

# The Text of Dr. Faustus

An Overview

Dr Subrata Sahoo

# Intro:

- No manuscript of the play has survived.
- Nor was the play published in Marlowe's lifetime.
- The first-known edition appeared in 1604.
- Eleven years after Marlowe's death.
- Entry in the Stationer's Register on 7 January, 1601.
- As "A book called the plaie of Doctor Faustus".

# Two widely-divergent forms

- A-TEXT: 1604 VERSION.
- B-text: 1616 version.

# A-text

- Published by Thomas Bushell in 1604.
- Actually a reprint of 1601 edition of Stationer's Registrar.
- Published 11 years after Marlowe's death.
- Reprinted with editorial changes in 1609 and 1611.
- Of 1517 lines.
- Only one copy survives.

# Contd...

- Acted by “Right Honorable the Earl of Nottingham his servants”.

# B-text

- Published in 1616 by John Wright.
- Further editions in 1619, 1620, 1624, 1628, and 1631.

# Contd...

- After this flurry of early editions, the play lay almost forgotten.
- In 17<sup>th</sup> century a new issue of B-Text appeared with a new episode added.
- It was almost a bewildered edition of B-Text.
- A century later, Marlowe's play came to Goethe's attention.

# Early 19<sup>th</sup> century

- Three new editions appeared.
- All based on B-version.

# Later 19<sup>th</sup> century

- A number of editions.
- Editorial favours oscillated between A and B  
VERSIONS
- It was in 1932 that B-version found a whole-hearted modern supporter.
- Since 1932 until 1973, editors and textual critics preferred B-Text.

# 1946

- Leo Kirschbaum: “The Good and Bad Quartos of Dr. Faustus”.
- Approved Boas’ choice of the B-text.
- 1604—bad quarto.
- 1616—good quarto.

# Quarto

- Common form in which Elizabethan play-texts appeared.
- Moderate –sized sheet of paper achieved by folding a very large sheet twice to make four leaves, hence quarto.

# Bad quarto

- Reported text of some kind.
- Sometimes pirated.
- Culled from memory.
- “Reported” by a short-hand writer.

# Good quarto

- Generally authentic.
- Published with author's approval.
- Printed from the holding company's prized prompt-book copy.

# Five-act Divisions

- Both A and B Texts were without act or scene division.
- Boas divided the play into five acts first.
- Kirschbaum accepted Boas' division.