dictionary* (www.oed.com)
- P&P* – *Past & Present*
- PQ* – *Philological Quarterly*
- RES* – *Review of English Studies* (new series)
- RQ* – *Renaissance Quarterly*

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When referring to early modern authors' names, I follow the forms Burton typically uses (as listed in the 'Biobibliography' of the Oxford edition, vol. VI) but also give vernacular alternatives in the first full citation, e.g. Montanus (Giambattista da Monte). In all quotations from early modern texts, the letters u/v and i/j are standardised. All quotations from the Bible are from the King James Version, unless indicated otherwise.