



Chiselbury Publishing

Master Secretary Robert Cecil - A Life in Fiction

Richard Woulfe

Description

Statesman, strategist, survivor: Robert Cecil stood at the very heart of England's transition from Tudor to Stuart rule. Hunched-backed and underestimated in an age hostile to disability, he rose to become Master Secretary to Elizabeth I and James I, suppressing the Essex Rebellion, foiling the Gunpowder Plot, and negotiating peace with Spain.

In this richly imagined sequence of eighteen interlinked stories, Cecil's voice is joined by those of his family, allies, and adversaries—Elizabeth I, Anthony and Francis Bacon, Walter Raleigh, Ben Jonson, Arbella Stuart, and nameless spies and commoners whose lives brushed against his. From court intrigue to tavern gossip, from the grandeur of the Somerset House Peace Conference to a humble Limerick shop, these tales weave fact and fiction into a vivid portrait of one of history's most remarkable political survivors.

Spanning his birth to his final conversation with the sculptor designing his tomb, Master Secretary opens a window onto the world Shakespeare inhabited—a world of politics and diplomacy, comedy and tragedy, faith and betrayal. Grounded in historical record yet alive with imagination, this is a compelling re-telling of the life of Robert Cecil: underestimated by many, unforgotten by all.

Biography

Richard has had two short stories published in Postbox, a Scottish arts magazine. Another story won the Hastings Book Festival LGBT+ Prize 2024. Previously, two radio dramas of his were produced, one by RTE Radio, the other by The Wireless Theatre Company. Both plays can be found online. Richard is from Limerick, and now lives in London, where he achieved a history MA at Birkbeck. Master Secretary is his first novel.

Review

Advance Information



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