

2018-1 Translation

1- Shakespeare's lifetime was coincident with a period of extraordinary activity and achievement in the drama.

(46) By the date of his birth Europe was witnessing the passing of the religious drama, and the creation of new forms under the incentive of classical tragedy and comedy.

These new forms were at first mainly written by scholars and performed by amateurs, but in England, as everywhere else in western Europe, the growth of a class of professional actors was threatening to make the drama popular, whether it should be new or old, classical or medieval, literary or farcical.

Court, school organizations of amateurs, and the traveling actors were all rivals in supplying a widespread desire for dramatic entertainment; and (47) no boy who went a grammar school could be ignorant that the drama was a form of literature which gave glory to Greece and Rome and might yet bring honor to England.

2- When Shakespeare was twelve years old, the first public playhouse was built in London.

For a time literature showed no interest in this public stage.

Plays aiming at literary distinction were written for school or court, or for the choir boys of St. Paul's and the royal chapel, who, however, gave plays in public as well as at court.

(48) But the professional companies prospered in their permanent theaters, and university men with literature ambitions were quick to turn to these theaters as offering a means of livelihood.

By the time Shakespeare was twenty-five, Lyly, Peele, and Greene had made comedies that were at once popular and literary; Kyd had written a tragedy that crowded the pit; and Marlowe had brought poetry and genius to triumph on the common stage - where they had played no part since the death of Euripides.

(49) A native literary drama had been created, its alliance with the public playhouses established, and at least some of its great traditions had been begun.

3- The development of the Elizabethan drama for the next twenty-five years is of exceptional interest to students of literary history, for in this brief period we may trace the beginning, growth, blossoming, and decay of many kinds of plays, and of many great careers.

We are amazed today at the mere number of plays produced, as well as by the number of dramatists writing at the same time for this London of two hundred thousand inhabitants.

(50) To realize how great was the dramatic activity, we must remember further that hosts of plays have been lost, and that probably there is no author of note whose entire work has survived.