

Stephen Greenblatt, *Dark Renaissance: The Dangerous Times and Fatal Genius of Shakespeare's Greatest Rival* (The Bodley Head, 2025), pb, ISBN 9781847927149, £25.

ADAM HANSEN

NORTHUMBRIA UNIVERSITY

Like the model Hansel in *Zoolander* (dir. Ben Stiller, 2001), Christopher Marlowe is “so hot right now.” National newspapers demand we “study and produce his plays more.”¹ London’s West End may not host those plays *by* him, but does present contemporary work *about* him.² A new edition, *The Oxford Marlowe: Collected Works*, promises to do for him what comparable texts have done for the likes of Thomas Middleton. And now Stephen Greenblatt, perhaps one of the most insightful and influential scholars in post-war Anglophone humanities, has published a biography.

Greenblatt might be seen as Marlowe’s ideal biographer. As he says in the book, he and Marlowe have history (295). He first published on him in the late 1970s, and from then on as part of his deservedly significant texts, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (1980) and *Learning to Curse* (1990). One of Greenblatt’s other works from this period, 1988’s *Shakespearean Negotiations*, (in)famously opened with the resonant phrase, “I began with the desire to speak to the dead.”³ Though Marlowe only enjoys a passing mention in that book, Greenblatt’s yearning echoed one of the twentieth-century’s other profoundly influential scholars of Marlowe, Harry Levin, and his conception of studying the past’s texts: “in reading them, we bring the dead to life.”⁴ Greenblatt may disavow the “liberty” taken by Anthony Burgess’s 1993 novel *A Dead Man in Deptford*, and does not exhibit the idiosyncrasies of a book like Brenda Hardwood’s *My Truth: The Far-Memory Of Christopher Marlowe* (2006), but in *Dark Renaissance*, whether you like it or not, he nevertheless speaks *as* the dead: there are several italicized first-person interpolations, channelling or ventriloquizing Marlowe himself (187, 247). Greenblatt, like Levin, was—and is, in *Dark Renaissance*—conscious that when we read the past, we read our present: “my own voice was the voice of the dead,

¹ ‘The Guardian view on Christopher Marlowe: it’s time to read him and honour him’; <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/aug/29/the-guardian-view-on-christopher-marlowe-its-time-to-read-him-and-honour-him>. Accessed 8 September 2025.

² Royal Shakespeare Company, <https://www.rsc.org.uk/born-with-teeth>. Accessed 11 September 2025.

³ Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (University of California Press, 1988), 1.

⁴ Harry Levin, *Contexts of Criticism* (Harvard University Press, 1957), 7.

for the dead had contrived to leave textual traces of themselves...in the voices of the living”; ‘now’ includes and is preconditioned by *then, I by others*, texts by contexts: “there is no escape from contingency.”⁵

Such an approach queries any “sharp distinction between literature and social life,” and exemplifies Greenblatt’s interpretive model of New Historicism.⁶ This combined an expanded textual and contextual canon with Clifford Geertz’s anthropology (with its insistence on cultural observers identifying and communicating “a stratified hierarchy of meaningful structures”), and poststructuralist understandings of the relationships between authority and discourse, repression and expression (derived from Michel Foucault).⁷ If this means literary texts are situated more profoundly in their worlds, so too is anyone looking at those texts: “literary criticism...must be conscious of its own status as interpretation.”⁸ In his classic work on Marlowe, Levin noted “the faltering allegiance of our own age to those ideals of worldly enlightenment which the sixteenth century put into operation.”⁹ Greenblatt echoed this:

We sense...that we are situated at the close of the cultural movement initiated in the Renaissance and that the places in which our social and psychological world seems to be cracking apart are those structural joints visible when it was first constructed. In the midst of the anxieties and contradictions attendant upon the threatened collapse of this phase of our civilization, we respond with passionate curiosity and poignancy to the anxieties and contradictions attendant upon its rise. To experience Renaissance culture is to feel what it was like to form our own identity, and we are at once more rooted and more estranged by the experience.¹⁰

This desire to estrange and connect past and present, canon and margin, text and context, informed Greenblatt’s rhetorical strategies, not least his use of the “historical anecdote,” which “functions less as explanatory illustration than as disturbance,” requiring “explanation, contextualization, interpretation”:

I am committed to the project of making strange what has become familiar, of demonstrating that what seems an untroubling part and untroubled part of ourselves...is actually part of something else, something different.¹¹

⁵ Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations*, 1, 3.

⁶ Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (University of Chicago Press, 1980), 3.

⁷ See Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (Basic Books, 1973), 3–30.

⁸ Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, 4.

⁹ Harry Levin, *The Overreacher* (Harvard University Press, 1952), 13.

¹⁰ Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, 174–75.

¹¹ Stephen Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture* (Routledge, 1990), 7, 11.

Marlowe occupies a crucial position in such thinking and in awakening our concern with the contradictions of cultural inheritance, if, as *Dark Renaissance* suggests, he was “one remarkable figure” who embodied “the ferocious energy and daring” that “awakened the genius of the English Renaissance” (7). In his biography, Greenblatt repeatedly affirms that Marlowe “gave supremely eloquent expression” to “the theatre of cruelty, an obsession with otherness, an aesthetic fascination with criminality and violence, and an unconstrained freedom of thought” which might appear “familiar” to us now, but were “uncanny” then (23). He exposes and widens “fissures” in his society, to “break through the suffocating carapace of inherited dogma” (284). In so doing, Marlowe responded to and represented the “mixed signals and...contradictions” of his moment (73) manifested by conflicts within and between “religious doctrine and...humanistic thought” and by “discoveries...being made in the heavens and on the globe” (212): “Very little that Kit studied in school during the week could be easily reconciled with what he heard from the pulpit on Sundays” (39).

Such observations restate Greenblatt’s earlier work on Marlowe. There, identifying a “strategy of subversion” in the plays, Greenblatt suggested that Marlowe showed how “desperate attempts at boundary and closure produce the opposite effect, reinforcing the condition they are meant to efface.”¹² For example, “*Tamburlaine*...teases its audience with the *form* of the cautionary tale, only to violate the convention.”¹³ Yet Greenblatt was equally conscious that such subversion was, if not contained, then compromised. Like the poststructuralist linguistic sign, any resistance to orthodoxy depended on orthodoxy and had no inherent value of its own: “Marlowe’s heroes fashion themselves not in loving submission to an absolute authority but in self-conscious opposition.”¹⁴ In this way, Barabas became central to Greenblatt’s appraisal of Marlowe. Barabas is “*brought into being* by the Christian society around him,” with his identity “very largely constructed out of the materials of the dominant, Christian culture.”¹⁵ But perhaps this limits any claim such a figure or identity would have to be in “genuinely radical opposition” to their society:

Marlowe’s protagonists rebel against orthodoxy, but they do not do so just as they please; their acts of negation not only conjure up the order they would destroy but seem at times to be themselves conjured up by that very order.¹⁶

¹² Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, 203, 198.

¹³ Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, 202.

¹⁴ Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, 203.

¹⁵ Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, 206–207.

¹⁶ Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, 210.

Or as Greenblatt put it in a later discussion of *The Jew of Malta*: “in Marlowe” we see “the will to play without the principle of hope.”¹⁷ To Greenblatt’s critics, this meant there is no subversion, for anyone:

New historicism ends up if not with something like a totalitarian model, then at least with a sense of the almost inevitable defeat of the poor, the innocent, and the oppressed.¹⁸

Greenblatt was accused of not exploring the “submerged politics of his own reading” that underpinned such conclusions: “it is his own culture Greenblatt broods on without realizing it.”¹⁹ On the contrary, Greenblatt realized, profoundly, how his work has been influenced by the moments in which it was conceived. In *Learning to Curse*, he recalled arriving in Berkeley in 1969, when “the University of California was in turmoil” as “police battled massive student and faculty protests against the Viet Nam War”: “Everything was in uproar; all routines were disrupted; nothing could be taken for granted.”²⁰ In his own words, it was events like this, more than an experience of defeat, that informed and “decisively shaped” his critical practice: “Everything can be different than it is; everything could have been different than it was. But it will not do to imagine that this alteration is easy, automatic, without cost or obligation.”²¹ Reading the past from the present can contribute to this sense of historical change and possibility. We “experience” the rhetorical “energy” of early modern texts “within ourselves,” but the “contemporary existence” of such energy “depends upon an irregular chain of historical transactions that leads back” from now to then.²² Reading the past from the present might also involve identifying “analogy or causality,” discontinuity or continuity, but it had to be an “intervention” in the “turmoil of the present,” not an “escape” into the past.²³ Such interventions were not neutral. Reading about past subversion is not “inherently liberating,” nor is writing about it without an eye to the present: to Greenblatt in 1990, “Writing that was not engaged, that withheld judgments, that failed to connect the past with the present seemed worthless.”²⁴ But as Greenblatt’s experiences, work, and subjects (like Marlowe) showed, the more challenging, provocative, or “subversive” an intervention,

¹⁷ Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse*, 73.

¹⁸ Walter Cohen, “Political Criticism of Shakespeare,” in *Shakespeare Reproduced: The Text in History and Ideology*, ed. Jean E. Howard and Marion F. O’Connor (Methuen, 1987), 18–46, 35.

¹⁹ Howard Felperin, *The Uses of the Canon: Elizabethan Literature and Contemporary Theory* (Clarendon Press, 1990), 113, 121.

²⁰ Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse*, 5.

²¹ Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse*, 223–24.

²² Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations*, 6.

²³ Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse*, 224.

²⁴ Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse*, 223–24.

the more it is repressed, by those in authority and, perhaps, counter-intuitively, by those seeking to make the intervention:

the term *subversive* for us designates those elements in Renaissance culture that contemporary audiences tried to contain or, when containment seemed impossible, to destroy and that now conform to our sense of truth and reality. That is, we find “subversive” in the past precisely those things that are not subversive to ourselves, that pose no threat to the order by which we live and allocate resources...our own values are sufficiently strong for us to contain alien forces almost effortlessly.²⁵

Does that mean what was once subversive has been normalised by this process of containment or destruction? If subversion was destroyed, how can we still know of it, whether or not we see it as conforming to “our sense of truth or reality”? However we answer such questions, Greenblatt’s charge remains that we are not open to being challenged, to being subverted; instead “we identify as principles of order and authority in Renaissance texts what we would, if we took them seriously, find subversive for ourselves: religious and political absolutism, aristocracy of birth, demonology...and the like.”²⁶ We do to the past’s subversive elements what the past did to its subversive others: contain. Pre-empting his critics, Greenblatt observed that we are our own worst enemies: “There is subversion, no end of subversion, only not for us.”²⁷ Who is “us,” though? Politically-sensitive, theoretically-informed, secular scholars of earlier periods, who might occupy an oblique and critical position to contemporary orthodoxies? The “West” in general? Pronouns and queries aside, this statement was in turn seen by some as a kind of “*soixante-huitard* fatalism,” and “a form of leftist disillusionment,” in the wake of the United States’ ongoing neo-colonial foreign policies, the rise of right-wing neo-liberal socio-economics, and the failure of any alternative to these.²⁸ Yet Greenblatt was arguing for *more* interventions mindful of the present’s irregular and unsettling relations to the past, not fewer. Equally, he was emphatically not saying that “perceptions” of “subversion,” past and present, “simply wither away,” or that “all manifestations of resistance in all literature...were coopted”: if that were the case “How else could change ever come about?”²⁹

²⁵ Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations*, 39.

²⁶ Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations*, 39.

²⁷ Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations*, 39.

²⁸ Richard Wilson, “‘Writ in blood’: Marlowe and the new historicists,” in *Constructing Christopher Marlowe*, ed. J. A. Downie and J. T. Parnell (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 116–32, 116; Cohen, “Political Criticism of Shakespeare,” 36.

²⁹ Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse*, 222–23.

In *Dark Renaissance*, such questions and concerns recur, at times, albeit in muted forms, with Greenblatt keen to embrace the challenge of helping readers apprehend differences in intellectual and cultural contexts past and present. Literary patronage and aristocratic protection were necessary *then* because today's "institutions that...make careers in poetry and fiction possible" such as "university literature departments and grant-giving foundations" (149) did not exist. Equally, "At this distance," says Greenblatt, it is "difficult" to comprehend how so many people embraced "profoundly disturbing" ideas like Calvinism (233)—though some might say the same of modern fundamentalism's many forms. That said, there are many ways in which, as he always has, Greenblatt uses the past to read the present. "Then as now," we hear, spies use "elaborate techniques" to maintain secrecy (101). The "complex instructions or rules" a magician like Faustus deploys to demonstrate "godlike power" are what "we would now call...algorithms" (236). In his "Acknowledgements" Greenblatt references his "involvement" in the laudable Harvard Scholars at Risk project, "which provides refuge to scholars and writers threatened by oppressive regimes" and from "societies without freedom of expression or the right to privacy," to note: "In certain crucial respects, the world of Christopher Marlowe was closer to that of North Korea than North Carolina" (288). Yet what presents as a wholly worthwhile awareness-raising point, and a recognition of privilege, is also a misrecognition of the state of the United States. It might not be North Korea for many, but it is brutally repressive to some, within and beyond its borders, as a consequence of what Greenblatt himself depicts as "the interminable wars in which America and its allies have become entangled post 9/11" (123). As one might expect from someone with Greenblatt's long and celebrated experience of academia, several of these interpolations focus on the function and responsibilities of education. Describing Marlowe's life in Cambridge, Greenblatt says (again) "Then as now" universities brought together "young people who were not fully fixed in their beliefs" and kept them "for years at a significant remove from the surrounding world" (54). Given the demands on modern students to make ends meet to pay for those "years," or care for loved ones, the idea they are today (or ever were) at a "remove" from the world is perhaps wishful thinking. Likewise, the negative, polarizing, metastasizing effects of the echo chamber of social media (and political debates drawing on or feeding these) means we can only trust that the hope that students do indeed arrive with unfixed beliefs is not a vain one. Is there a reflective and resigned tone when Greenblatt describes what he confesses may be a "fantasy": the occasions when an "electric current of response passes" from a teacher to a pupil like Marlowe, when reading Virgil (or, we might add, when reading Shakespeare or Marlowe), in contrast to the "almost deliberate

dullness” of some readers (49)? When, then, Greenblatt says (of Marlowe, but perhaps with broader implications), that “education...often has the opposite effect from the one that is intended” (69), is there a note, too, of regret? Has the radical promise of pedagogy and scholarship engaged with the world of the past and the present, dissipated and, whisper it, been *contained*? In the US, it has certainly been curtailed, undermined, and condemned. If the “long immersion in the humanities” (83) that Marlowe experienced, and that Greenblatt himself has so wonderfully enabled, do not make people critical, aware, and active, but produces “alienated intellectuals” (81), politically despairing and economically disempowered, experiencing “frustration, rage, or the fantasy of escape” (as many literature PhD students could attest), what do we do?

Maybe a book like this is itself a kind of response. Writing biography, as Greenblatt did with 2005’s *Will in the World* about Shakespeare, is a logical, long-form extension of anecdotal discourses, concatenating recondite contextual details with startling textual exegesis, which characterised his modelling of New Historicism. Equally, if the Geertzian anthropology of “thick description” underpinning such approaches is your aim, it makes sense to do this with a person, as well as their writing. Greenblatt recognised that to some of his critics, a text like *Will in the World* was a “repudiation of my past work”; his view was different, and suggested he saw, and sees, another way of mainstreaming theoretical positions:

When I began to think about how to convey to an audience beyond the small one that we normally address the significance of the historical, anthropological, and sociological work of contextualization that literary scholars have done for the last 30 or 40 years, I realised that the obvious genre to do so is the genre of literary biography.³⁰

Hence, after publishing *Will in the World* Greenblatt drew on precisely such Geertzian language to reflect that he sought to make “the case for why you need a thick or interesting past in order to have a thick or interesting present,” *and* “make a large public aware that there *was* a past to which they remain in compellingly interesting relation,” in his terms, “the easy way, by writing about Shakespeare.”³¹ Does writing about Marlowe have the same impact? Given his relative obscurity and poverty of cultural capital, probably, and sadly, not. To his credit, Greenblatt tries to change this.

³⁰ Noel King, “‘The Restless Circulation of Languages and Tales’: interview with Stephen Greenblatt, Harvard University, 27 April 2005,” *Textual Practice* 20, no. 4 (2006): 707.

³¹ King, “‘The Restless Circulation of Languages and Tales,’” 704.

Will in the World was notably enjoyable for developing some concise and innovative ways of reading Shakespeare. Greenblatt discussed throughout the idea and impact of “double consciousness” whereby early modern English people could sustain “a tenaciously held inward Catholic faith coupled with a steadfast public adherence to the official religious settlement [of Protestantism].”³² Shakespeare was, we learned, a “master” of representing and navigating it.³³ Equally, reworking Keats’s notions of Shakespeare’s “negative capability,” Greenblatt developed a sense of Shakespeare’s “strategic opacity,” whereby his mature plays aimed at “occluding the rationale, motivation or ethical principle that accounted for the action that was to unfold,” the better to engage audiences.³⁴

Though there is not quite the same sustained level of innovation in *Dark Renaissance*, fascinating, exciting ideas do come in and out of focus. Greenblatt identifies a “great separation” (26) in Marlowe’s early life, reflecting “the impact of higher education on working-class families over centuries” (30), and sees this as the beginnings of a productive alienation from normative society, but the theme is not really followed through. Citing Marlowe’s room-mate Thomas Kyd, and drawing on Nietzsche’s *Human, All Too Human* (“highly relevant to Marlowe,” 297), Greenblatt sees “Marlowe’s signature quality” and the effect of such separation as “suddenness” (22)—a rash, fiery, violent quickness of intellect and behaviour that is painful and self-destructive but also insightful. If this is a Marlovian keyword, then looking at Marlowe’s own self-aware uses of it and its cognates might have been fruitful, as when Tamburlaine feels himself “distempered suddenly” (2.5.1.217) after burning the Koran.³⁵ Citing Raphael Holinshed’s chronicle account of Edward II, and echoing his claim in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* that Marlowe’s protagonists exhibit a Freudian “*repetition compulsion*,” Greenblatt avers Marlowe’s play is “a study in addiction” (257).³⁶ This is a suggestive but underdeveloped point about which Greenblatt says little more, and which could have drawn on scholarship on addiction in relation to religion and science or substances and the theatre.³⁷

Greenblatt wants to say Marlowe did all this with unique vitality, and “perhaps more fully than anyone” (212), but knows enough of the period and its authors to know he cannot

³² Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* (Pimlico, 2005), 97.

³³ Greenblatt, *Will in the World*, 155.

³⁴ Greenblatt, *Will in the World*, 324.

³⁵ Christopher Marlowe, *Complete Plays*, ed. Frank Romany and Robert Lindsay (Penguin, 2003).

³⁶ Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, 200.

³⁷ See Rebecca Lemon, *Addiction and Devotion in Early Modern England* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), for a discussion of *Doctor Faustus* in these terms; and Tanya Pollard, *Drugs and Theater in Early Modern England* (Oxford University Press, 2005).

(hence the qualifier). “Virtually everything in the Elizabethan theatre is pre- and post-*Tamburlaine*” (128), Greenblatt suggests. In terms of chronology, this is self-evident; in terms of aesthetics, less so. Did “the dramatic representation of a powerful, complex inner life, largely through the intimacy of the soliloquy” really only emerge “on stage for the first time” in *Doctor Faustus* (226)? People could and do make comparable and legitimate claims about a play like Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy*.³⁸ There are, naturally, some exemplary close readings, attendant to the details of literary devices’ interactions with context, whether Greenblatt is discussing the plosive, propulsive power of *Tamburlaine*’s acoustics (134–35), or the collapse of distinctions “between active and passive, god and human, male and female” when Faustus kisses Helen (247). Indeed, having situated *Doctor Faustus* within an Elizabethan milieu of “alienated” intellectuals and “frustrated career seekers” (82), Greenblatt brilliantly articulates the “radical act” of the play identifying hell in the “here and now,” and through “an awareness of how painfully limited life is,” while also reconfiguring Mephistopheles’s contract as akin to being embroiled in the commitments of the spy service (242–43). There are also many memorable turns of phrase. The churches of Marlowe’s youth in Canterbury composed a “melancholy symphony” (25) tolling out plague deaths; the theologian John Rainoldes’s complaint about the poisonous charms of beautiful youths in the theatre is recast as angst at “the kiss of the spider boy” (67).

As with *Will in the World*, echoes of New Historicism proliferate in engaging ways. Greenblatt draws explicitly on Foucault’s conception of “*le savoir/pouvoir*” to characterise Marlowe as “the first great avatar of power/knowledge” (236), dreaming of “limitless riches,” while “crushing competitors, and manipulating nature” (237). But the example Greenblatt subsequently chooses to exemplify this—Faustus bringing grapes to the Duchess of Vanholt out of season—is a banal act of what Greenblatt himself terms “a glorified court entertainer” (244; or even, in Lisa Hopkins’s words, an “idiot”), and hardly validates his point.³⁹ Likewise, the concept of selves as unstable, fashion-able, and pliable persists: Greenblatt discusses Richard Baines “revealing himself, or at least a significant part of himself” (98), and presents Shakespeare as accomplished depicter of “distributed personhood” (253)—that is, putting different parts of himself into his characters. In turn this allows for biographical readings of *Doctor Faustus*, wherein Marlowe “clearly identified with the devil” (253) and

³⁸ See, most recently for example, Noam Reisner, *Performing Ethics in English Revenge Drama: Wild Play* (Cambridge University Press, 2024).

³⁹ Lisa Hopkins, *Christopher Marlowe, Renaissance Dramatist* (Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 68.

the mage: “To judge from the character he created, he found himself confronting anxiety, regrets, a sense of waste, fear” (255).

Greenblatt’s classic New Historicist texts were notorious (or appealing) for their lengthy notes. Here notes frequently offer useful guides to scholarship old and new on Marlowe and his period. These also allow Greenblatt to acknowledge debts (to previous biographers, notably Park Honan and David Riggs), some of which are more evident than others: the book’s ending offers a survey of others’ evidence and different perspectives regarding Marlowe’s murder, though cannot draw on any new materials to develop its own view. Notes also record disagreements, as with what Greenblatt terms J. A. Downie’s “programmatic skepticism” regarding what we can say we know about Marlowe’s life (in response, and as noted above, Greenblatt accepts he necessarily uses “words like *perhaps* and phrases like *may have* and *could have*,” 294). Addressing Lukas Erne’s sustained disintegration of Marlovian verities might have proved sterner.⁴⁰ Moreover, Greenblatt’s enthusiasm—verging on hyperbole?—as he sets out what made Marlowe’s work so powerful will not be deterred by challenges, from the likes of Holger Syme, to “the widespread belief” that a play like *Tamburlaine* was indeed “an extraordinary innovation” (309). Because Marlowe is of course wonderful to read, think with, perform, and see performed, any hyperbole on Greenblatt’s part is understandable, forgivable, and eminently Marlovian (Harry Levin, of course, saw it as characterising his style and protagonists).⁴¹ Does *Dark Renaissance* tell you much new about Marlowe? Not really. But does it make you want to read Marlowe anew? Emphatically, yes. There can be no higher recommendation, or worthwhile aim.

⁴⁰ See Lukas Erne, “Disintegrating Marlowe,” *Studies in Philology* 119, no. 2 (2022); and “Biography, Mythography, and Criticism: The Life and Works of Christopher Marlowe,” *Modern Philology*, 103 (2005), 2

⁴¹ Levin, *The Overreacher*, 141.

Bibliography

- “Born with Teeth.” Royal Shakespeare Company. <https://www.rsc.org.uk/born-with-teeth>. Accessed 11 September 2025.
- Cohen, Walter. “Political Criticism of Shakespeare.” In *Shakespeare Reproduced: The Text in History and Ideology*, edited by Jean E. Howard and Marion F. O’Connor. Methuen, 1987.
- Erne, Lukas. “Biography, Mythography, and Criticism: The Life and Works of Christopher Marlowe.” *Modern Philology* 103 (2005): 28–50.
- . “Disintegrating Marlowe.” *Studies in Philology* 119, no. 2 (2022): 272–97.
- Felperin, Howard. *The Uses of the Canon: Elizabethan Literature and Contemporary Theory*. Clarendon Press, 1990.
- Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. Basic Books, 1973.
- Greenblatt, Stephen. *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture*. Routledge, 1990.
- . *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*. University of Chicago Press, 1980.
- . *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England*. University of California Press, 1988.
- . *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*. Pimlico, 2005.
- “The Guardian view on Christopher Marlowe: it’s time to read him and honour him.” *The Guardian*, 29 August 2025.
- <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/aug/29/the-guardian-view-on-christopher-marlowe-its-time-to-read-him-and-honour-him>. Accessed 8 September 2025.
- Hopkins, Lisa. *Christopher Marlowe, Renaissance Dramatist*. Edinburgh University Press, 2000.
- King, Noel. “‘The Restless Circulation of Languages and Tales’: interview with Stephen Greenblatt, Harvard University, 27 April 2005.” *Textual Practice* 20, no. 4 (2006): 703–712.
- Lemon, Rebecca. *Addiction and Devotion in Early Modern England*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018.
- Levin, Harry. *Contexts of Criticism*. Harvard University Press, 1957.
- . *The Overreacher*. Harvard University Press, 1952.
- Marlowe, Christopher. *Complete Plays*, edited by Frank Romany and Robert Lindsay. Penguin, 2003.

Pollard, Tanya. *Drugs and Theater in Early Modern England*. Oxford University Press, 2005.

Reisner, Noam. *Performing Ethics in English Revenge Drama: Wild Play*. Cambridge University Press, 2024.

Wilson, Richard. “‘Writ in blood’: Marlowe and the new historicists.” In *Constructing Christopher Marlowe*, edited by J. A. Downie and J. T. Parnell. Cambridge University Press, 2000.