

Shakespearean Authorship Trust

Roger Manners, 5th Earl of Rutland



Dates:

1576–1612

Background:

One of the most well-educated and remarkably literate people of Elizabethan England. Master of Arts of Cambridge and Oxford Universities. Was a student at Padua University (Italy) for a while, studied law at Gray's Inn. For some time, was under the tutelage of Sir Francis Bacon. Travelled extensively about Europe, visited the Netherlands, Germany, France, Switzerland, Northern Italy. Corresponded with European scholars.

Famous for:

His life was closely associated with the Pembrokes and Sidneys, with the Earl of Southampton, and the Earl of Essex. His platonic wife and, later, co-author was Elizabeth Sidney, an only daughter of the famous poet Sir Philip Sidney and step-daughter of the Earl of Essex. In spite of precarious state of health, the Earl of Rutland participated more than once in war on land and sea. Was actively involved in Essex's rebellion and severely punished for that by Queen Elizabeth I. After the Queen's death in 1603, the new monarch King James I sent him as his envoy on an honorary mission to the King of Denmark.

The Case for the Earl of Rutland:

This eccentric aristocrat enveloped his own person and his literary activities in mystery and secrecy. He never published anything in his own name, preferring to ascribe the authorship of his works to "live masks," i.e. semiliterate people like William Shakspeare from Stratford-upon-Avon and Thomas Coryate from Odcombe. This was his, his wife's and a few friends' Grand Game, Theatre in Life.

Today we finally have a multitude of positively established facts witnessing beyond any doubt to the Earl of Rutland's direct connection with the Shakespeare oeuvre. For instance, the Belvoir Castle archives keep a variant of a chant from "Twelfth Night" written in the Earl of Rutland's hand, and a unique record of the Castle's steward about payment of money to Shakspeare. Poet and playwright Ben Jonson, who was well-acquainted with the Earl and Countess of Rutland, called them and their close circle "poets of the Belvoir Vale." The scene of some Shakespeare's plays is laid in the very towns of Northern Italy that Rutland had earlier visited during his European travels. The exact and accurate Danish realities appeared in "Hamlet" only after the Earl's trip to Denmark. The mysterious "Shake-Speare" ceased his creative work at the very same time when Roger Manners, the 5th Earl of Rutland, and his wife passed away in 1612 (in quick succession one after the other). The First Folio was to be released in 1622, the 10th obit of the Earl and his platonic wife. The Second Folio was published in 1632, obviously to commemorate their 20th obit.

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