Royal Poetrie includes a chapter on James VI/I, the most prolific royal writer of the period, and concludes with Charles I, whose name is attributed to poems but who does not write himself, thereby marking the end of royal poetry in the period. While the discussion of both of the Stuart kings offers further insight into why monarchs write verse, the strength of *Royal Poetry* is the analysis of the poetry of Mary Queen of Scots and Elizabeth I. The paradox of female rule, alongside the masculine nature of lyric, combined with the historical, political, and sexual complexities of their poetry, give Herman the opportunity to explore the elasticity of monarchic verse and find the most fascinating answers to his central question of why monarchs write verse.

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Elizabeth I and the Culture of Writing. Ed. Peter Beal and Grace Ioppolo. London: British Library, 2007. 221 pp. $75. ISBN 978–0–7123–0678–2.

The preface of this collection asserts that, through writing, Elizabeth I can be understood in all of her roles: "sovereign and ultimate arbiter, spectator and protagonist, friend and confidante, creator and recipient, and muse and literary icon, as well as a woman" (xiv). This hypothesis is borne out through what initially seems a picaresque, almost arbitrary series of topics. From Elizabeth's handwriting to her New Year's gift rolls to her execution warrants, the volume offers a pluralistic, inclusive interpretation of early modern writing, and the result is equally valuable as personal, cultural, or literary history.

This collection brings to light several overlooked materials. Grace Ioppolo contributes a fascinating essay examining the "largely ignored" Hulton papers, forty-three letters written by Robert Devereux, the 2nd Earl of Essex (44). Katherine Duncan-Jones unearths a set of neglected letters from the Queen to George Carey, 2nd Baron Hunsdon, from Berkeley Castle. Joshua Eckhardt reveals the unlikely poet in Secretary of State Robert Cecil. Jane Lawson, exploring extant Elizabethan gift rolls (accounting for less than half of the reign), provides invaluable sleuthing techniques for the scholar facing missing documentation.

Another strong current running throughout the text is writing as self-fashioning or self-presentation. In her analysis of the Hulton letters, Ioppolo characterizes the Earl of Essex's letters to Elizabeth as "self-creating and self-institutionalizing" (57). Through them, she rejects the oft-rehearsed claim of the Icarus-like Essex's inability to defer to monarchs, instead reaching the striking conclusion that it was Elizabeth's womanhood, and not her sovereignty, which Essex could not respect (60). Gabriel Heaton uses the drama *The Tale of Hemetes* to demonstrate how Sir Henry Lee, who commissioned it, and George Gasgoigne, who presented it to Elizabeth in manuscript form, idealized their relationships to the Queen. Eckhardt convincingly shows that even successful politicians were occasionally made to play courtier, as Robert Cecil proves in the poetry he presented at court late in the reign. Cecil was forced, Eckhardt argues, to compete with courtiers for Elizabeth's affection as well as her trust.

Among the more ambitious essays is Peter Beal's examination of Elizabeth's own self-fashioning through the execution warrants of Thomas Howard, 4th Duke of Norfolk, Robert Devereux, and Mary Queen of Scots. Through these warrants, Beal demonstrates Elizabeth's tendency to retreat from grisly acts, opting instead to be a "bringer of mercy," as when she commuted Norfolk's sentence from a traitor's death to mere beheading (176). Of interest in Mary's case is the unprecedented public proclamation following her sentencing, which was silent regarding her execution. This is a fascinating site of contrast between "public" and "private" documents. The warrant itself is written in a language of reluctance: Elizabeth is motivated by her people's welfare, not relish for the deed. Beal's achievement is in introducing the warrant as a form of writing ripe for further study; nevertheless, this reviewer would have preferred greater emphasis on the first two warrants, which constitute the real new ground in this piece.

Steven May uses Elizabeth's prayers to evaluate her posthumous mythology. He differentiates this study from that found in John Watkins's *Representing Elizabeth in Stuart England* (2002) by examining prayers ascribed to Elizabeth herself, rather than works composed following her death. Though May largely agrees with Elizabeth's seventeenth-century representation, he argues that many of the prayers, which circulated to build that reputation, have been falsely ascribed to her.

These pieces also argue for a better understanding of Elizabeth herself through writing. Contemporary accounts of a court performance of Robert Cecil's "From A Servant of Diana" show a "spirited, teasing, and playfully jealous" Elizabeth only months before her death (118). Duncan-Jones underscores the Queen's caustic sense of humor in letters to George Carey; she also concludes, interestingly, that Elizabeth may have employed scribes whose hands closely mirrored her own at its best (29). The essay is hampered by the rare technical error — Duncan-Jones conflates Henry Carey's sister with his niece — but this does not detract from her achievement, and invites historians to continue seeking out collections held in unusual locations.

Penmanship itself is a substantial source of interpretation. Interestingly, May cites unfamiliar penmanship as a means of discrediting compositions as Elizabeth's own, maintaining that she employed the same italic hand from 1549 onwards (206), whereas earlier in the volume, Henry Woudhuysen provides evidence that, owing to overwork and rheumatism, Elizabeth's hand altered substantially over the course of her life (13). In her study of the Hulton letters, Ioppolo demonstrates that Essex reserved his neat, calligraphic hand for letters to his mother, the exiled Lettice Knollys, while proffering an untidy scrawl to Elizabeth. Ioppolo's striking hypothesis, buttressed by the infamous enmity between these two women, is that these differing hands suggest a "qualified deference" to Elizabeth, but an "absolute loyalty" to his mother (50).

The physicality of writing is not overlooked. Lawson posits that several books given as New Year's gifts were so lavishly decorated that they may have been inventoried with the Queen's jewels rather than her library (157). Identifying Elizabeth as the first person in England to have a personal watermark, Woudhuysen calls for a deeper investigation into paper, asserting that paper identification could aid in dating manuscripts, as well as revealing the circumstances under which documents were written. Finally, Heaton identifies the remarkable subtext of the frontispiece and emblem in Gasgoigne's manuscript version of *The Tale of Hemetes*.

Blair Worden ventures into political territory by focusing on allegorical messaging; Worden's piece is also the only essay featuring anti-Elizabethan rhetoric. Based largely on his 1996 monograph *The Sound of Virtue: Philip Sidney's* Arcadia *and Elizabethan Politics,* Worden examines the juxtaposition of political writing and romances, demonstrating how the "wit and imagination" of poets could be deployed as critiques of Elizabethan government (86).

The research in this volume serves at once as a collection of highly specialized examinations and as a sweeping history with multiple applications, making it a necessary read for any student of Elizabeth, or, indeed, any student of historical writing.

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Mary Sidney, Lady Wroth. Margaret P. Hannay. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010. xxvii, 363 pp. $99.95. ISBN 978–07–54–66053–8.

This volume achieves precisely what one has come to expect from the scholarly endeavors undertaken by Margaret Hannay: meticulous, encyclopedic research intertwined with sparkling readings of relevant literary texts further interspersed with references to seemingly every academic study of Wroth and the Sidney family. For those in the beginning stages of a project concerning, especially, Wroth but also most members of the Sidney family, this book offers an invaluable resource since it catalogues research and sources so effectively. Those farther along in their studies probably have anticipated the emergence of this volume because of Hannay's comprehensive knowledge of the field.

Hannay has already contributed extensively to contemporary understanding of Wroth, her family, and their writing, with such volumes as *Philip's Phoenix: Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke* (Oxford University Press, 1990); *Domestic Politics and Family Absences: The Correspondence (1588–1621) of Robert Sidney, First Earl of Leicester, and Barbara Gamage Sidney, Countess of Leicester,* co-edited with Noel J. Kinnamon and Michael G. Brennan (Ashgate, 2005); *Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke: Ashgate*