



Thomas Churchyard: Pen, Sword, and Ego

Matthew Woodcock

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Soldier, courtier, author, entertainer, and amateur spy, Thomas Churchyard (c.1529-1604) saw action in most of the principal Tudor theatres of war, was a servant to five monarchs, and had a literary career spanning over half a century during which time he produced over fifty different works in a variety of forms and genres. Churchyard's struggles to subsist as an author and soldier provides an unrivalled opportunity to examine the self-promotional strategies employed by an individual who attempts to make a living from both writing and fighting, and who experiments throughout his life with ways in which the arts of the pen and sword may be reconciled and aligned. Drawing on extensive archival and literary sources, Matthew Woodcock reconstructs the extraordinary life of a figure well-known yet long neglected in early modern literary studies. In the first ever book-length biography of Churchyard, Woodcock reveals the author to be a resourceful and innovative writer whose long literary career plays an important part in the history of professional authorship in sixteenth-century England. This book also situates Churchyard alongside contemporary soldier-authors such as Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, George Gascoigne, and Sir Philip Sidney, and it makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the relationship between literature and the military in the early modern period. Churchyard's writings drew heavily upon his own experiences at court and in the wars and the author never tired of drawing attention to the struggles he endured throughout his life. Consequently, this study addresses the wider methodological question of how we should construct the biography of an individual who was consistently preoccupied with telling his own story.

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