

The genre of character sketch, as developed in England during the first half of the sixteenth century, obeyed definite rules: a character portrayed a "sort of person" in a satirical way; most writers claimed a moral purpose for their collections of characters; the genre had specific stylistic rules of composition, which included alliteration, balance, puns, and paradoxes. This style can be seen in Overbury's *Characters*. By the mid-sixteenth century handbooks had codified these rules of composition. During the following century the genre developed a more novelistic style which included reported conversations and concisely reported encounters between a narrator and the subject of the sketch. The *Tatler* and The *Spectator* contain many examples of this later style.

Character sketches can be found in John Barclay's novel *Euphormio's Satyricon* (Paris 1607) but more prominently in the third part of his *Icon Animorum* (London, Paris 1614; *Mirror of Minds* in Thomas May's translation of 1633). In his novel the descriptions of Aquilius and Catharinus in *Euphormio* 2.27 and 2.30 (The Emperor Rudolph and a Puritan respectively) are extended sketches. In the third part of the *Icon* such sketches are far more common. They portray characters at the court and include the valiant man, the timid, the quick-witted, the slow-speaker, the wastrel youth, and others. In addition Barclay includes sketches of religious figures (the founder, the reformer), magistrates, and lawyers. Barclay's character sketches follow contemporary, 17th century practice (as seen in Overbury) to a limited extent: they do portray a "sort of person", not a specific individual, with some humor; the sketches usually begin or end with practical, if not specifically moral, advice. The sketches however do not conform to contemporary rules for composition: they are not characterized by alliteration, puns, and the rest.

Instead Barclay anticipates the 18th century type of character with its more novelistic style and its lesser concern for verbal effects. Barclay even includes short stories which illustrate his point. An example is the story in *Icon*, chapter 14, of Caepio and Mella, which shows a mind "drunken with sudden prosperity," a dangerous affliction to those familiar at court. English literary criticism considers the character sketch to have contributed to the development of the novel. Barclay however, having written a novel already, was able to apply novelistic techniques to his sketches in a way not available to contemporary English writers. In addition the verbal effects seen in the English characters were not typical of Renaissance Latin prose and would have violated decorum.

The paper illustrates the points made above with passages selected from English character writers and corresponding passages from Barclay. There will be a handout.