

Stephen Greenblatt
DARK RENAISSANCE

Narrated by Edoardo Ballerini

The Dangerous Times and Fatal Genius of Shakespeare's Greatest Rival

Poor boy. Spy. Transgressor. Genius.

In repressive Elizabethan England, artists are frightened into dull conventionality; foreigners are suspect; popular entertainment largely consists of coarse spectacles, animal fights, and hangings. Into this crude world of government censorship and religious authoritarianism comes an ambitious cobbler's son from Canterbury with a daring desire to be known—and an uncanny ear for Latin poetry. A torment for most schoolboys, yet for a few, like Christopher Marlowe, a secret portal to beauty, visionary imagination, transgressive desire, and dangerous skepticism.

What Marlowe seizes in his rare opportunity for a classical education, and what he does with it, brings about a spectacular explosion of English literature, language, and culture. His astonishing literary success will, in turn, nourish the talent of a collaborator and rival, William Shakespeare.

Dark Renaissance illuminates both Marlowe's times and the origins and significance of his work—from his erotic translations of Ovid to his portrayal of unfettered ambition in a triumphant *Tamburlaine to Doctor Faustus*, his unforgettable masterpiece about making a pact with the devil in exchange for knowledge. Introducing us to Marlowe's transgressive genius in the form of a thrilling page-turner, Stephen Greenblatt brings a penetrating understanding of the literary work to reveal the inner world of the author, bringing to life a homosexual atheist who was tormented by his own compromises, who refused to toe the party line, and who was murdered just when he had found love. Meanwhile, he explores how the people Marlowe knew, and the transformations they wrought, gave birth to the economic, scientific, and cultural power of the modern world including Faustian bargains with which we reckon still.

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AUDIO

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