

THE UNIVERSITY WITS

The Pre-Shakespearean dramatists are known as the 'University Wits'. They are so called as nearly all of them were closely associated with Oxford and Cambridge University. They were usually actors and dramatists. Their training began as actors. They revised old plays and finally became independent writers.

JOHN LILLY

•Lilly wrote comedies which were intended for the child actors in royal service. His charming romantic Plays are all comedies. They are- Women in the Moon, Endymion, Sappho and Phas, Alexander and Campaspe, Midas, Mother Bombie and Love's Metamorphosis.

Lilly elaborated the romantic sentiment in his plays. He brought on the English stage the element of high comedy, full of lively wit and fantastic charm. His wit consists of puns, quibbles and a rapid exchange of repartee.

Lilly's subjects are taken mostly from mythology and legends, foreign as well as natives. He introduces pastoral scenes to allegorize his plays. Their characters are personifications of Nature of Concord and Discord.

He mingled the tragedy and comedy, pathos and humour in his plays. He freely blended the different segments of existence and different worlds.

Human figures live and move side by side with the deities of classical mythology.

He added to English drama the feminine qualities of literature delicacy, grace, charm and subtlety.

Lilly's sparkling dialogue gave Shakespeare an excellent model to follow and the greater dramatist is probably indebted to him for his first teaching in court style

ROBERT GREENE

Greene contributed greatly to the development of romantic comedy. In his plays the realism and idealism meet freely.

In characterization he makes a notable movement; in place of the stock characters of the mystery and miracle plays he introduces individual

characters. He brings the suppleness and grace into his comedies. Though his style is not of outstanding merit, his humour is some what genial. His plays are five in number. 'Alphonsus, king of Aragon' is an imitation for Marlowe's 'Tamburline'.

'A looking Glass for London and England' is written with the collaboration with Lodge. It is a mixture of elements from the Moralities and modern Elizabethan satire.

'Orlando Furioso' is basically written after reading Sir John Harrington's translation of Aristo.

In 'Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay' we have three distinct worlds mingled together-the world of magic, the world of aristocratic life, and the world of the country.

In 'James IV' there is also the fusion of romantic love and humour. It is not a historical play but founded on the imaginary incident in the life of the king.

GEORGE PEELE

His plays include-

The Araygnement of Paris is a kind of romantic comedy.

The Famous Chronicle of King Edward the First, is a rambling chronicle-play.

The old Wives' Tale is a clever satire on the popular drama of the day.

The Love of King David and Fair Bethsabe is an interesting play.

Peele's style can be violent to the point of absurdity; but he has his moments of real poetry; he can handle his blank verse with more ease and variety than was common at the time; he is fluent; he has humour and a fair amount of pathos. In short, he represents a great advance upon the earliest drama, and is perhaps one of the most attractive among the playwrights of the time.

THOMAS NASH

Nash took active part in the political affairs. He was a born journalist. He has no creditable achievement as a dramatist. He is supposed to have finished Marlowe's 'Dido'.

His only surviving play is - 'summer's Last will and Testament'. It is a kind of satirical masque about the seasons.

THOMAS LODGE

His dramatic work is small in quantity. He probably collaborated with Shakespeare in 'Henry-VI' and Greene's – "A Looking Glass for London and England". His only surviving play is- 'The Wounds of Civil War', a play of the old loose historical type dealing with Marius and Sulla.

THOMAS KYD

Thomas Kyd is one of the most important of University Wits. He was however influenced by Seneca.

Of his surviving plays the most important is -"The Spanis