

Mary Sidney, Lady Wroth

Margaret P. Hannay

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Despite her fascinating life and her importance as a writer, until now Lady Mary Wroth has never been the subject of a full-length biography. Margaret Hannay's reliance on primary sources results in some corrections, as well as additions, to our knowledge of Wroth's life, including Hannay's discovery of the career of her son William, the marriages of her daughter Katherine, her grandchildren, her last years, the date of her death, and the subsequent history of her manuscripts. This biography situates Lady Mary Wroth in her family and court context, emphasizing the growth of the writer's mind in the sections on her childhood and youth, with particular attention to her learned aunt, Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, as literary mentor, and to her Continental connections, notably Louise de Coligny, Princess of Orange, and her stepson Prince Maurice. Subsequent chapters of the biography treat her experience at the court of Queen Anne, her relationships with parents and siblings, her love for her cousin William Herbert, her marriage to Robert Wroth, the birth and early death of her only legitimate child, her finances and properties, her natural children, her grandchildren, and her last years in the midst of England's civil wars. Throughout the biography attention is paid to the complex connections between Wroth's life and work. The narrative is enhanced with a chronology; family trees for the Sidneys and Wroths; a map of Essex, showing where Wroth lived; a chart of family alliances; portraits; and illustrations from her manuscripts.



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