

Date: 28.06.21 The University, Wits

The next stage of the development of British drama ranges from 1580 to 1596. It included the plays of Lyly, Peele, Greene, Lodge, Nashe, Kyd and Marlowe. Known as university wits because they came either from Oxford or from Cambridge. Commenting on the contribution of the university wits to British drama Nicoll writes, "The classicists had form, but no fire, the popular dramatists had interest but little sense of form. Drama that is to say, was struggling between a well formed cell and structureless ~~enthusiasm~~ enthusiasm.

The great merit of the university wits was that they came with their passion and poetry, and their academical training, to unite these forces and thus to give Shakespeare a pliable and fitting medium for the expression of his genius."

John Lyly - Lyly wrote eight comedies - A most excellent comedy of Alexander and Campaspe and Diogenes, Sapho and Pacho, Gallathea, The man in the moon

midas, mother Bombie, Love's metamorphosis and The woman in the moon. He wrote for private theatres. Lyly first of all created genuine romantic atmosphere imbued with humour and fancy for romantic comedy. He deftly assimilated realism, classicism and romanticism in his comedies. He established prose as a medium of expression for comedy. He skillfully used prose to express light feelings of fun and laughter. He also used suitable blank verse for comedy. He gave to British comedy a witty phraseology. Lyly successfully depicted comic characters both as types and individuals. The device of mistaken identity, that is a girl dressed as a boy, is traced back to Lyly. The introduction of songs, symbolical of mood or movement of a particular comedy owes its popularity to Lyly. He thus paved the way for the blossoming of Shakespeare's dramatic genius.

Date: 28.06.21

George Peele - Peele's work consists of the Arrangement of Paris, The Battle of Alcazar, The famous chronicle of King Edward the I, The love of King David and Fair Bethsaobe and The Old Wives Tale. His range is versatile. He has left behind a pastoral, a romantic tragedy, a chronicle history and a romantic satire. He ~~was~~ juxtaposes reality and romance in his plays. As a humorist he influenced Shakespeare in The Old Wive's Tales Lyly for the first time introduced the note of satire in comedy.

Robert Greene - Greene's plays include The comical history of Alphonsus, King of Aragon, The Honourable history of Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay and The Scottissh history of James the IV. He was the first master of the art of plot construction in British drama. In his plays Greene has three distinct worlds mingled together - the world of magic, the world of aristocratic life and

the world of the country. There is a peculiar romantic humour and rare combination of realism and idealism in his plays. He is the first to draw romantic heroines. His heroines Margaret and Dorothea anticipate Shakespeare's Rosalind and Celia.

Thomas Kyd - Kyd's only play The Spanish Tragedy, a Senecan tragedy, is a landmark in drama. It is a well-constructed play in which the dramatist has skillfully woven passion, pathos and fear. He succeeded in producing dialogue that is forceful and capable. Kyd introduced the revenge motif in tragedy. He, thus, influenced Shakespeare's Hamlet. The device of play within play which Shakespeare employed in ~~Hamlet~~ Hamlet is used for the first time in The Spanish Tragedy.

Thomas Lodge and Thomas Nashe who wrote The Wounds of Civil War and The Gyle of Dogs res-

pectively, did not make any significant and memorable contribution to the evolution of British drama.

Christopher Marlowe - As a dramatist Marlowe surpassed all other university wits and "as metrist is almost as great as Shakespeare." His memorable plays are Tamburlaine, Dr. Faustus and Edward III his other plays are The Jew of Malta, The Tragedy of Dido, The Queen of Carthage and The Massacre of Paris. Swinburne calls him "the first great poet, the father of English tragedy and the creator of blank verse." Nicoll calls him "the most individual and the most talented of pre-Shakespeareans." He was the first English dramatist, who, according to Rickett, "saw clearly enough that the romantic drama, was better suited to the insular genius." Marlowe provided big heroic subjects that appealed to human imagination. Marlowe's

Page (06)

Date : 28.06.21

Characters Tamburlaine, Dr. Faustus and the Jew of Malta are outlined with strength and developed with fire. Each play illustrates one ruling passion, in its growth, its power and its extremes.

The end

Munir Bhushan Sinha
Deptt. of English
S. S. College, Jehanabad