Richard Aldington

A Book of Characters from Theophrastus, Joseph Hall, Sir Thomas Overbury, Nicolas Breton, John Earle, Thomas Fuller, and Other English Authors Jean de la Bruyère, Vauvenargues, and Other French Authors

London: Routledge & Sons, n.d. 1924

In 1614 there appeared a book of 21 characters (expanded to 83 in subsequent editions) by the late Sir Thomas Overbury and other learned gentlemen (among them Webster, Dekker, and Donne), often employing extravagant wordplay and metaphor, which extend the genre to reflect contemporary English life; there are characters not only of vices and virtues but trades (The Ostler) and national types (The Dutchman). Then in 1628 John Earle’s Microcosmography retained the wide range of subjects treated in Overbury, but returned to a more relaxed, less mannered style. Hall, Overbury, and Earle proved...