

# The Swerve: How the World Became Modern

By Stephen Greenblatt

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**The Swerve: How the World Became Modern** By Stephen Greenblatt


Winner of the 2012 Pulitzer Prize for Non-Fiction

Winner of the 2011 National Book Award for Non-Fiction

One of the world's most celebrated scholars, Stephen Greenblatt has crafted both an innovative work of history and a thrilling story of discovery, in which one manuscript, plucked from a thousand years of neglect, changed the course of human thought and made possible the world as we know it.

Nearly six hundred years ago, a short, genial, cannily alert man in his late thirties took a very old manuscript off a library shelf, saw with excitement what he had discovered, and ordered that it be copied. That book was the last surviving manuscript of an ancient Roman philosophical epic, *On the Nature of Things*, by Lucretius—a beautiful poem of the most dangerous ideas: that the universe functioned without the aid of gods, that religious fear was damaging to human life, and that matter was made up of very small particles in eternal motion, colliding and swerving in new directions.

The copying and translation of this ancient book—the greatest discovery of the greatest book-hunter of his age—fueled the Renaissance, inspiring artists such as Botticelli and thinkers such as Giordano Bruno; shaped the thought of Galileo and Freud, Darwin and Einstein; and had a revolutionary influence on writers such as Montaigne and Shakespeare and even Thomas Jefferson.

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## **The Swerve: How the World Became Modern** By Stephen Greenblatt Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

### Review

“The ideas in *The Swerve* are tucked, cannily, inside a quest narrative. . . . The details that Mr. Greenblatt supplies throughout *The Swerve* are tangy and exact. . . . There is abundant evidence here of what is Mr. Greenblatt’s great and rare gift as a writer: an ability, to borrow a phrase from *The Swerve*, to feel fully ‘the concentrated force of the buried past.’” (New York Times)

“In this gloriously learned page-turner, both biography and intellectual history, Harvard Shakespearean scholar Greenblatt turns his attention to the front end of the Renaissance as the origin of Western culture’s foundation: the free questioning of truth.” (starred review - Publishers Weekly)

“More wonderfully illuminating Renaissance history from a master scholar and historian.” (starred review - Kirkus Reviews)

“In *The Swerve*, the literary historian Stephen Greenblatt investigates why [Lucretius’] book nearly dies, how it was saved and what its rescue means to us.” (Sarah Bakewell - New York Times Book Review)

“In this outstandingly constructed assessment of the birth of philosophical modernity, renowned Shakespeare scholar Greenblatt deftly transports reader to the dawn of the Renaissance...Readers from across the humanities will find this enthralling account irresistible.” (starred review - Library Journal)

“Every tale of the preservation of intellectual history should be as rich and satisfying as Stephen Greenblatt’s history of the reclamation and acclamation of Lucretius’s *De rerum natura* from obscurity.” (John McFarland - Shelf Awareness)

“It’s fascinating to watch Greenblatt trace the dissemination of these ideas through 15th-century Europe and beyond, thanks in good part to Bracciolini’s recovery of Lucretius’ poem.” (Salon.com)

“But *Swerve* is an intense, emotional telling of a true story, one with much at stake for all of us. And the further you read, the more astonishing it becomes. It’s a chapter in how we became what we are, how we arrived at the worldview of the present. No one can tell the whole story, but Greenblatt seizes on a crucial pivot, a moment of recovery, of transmission, as amazing as anything in fiction.” (Philadelphia Inquirer)

“[*The Swerve*] is thrilling, suspenseful tale that left this reader inspired and full of questions about the ongoing project known as human civilization.” (Boston Globe)

“Can a poem change the world? Harvard professor and bestselling Shakespeare biographer Greenblatt ably shows in this mesmerizing intellectual history that it can. A richly entertaining read about a radical ancient Roman text that shook Renaissance Europe and inspired shockingly modern ideas (like the atom) that still reverberate today.” (Newsweek)

“A fascinating, intelligent look at what may well be the most historically resonant book-hunt of all time.” (Booklist)

“Pleasure may or may not be the true end of life, but for book lovers, few experiences can match the intellectual-aesthetic enjoyment delivered by a well-wrought book. In the world of serious nonfiction,

Stephen Greenblatt is a pleasure maker without peer.” (Newsday)

“*The Swerve* is one of those brilliant works of non-fiction that's so jam-packed with ideas and stories it literally boggles the mind.” (Maureen Corrigan - NPR/Fresh Air)

#### Review

In this outstandingly constructed assessment of the birth of philosophical modernity, renowned Shakespeare scholar Greenblatt deftly transports reader to the dawn of the Renaissance...Readers from across the humanities will find this enthralling account irresistible.--starred review

#### About the Author

Stephen Greenblatt (Ph.D. Yale) is Cogan University Professor of the Humanities at Harvard University. Also General Editor of The Norton Anthology of English Literature, he is the author of eleven books, including *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern* (winner of the 2011 National Book Award and the 2012 Pulitzer Prize); *Shakespeare's Freedom*; *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*; *Hamlet in Purgatory*; *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World*; *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture*; and *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*. He has edited seven collections of criticism, including *Cultural Mobility: A Manifesto*, and is a founding coeditor of the journal *Representations*. His honors include the MLA's James Russell Lowell Prize, for both *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* and *The Swerve*, the Sapegno Prize, the Distinguished Humanist Award from the Mellon Foundation, the Wilbur Cross Medal from the Yale University Graduate School, the William Shakespeare Award for Classical Theatre, the Erasmus Institute Prize, two Guggenheim Fellowships, and the Distinguished Teaching Award from the University of California, Berkeley. He was president of the Modern Language Association of America and is a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the American Philosophical Society, and the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

#### Users Review

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##### Donna Young:

As people who live in the particular modest era should be update about what going on or details even knowledge to make these keep up with the era that is certainly always change and progress. Some of you maybe will update themselves by reading books. It is a good choice for you personally but the problems coming to anyone is you don't know what one you should start with. This *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern* is our recommendation to make you keep up with the world. Why, as this book serves what you want and need in this era.

##### Ronald Johnson:

The e-book with title *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern* includes a lot of information that you can study it. You can get a lot of gain after read this book. That book exist new know-how the information that exist in this reserve represented the condition of the world at this point. That is important to yo7u to be aware of how the improvement of the world. This book will bring you throughout new era of the the positive effect. You can read the e-book with your smart phone, so you can read that anywhere you want.

**Margarita Culbertson:**

The book *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern* has a lot of information on it. So when you check out this book you can get a lot of help. The book was authored by the very famous author. The author makes some research before write this book. This book very easy to read you may get the point easily after reading this book.

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