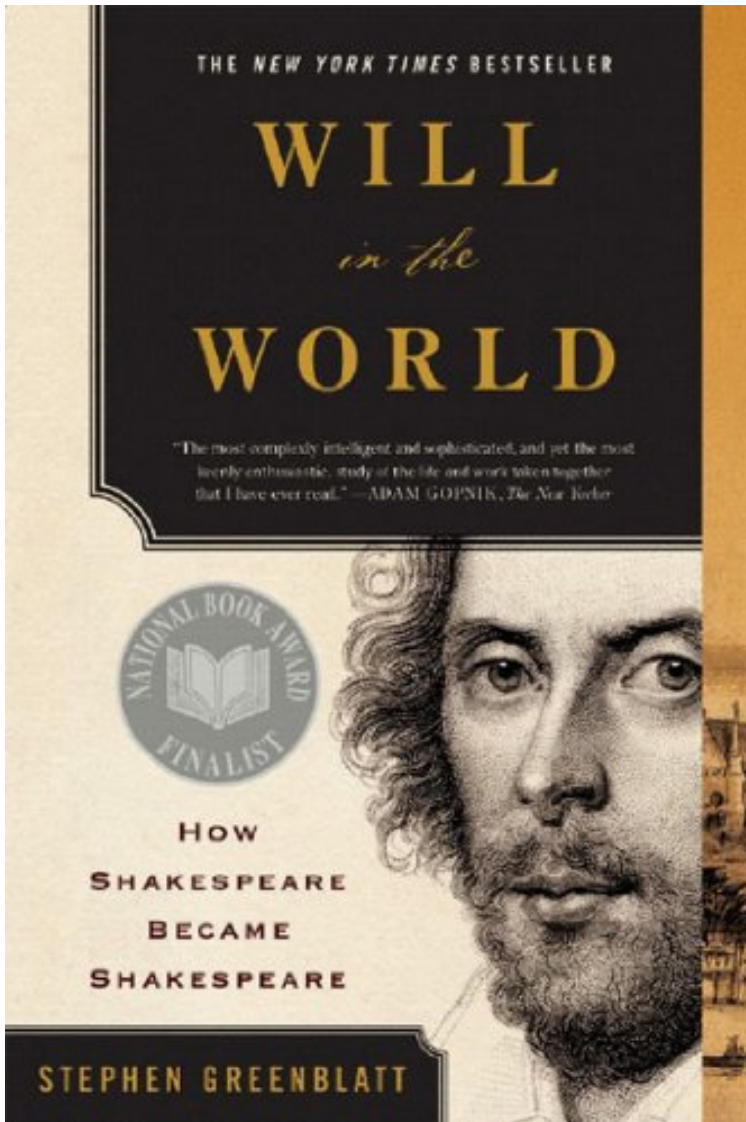


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# Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare



Par Stephen Greenblatt  
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**Description :** Description du produitA brilliant reading of Shakespeare's world yields a new understanding of the man and his genius. A young man from the provincesa man without wealth, connections, or university educationmoves to London. In a remarkably short time he becomes the greatest playwright not just of his age but of all time. His works appeal to urban sophisticates and first-time theatergoers; he turns politics into poetry; he recklessly mingles vulgar clowning and philosophical subtlety. How is such an achievement to be explained? Will in the World interweaves a searching account of Elizabethan England with a vivid narrative of the playwright's life. We see Shakespeare learning his craft, starting a family, and forging a career for himself in the wildly competitive London theater world, while at the same time grappling with dangerous religious and political forces that took less-agile figures to the scaffold. Above all, we never lose sight of the

great works A Midsummer Night's Dream, Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, Macbeth, and more that continue after four hundred years to delight and haunt audiences everywhere. The basic biographical facts of Shakespeare's life have been known for over a century, but now Stephen Greenblatt shows how this particular life history gave rise to the world's greatest writer. 16 pages of color illustrations.

Presentation de l'auteur "Greenblatt knows more about [Shakespeare] than Ben Jonson or the Dark Lady did." John Leonard, *Harper's* A young man from a small provincial town moves to London in the late 1580s and, in a remarkably short time, becomes the greatest playwright not of his age alone but of all time. How is an achievement of this magnitude to be explained? How did Shakespeare become Shakespeare? Stephen

Greenblatt brings us down to earth to see, hear, and feel how an acutely sensitive and talented boy, surrounded by the rich tapestry of Elizabethan life, could have become the world's greatest playwright. A Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award Finalist. [com](http://www.com) There's no shortage of good Shakespearean biographies. But Stephen Greenblatt, brilliant scholar and author of *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*, reminds us that the "surviving traces" are "abundant but thin" as to known facts. He acknowledges the paradox of the many biographies spun out of conjecture but then produces a book so persuasive and breathtakingly enjoyable that one wonders what he could have done if the usual stuff of biographical inquiry--memoirs, interviews, manuscripts, and drafts--had been at his disposal. Greenblatt uses the "verbal traces" in Shakespeare's work to take us "back into the life he lived and into the world to which he was so open." Whenever possible, he also ushers us from the extraordinary life into the luminous work.

The result is a marvelous blend of scholarship, insight, observation, and, yes, conjecture--but conjecture always based on the most convincing and inspired reasoning and evidence. Particularly compelling are Greenblatt's discussions of the playwright's relationship with the university wit Robert Greene (discussed as a chief source for the character of Falstaff) and of Hamlet in relation to the death of Shakespeare's son Hamnet, his aging father, and the "world of damaged rituals" that England's Catholics were forced to endure. *Will in the World* is not just the life story of the world's most revered writer. It is the story, too, of 16th- and 17th-century England writ large, the story of religious upheaval and political intrigue, of country festivals and brutal public executions, of the court and the theater, of Stratford and London, of martyrdom and recusancy, of witchcraft and magic, of love and death: in short, of the private but engaged William

Shakespeare in his remarkable world. Throughout the book, Greenblatt's style is breezy and familiar. He often refers to the poet simply as Will. Yet for all his alacrity of style and the book's accessibility, *Will in the World* is profoundly erudite, an enormous contribution to the world of Shakespearean letters. --Silvana

Tropea Interview with Stephen Greenblatt Stephen Greenblatt shares his thoughts about what make Shakespeare Shakespeare and why the Bard continues to fascinate us endlessly. From *Publishers Weekly* This much-awaited new biography of the elusive Bard is brilliant in conception, often superb in execution, but sometimes perhaps inevitably disappointing in its degree of speculativeness. Bardolators may take this last for granted, but curious lay readers seeking a fully cohesive and convincing life may at times feel the accumulation of "may haves," "might haves" and "could haves" make it difficult to suspend disbelief.

Greenblatt's espousing, for instance, of the theory that Shakespeare's "lost" years before arriving in London were spent in Lancashire leads to suppositions that he might have met the Catholic subversive Edmund Campion, and how that might have affected him and it all rests on one factoid: the bequeathing by a nobleman of some player's items to a William Shakeshafte, who may, plausibly, have been the young Shakespeare. Nevertheless, Norton Shakespeare general editor and New Historicist Greenblatt succeed impressively in locating the man in both his greatest works and the turbulent world in which he lived. With a blend of biography, literary interpretation and history, Greenblatt persuasively analyzes William's father's rise and fall as a public figure in Stratford, which pulled him in both Protestant and Catholic directions and made his eldest son "a master of double consciousness." In a virtuoso display of historical and literary criticism, Greenblatt contrasts Christopher Marlowe's Jew of Malta, Elizabeth's unfortunate Sephardic physician who was executed for conspiracy and Shakespeare's ambiguous villain Shylock. This wonderful study, built on a lifetime's scholarship and a profound ability to perceive the life within the texts, creates as vivid and full portrait of Shakespeare as we are likely ever to have. 16 pages color illus. not seen by PW.

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