

BIBLIOGRAPHY, CRITICISM, AND THE PROBLEM OF *DOCTOR FAUSTUS*

'TO B OR NOT TO B' — that appears to be the question confronting the editor of *Faustus*. Should we place our trust in the short A text of the play which appeared in 1604, or in the much longer version, B, of 1616? It is widely accepted that neither version perfectly reflects what Marlowe (who died in 1593) wrote, but those of us — and I think they still form a majority of readers — who are interested in knowing what was written by Marlowe rather than any other author have been inclined to feel fairly vehemently that either the one version or the other is more authorial.

Something of a revolution has recently occurred in the way the matter is approached. Indeed, it is a second revolution. Scholars first moved from a preference for A (the dominant view during the nineteenth century) to the confident belief that B is more authentic (a view developed by bibliographers from the thirties on), while now it is once again A which enjoys favour.

The second revolution is perhaps reflected nowhere more clearly than in Roma Gill's two quite different editions of the play for the justly popular (and constantly improving) New Mermaids series, now published by A. & C. Black in London and W.W. Norton in New York. In Gill's first version, G1 (London, 1965), we are informed:

For a long time it was thought that A was the more original and that the new parts of B . . . were the 'adicyones' for which Henslowe paid £4 to a couple of his hack writers, Bird and Rowley, in 1602. Modern bibliographical study, however, has worked to reverse these views. (p.xv)

Gill expresses some serious reservations about the conclusions of modern bibliographical study, but she proceeds to base her text substantially on B. In her second edition (G2), however, published in 1989, Gill states that 'there is very little wrong with the A text', which she uses as her copy-text. With that procedure I agree, although I feel that Gill provides little reason for her change of mind beyond the general claim that 'B seems to be based on a copy of A3 [a 1611 version of A] augmented by a theatrical manuscript which has been "edited" by a book-keeper, censored in accordance with the Act of Abuses [1606], and altered by the two dramatists referred to in Henslowe's *Diary* [i.e. Bird and Rowley]', (p.xiv). She should have mentioned — or at least referred to — the detailed arguments of those who have advocated the case for A between 1965 and 1989. Even in Gill's subsequent 'old-spelling' text, volume II (1990) of *The Complete Works of Christopher Marlowe*, which she has been editing for Oxford's Clarendon Press, Gill remains rather cursory in her discussion of the relation between A and B and of recent scholarship on the matter, although we are offered a rapid survey of opinions held in 'Appendix C: A or B? The Scholar's Responsibility' (pp.141-3). This rather superficial appendix seems to me the least satisfactory aspect of the Clarendon *Faustus* (G3), although it does give us more help than G2.

Nevertheless, Gill shares with Fredson Bowers the honour of first seriously questioning, in G1, what had become received wisdom, particularly after W.W. Greg's edition *Marlowe's 'Doctor Faustus' 1604-1616: Parallel Texts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950), namely that A is a 'memorial reconstruction' and therefore unreliable, while the B version, even in its seemingly 'additional' material, preserves an earlier and more authentic version. Both Gill and Bowers concluded that what

looked like added material in B was exactly that (most likely for the most part the writing which Bird and Rowley had been paid for in 1602). Bowers, in his two-volume *The Complete Works of Christopher Marlowe* (New York and London: Cambridge University Press, 1973), with obvious reluctance decided that his text should still be based on B, although he added: 'The case would be altered, of course, if the A-text were not a memorial version, a bad quarto; but facts are facts' (vol.2, p.143).

Despite his phrase that 'facts are facts', what Bowers actually accepts is nothing other than a theory, not a fact, developed successively by F.S. Boas in his edition *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* (London: Methuen, 1932), Leo Kirschbaum, in 'The Good and Bad Quartos of *Dr Faustus*', *The Library*, 26(March 1946): 272-94, and, above all, Greg in his monumental *Parallel Texts*. Greg himself did not claim that his theory had the status of fact, though his attitude to it is not as tentative and provisional as G3 (p.143) would have us believe. True, he admitted: 'Complexity, I am well aware, is no recommendation for a theory' (p.vii). But not long after he states: 'Of the correctness of the main conclusions I feel as certain as a reasonable critic can be of anything of the sort' (p.viii). In the light of such confidence, and given Greg's status as a scholar, it is hardly surprising that his followers came to see the theory as in effect proven beyond reasonable doubt, and hence 'fact'. One editor after another proceeded to base the text of *Faustus* on B.

At the same time, it is true to say that more than one editor felt uneasy about the perceived need to rely on B as supposedly more authentic. J.B. Steane, for example, in his Penguin edition of *The Complete Plays of Marlowe* (Harmondsworth, 1969) based his text on B only 'reluctantly' — 'because the editor's personal opinion is that the play is artistically stronger in its shorter form' (p.261). Steane distinguished clearly between his critical opinion of the play and his respect for bibliographical scholarship; having no ammunition, as he thought, with which to destroy what it is perhaps most convenient to call 'the Greg case', he understandably enough decided to subordinate his literary sense to what appeared to be the unassailably factual evidence presented. Bowers, in editing the play soon after, showed a rather more complex attitude. He appears to have questioned the Greg case on the basis of what we may call in part 'bibliographical' and in part 'critical' grounds. Ultimately, he was not willing to trust the 'critical' part of his mind and the part of his bibliographical thinking most closely allied to it. Therefore, he opted for what must have seemed the safety of bibliographical fact as established (or so it appeared) by Greg and his predecessors.

Nevertheless, the more critical, questioning part of Bowers's mind did question the Greg case. One is reminded of that telling statement by F.W. Bateson in *The Scholar-Critic* (London: Routledge, 1972): 'Greg was a superb scholar, but he was not a literary critic' (p.144). Bowers himself, although an excellent bibliographer, was probably not quite as extraordinary a scholar as Greg, but what Bateson does not sufficiently acknowledge and what may easily be overlooked as a result of Bowers's fascination with a supposedly infallible 'scientific' method of bibliography, is nevertheless, I believe, true; Bowers was a better literary mind than Greg. The purpose of the present essay is to show that if Bowers had been less hesitant to act

upon his doubt and more willing to see a need for *combining* 'bibliography' in the narrow sense with 'criticism' in the broader sense, his conclusions about the A and B texts of *Faustus* would have made for better bibliography. Bateson castigates Bowers more than once for his undue respect for the 'scientific' side of bibliography; but I believe that Bowers and many other bibliographers are not so dogmatic as to reject the following propositions out of hand:

1. Where facts, as established by bibliography, are truly unassailable, literary critics have to live with them and act on them.
2. Where the 'facts' are not of this kind, and where a sensible literary case is obviously at odds with bibliographical theory, bibliography can only diminish its status and the accuracy of its results by not taking account of such a case.

Prior to his edition of *Faustus* Bowers had already significantly departed from the Greg case in his 'Marlowe's *Dr Faustus: The 1602 Additions*', *Studies in Bibliography* 26(1973): pp.1-18. In the main, he argues sensibly for the idea that (in tune with the dates of their appearance) the B text is later than A and contains additional material. Although his subsequent decision to base his edition on B may now strike us as oddly respectful of Greg, Bowers never, in writing about *Faustus*, seems to me so inclined as Greg to produce spurious or absurd 'literary' statements either to support a bibliographical position or to straighten out what might otherwise seem a deviation from it.

The Greg case has by now been, I think most scholars would agree, effectively discredited, most tellingly in David Ormerod and Christopher Wortham's edition, *Dr Faustus: The A-Text* (Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press, 1985), especially pp.xxi-xxix. I think that it will not be long before this edition will emerge as superior to G2 and G3, and probably the best edition of *Faustus* so far. But, although the editors give a good survey of scholarly arguments against the Greg case as advanced by Bowers and others, and produce potent reasons of their own, I think it remains necessary to stress how peculiarly Greg makes literary considerations part of his case, and to show that an open-minded and commonsensical consideration of A and B as *literary* texts can only lead to the conclusion that B is, in essence, an alteration of A and a revision of such a nature that it is extremely unlikely that Marlowe was associated with it. According to what I have said before, I believe that literary considerations of the kind I shall offer ought to be part of bibliographical study unless that can clinchingly proceed on its own.

In fairness to Greg I shall not argue that literary considerations ultimately lie at the basis of his bibliographical argument. I believe that he honestly thought that his bibliographical view had validity and then proceeded to adapt his literary views to his bibliographical ones; or else perhaps the two processes coincided. What I find worrying is that he could produce literary statements of a poor nature, and that better literary insights — which would have collided with his bibliographical contentions — never appear to have occurred to him. Nor is it unfair to say that *at least* his literary views — no doubt unintentionally — may have guided his bibliographical ones. Thus, for example, we find him arguing in that odd but

influential essay (prior to the *Parallel Texts*) 'The Damnation of Faustus', in *Modern Language Review*, 41(1946):

There is as yet no satisfactory critical text of *Faustus*, and I have had to do the best I could, in the light of my own study, to harmonize the final versions as printed in the quartos of 1604 and 1616 respectively, taking from each what best illustrated the points I wished to make. (p.97)

This statement suggests to me — I think defensibly — that there is one 'authorial' text which Greg feels he can arrive at by conflating bits from A and B. If so, his notion of what a 'satisfactory critical text' should look like must obviously be based on what he ultimately feels Marlowe must have written, which is to say that at this point his procedure is what we usually label 'critical' or 'literary', not bibliographical.

As for the essay itself, it introduces the notion that after his bodily intercourse with Helen — a spirit — Faustus is irrevocably damned. As I shall argue later, I believe that this whole idea is based on additions to the text in B and not supported by anything in A. In other words, Greg prefers (as a literary critic) what the B text offers him, while according to his own admission he is 'taking from each what best illustrated the points I wished to make'. And again his choice has nothing to do with bibliography *per se*, except that one fears ('fears' because his literary judgement is so bad) that his assumption about the superiority of B is likely to have influenced his bibliographical construct.

Even in points of literary detail Greg is disappointing in his edition of A and B, and it must be said that his readings are often strained and inconsistent. In the Prologue to the play A reads (in Greg's text):

So soone hee [i.e. Faustus] profites in Diuinitie,

...

That shortly he was grac't with Doctors name
Excelling all, whose sweete delight disputes
In heavenly matters of *Theologie*. (16-20)

In B line 19 reads: 'Excelling all, and sweetly can dispute'. B makes good sense here (as many editors have recognized), and if one believes, as Greg does, that B precedes A, it would be tempting to dismiss A's version of the line. On this particular occasion, however, Greg prefers A and rejects B as offering a 'superficially specious' substitution. I would — but consistently, is someone who prefers A — indeed reject the B version, but I would not support A in the cramped way that Greg does. As he sees it, *disputes* is a substantive, and 'is' (i.e. consists in) is understood after *delight*. But this kind of confidence in A seems just as mistaken as the trust in B which Greg displays elsewhere. We need only assume that *delight* and *disputes* changed places at some stage before they appeared on the printed page, as Koeppel (referred to by Greg!) suggested long ago. From a bibliographical viewpoint there is nothing extraordinary about such an assumption, and I think that most good literary critics would readily accept Koeppel's version as better than A's.

Greg's preference for A here is quite inconsistent with his rejection of it in an important line not long after, where Faustus reflects in Scene 1, line 92:

A sound Magician is a mighty god.

B reads 'Demi-god' for A's, 'mighty god'. As I see it, Marlowe is likely to have written 'mighty god' to show the delusion of Faustus's mind and its blasphemous nature. B's 'Demi-god' reads like an unintelligent substitution by someone who felt that 'mighty god' would give offence — i.e. that officials, or the audience generally, might believe that Marlowe shared Faustus's attitude. I cannot believe that Marlowe wrote 'Demi-god', because Faustus's ambition throughout the play is portrayed as reaching beyond such a status. But in this instance (unlike the one just considered) Greg prefers B and rebukes A for being 'content with nothing less than "a mighty god"' (p.58).

Surely the inconsistency and poverty of Greg's literary pronouncements must arouse our suspicion about his claims for B as, in general, an authoritative text, unless his case is unassailable on bibliographical grounds. As it is not we must open-mindedly look at the possibility that A is superior to B and that the differences in B are most readily explained as accretions or substitutions, rather than that the later text reflects better Marlowe's intentions, which — Greg and others argue — are found back in a much reduced and maimed form in the 'memorial reconstruction' of an earlier published date. It is worth adding here, incidentally, that the whole theory of texts based on 'memorial reconstruction', in the case of Renaissance drama, is at present under severe attack — but with that point I am not for the moment greatly concerned.

As I see it, the play as presented in A is absolutely consistent and essentially quite simple in its implied message. Faustus sells his soul to the Devil, and the responsibility for this action and for his failure to cancel the bond by repenting is his. God is good and omnipotent, and His mercy is infinite; if Faustus repented he would be forgiven, no matter the wishes of the Devil. As Faustus does not repent, the bond with the Devil holds good and God does not save him.

Much of the material in B which strikes me as spurious is comparatively innocent, though it is often not seen for what it is. The extent of the padding in B, for example, is worse than has been acknowledged. In A, Scene xi, the Horsecourser gives an account of how his horse disappeared under him when he rode it into water; in B this account occurs not only at much the same point, but again in B's next scene, IV.vi. The likelihood is that the first passage in B is a rewrite, for the verbal resemblance with A is greater in B's later passage! Instances like this occur more than once.

On the whole, however, the most striking difference between A and B is not merely that B is longer, but that its religious perspective is quite dissimilar. It is clear that several hands are responsible for the changes in B, but the total effect is strangely homogeneous, and, I feel, adds up to something like a consistent distortion of the starkness and intelligence of Marlowe's vision.

As Gill says in G2, a number of alterations can be explained on the basis of the assumption that the text was censored according to the Act of Abuses of 1606, which forbade any person in a stage play jestingly or profanely to speak or use the holy name of God or of Jesus Christ or of the Holy Ghost or of the Trinity.

Perhaps A's 'mighty God', which Greg did not like, was found offensive in terms of the Act, and accordingly modified to B's 'Demi-god'. The reasoning would have been that Faustus should not be allowed to speak of a magician as in any sense equivalent to the Divinity. Certainly some of the changes in the B text would appear to be obvious results of censorship of this kind. Thus, for example, A's Scene xiv has a line which editors keenly accept even if they otherwise follow B: 'See see where Christs blood streames in the firmament' (1463). In B there is not even an attempt to rewrite the line; it is simply omitted. The effect of such alterations is pervasive and damaging.

A potential difficulty with the play even in the A version is that there is a touch of anti-Catholicism in it which is conveyed by Faustus, so that in this respect a hero, who is otherwise normally at fault, is called on to exhibit an attitude with which the author and the audience are likely to sympathize. When Faustus first conjures a Devil appears and Faustus instructs him (A, Scene iii, 267-70):

I charge thee to returne and change thy shape,
 Thou art too vgly to attend on me,
 Goe and returne an old Franciscan Frier,
 That holy shape becomes a diuell best.

And even in A, Scene vii is anti-Catholic, poking fun at the Pope. But in B the scene is much expanded — most likely, it is generally held, by Samuel Rowley. Anyone who comes to such a scene in A and B without prejudices or theories is likely to conclude that Rowley's material is indeed an addition, designed to please anti-Catholic and patriotic Englishmen. Thus, for example, the B version of the scene makes much of the Pope's contempt for his rival, 'Saxon Bruno', and an English audience aware of Henry VIII's quarrel with the Pope will readily sympathize with Bruno and dislike the Roman Pope. The point is not, of course, whether Marlowe would or would not have approved of Bruno rather than the Pope; rather in A the scene is sensibly short, while in B the audience's attention is diverted from the main current of the play and the risk of undue admiration for Faustus and the pranks which he plays on the Pope is greater. The B version is almost likely to make us feel that there is, after all, little wrong with Faustus's pact with the Devil. The focus shifts from the essence of his plight, which is a religious and human matter, towards the mundane politics of 'Protestantism' (England) versus 'Catholicism' (Rome). B's long scenes concerning Benvolio (IV,ii and iii) are perhaps a less serious distraction, but similarly remove us from the serious preoccupation of the play and mistakenly induce some sympathy for Faustus and his worldly successes. Elsewhere, too, B has a good deal of cheap, worldly, supposedly 'entertaining' material which clearly looks additional to what we find in A and which is at best irrelevant and at worst inconsistent with the seriousness of the play in A in that we are asked to humour Faustus, or even admire him, and to consider the possibility that his alliance with the Devil enables him to enjoy a fun-filled existence of which the less intelligent characters are wrongly envious.

For one reason or another, the effect of many of the alterations and additions in B is to make Faustus less evil. An interesting example occurs when in A's Scene i Faustus speaks to Valdes and Cornelius:

Know that your words haue woon me at the last,
 To practise Magicke and concealed arts:
 Yet not your words onely, but mine owne fantasie,
 That will receiue no obiect for my head,
 But ruminates on Negromantique skill. (134-8)

A critical reader would in any case not wish to excuse Faustus on the basis of the argument that others have persuaded him to practise black magic. But the A version leaves no doubt on this point. It stresses that Faustus's 'owne fantasie' is to blame, so that we cannot simply lay responsibility for Faustus's sin at the door of Valdes and Cornelius. I find it impossible to agree with Greg that lines 136-8 in A are 'probably corrupt'. Faustus means that he has not only been influenced by the words of Valdes and Cornelius, but also (or rather?) by his own imagination, which will admit no other object for contemplation to his mind than necromantic skill. Although Greg writes about half a page on the lines, their sense is actually quite clear, and the deficiency apparent to this reader, at least, is in Greg's mind, not in the lines in A. And I think that whoever dropped the lines in B did not misunderstand them, but probably omitted them because it was felt appropriate to minimize the extent of Faustus's rebellion. The thinking behind the omission fits in with what underlies the alterations undoubtedly effected as a result of the Act of Abuses, though I do not mean to suggest that a change like this was actually inspired by it.

One other *locus* will have to suffice by way of illustration of this kind of change. In A's Scene vi, Faustus promises Lucifer:

Faustus vowes neuer to looke to heauen,
 Neuer to name God, or to pray to him,
 To burne his scriptures, slay his Ministers,
 And make my spirites pull his churches downe. (725-8)

Here B's omission of lines 726-8 even bothers Greg, who comments that 'It was, of course, the editor's fear of profanity that led him to cancel these lines' and refers to similar lines in *The Jew of Malta* to suggest that they are Marlowe's. A difficulty about Greg's position is, inevitably, that his approach is eclectic; here B is at fault, whereas in the previous instance quoted Greg blamed A. My contention is, by contrast, that in both cases Faustus's rebellious urge was deliberately reduced in B, and obviously it is much easier to make sense of the evidence on this assumption than on Greg's that normally A has to be seen as intrinsically 'later' and more spurious than B.

While there are many points of detail like this (and they are by no means trivial), the best way to demonstrate the falsification of B is to concentrate on what happens towards the end, especially in A's Scenes xiii and xiv, if compared with their counterpart, Act V in B. In particular, I wish to lay stress on the way in which B wishes us to see Faustus's perdition as inevitable — particularly, it seems, after Faustus's bodily intercourse with Helen. Thus B — and its view is accepted by Greg, who endorsed it in his *Modern Language Review* essay preceding the *Parallel Texts* — shows us a God so limited in capacity that He would not be willing to forgive

Faustus for this sin, as distinct from others. But there are other unsatisfactory aspects of B's final act to be discussed, such as the tendency to blame the Devil(s) for what Faustus has misdone, and to sentimentalize the hero by the attitude which the scholars display towards him in B.

B's obsession with the idea that bodily intercourse with spirits (seen as devils) will lead to damnation comes to the fore in IV.ii (A's Scene ix), which is altered so as to fit in with the description of the encounter with Helen in B's Act V. In A's Scene ix Faustus is called upon to produce Alexander and his paramour to please the German Emperor. Faustus explains to the Emperor that he cannot present the true substantial bodies of those two deceased princes, which long since are consumed to dust (1081-3); however, he will produce convincing spirits. The Emperor, with Faustus's approval, examines the lady's neck to see whether it has the mole which he expects.

There is no important message embodied in these events, unless we are to take it that the Emperor is unduly fascinated with Alexander and his paramour (i.e. with power and sex). But in the B version the incident becomes something totally different. There Faustus says to the Emperor:

My Lord, I must forewarne your Maiesty,
That when my Spirits present the royall shapes
Of *Alexander* and his Paramour,
Your grace demand no questions of the King,
But in dumbe silence let them come and goe. (1281-5)

Faustus obviously warns the Emperor not to ask any questions because to do so would be dangerous. His touching concern, given his own pact with the Devil and conjuring up of spirits when he likes, is unconvincingly inconsistent. And that B is indeed preoccupied with the Emperor's safety is obvious from the fact that when the Emperor sees the apparitions he '*offers to embrace them*', according to the ensuing stage direction, '*which Faustus seeing, suddenly staies him*'. Almost superfluously, Faustus adds (1303-4): 'My gracious Lord, you doe forget your selfe, These are but shadowes, not substantiall.'

Gill, in G1, had seen the connection between this episode and Faustus's later embrace of Helen. As she wrote in 1965 about the later incident: 'Faustus sees a spirit, a devil, in the form of Helen and, forgetful of his own admonitions to the Emperor, he speaks to it, touches it. Helen's lips "suck forth" his soul in more than metaphor. The kiss signals the ultimate sin, demoniality, the bodily intercourse with spirits' (p.xxiv). This reasoning comes straight from Greg's *Modern Language Review* article and, if we accept the supposed authority of B (as Greg did even then), the argument makes sense. There is no need, however, to accept B's version of either the Emperor's physical approach or Faustus's as threatening damnation. Indeed, if A had implied any such meaning in its presentation of the Emperor's attempted embrace, there would have been no need for B to interfere. In other words, the A version merely distinguishes between the appearance of spirits and that of bodies, and there is no intention whatever to express a warning against intercourse with devils. Yet the old mental habits concerning these matters die

hard, for in G2 (1989) Gill repeats her earlier statement almost verbatim (pp.xxiv-v), as though the A text on which she now bases her edition contains the 'admonitions to the Emperor', which in fact are totally absent from it. And the remainder of Gill's statement is equally wrong if only we examine the evidence in A, as distinct from B.

The reader of B, but not that of A, will come to the scene in which Faustus embraces Helen in the knowledge that there is danger in such contact with a spirit. It is true that even in A the scholars who wish to see Helen are told by Faustus: 'Be silent then, for danger is in words' (Scene xiii, 1290). But this statement, by itself, need not be taken at all as a warning against spirits *per se*; more likely, Faustus means that the spell of his witchcraft will be broken if people speak. B is highly conscious, however, of Helen as an evil spirit; in A (line 1297) the First Scholar speaks of Helen as the 'onely Paragon of excellence' — obviously judged to be a blasphemous statement by the person who revised B at this point, for there the phrase is omitted. But a far more startling revision was undertaken in the case of the Old Man's speech. In A (lines 1302-13) the speech runs:

Ah Doctor Faustus, that I might preuaile,
 To guide thy steps vnto the way of life,
 By which sweete path thou maist attaine the gole
 That shall conduct thee to celestial rest. 1305
 Breake heart, drop blood, and mingle it with teares,
 Teares falling from repentant heauinesse
 Of thy most vilde and loathsome filthinesse,
 The stench whereof corrupts the inward soule
 With such flagitious crimes of hainous sinnes, 1310
 As no commiseration may expel,
 But mercie Faustus of thy Sauour sweete,
 Whose blood alone must wash away thy guilt.

This speech exhorts Faustus to abandon his sinful life, and stresses that repentance is still possible. Ordinary 'commiseration' (1311) cannot expel the crimes of Faustus's sins, but the Mercy of the Saviour can do so, as His blood alone must wash away Faustus's guilt. Gill, in G2, has undue difficulty with this passage, which she calls 'oddly strained'; for example, she reads a semicolon after 'expel' (1311), which makes the next two lines hang loose. The fault is Gill's, not that of A, which makes quite satisfactory sense.

The B text, however, offers a very different speech. It is not at all badly written — in fact much of the material unique to B is competent enough — but it offers once again support to those who believe that at some specific point before his death Faustus can no longer be forgiven. Almost certainly the speech is meant to prepare us for the bodily intercourse with Helen as the decisive moment. It will be sufficient to quote lines 1813-22 from V.i in B:

O gentle *Faustus* leaue this damned Art,
 This Magicke, that will charme thy souls to hell,
 And quite bereaue thee of saluation. 1815

Though thou hast now offended like a man,
 Doe not perseuer in it like a Diuell;
 Yet, yet, thou hast an amiable soule,
 If sin by custome grow not into nature:
 Then *Faustus*, will repentance come too late, 1820
 Then thou art banisht from the sight of heauen;
 No mortall can expresse the paines of hell.

In A it appears to be axiomatic that repentance will *never* come too late. The view here presented in B is, of course, a childish and unintelligent one. It is psychologically possible to imagine Faustus as so hardened in evil that his sin grows 'into nature' (1819). What is not psychologically plausible is that a man in that condition could get himself to repent, leave alone that we can legitimately be asked to accept the notion that God, *if* such a person repented, would banish him from the sight of heaven (as though God's mercy is *not* infinite). The B version seems bent on inculcating the idea that intercourse with a devil is the ultimate, unpardonable sin, and critics like Greg and Gill have been far too willing to accept this view, which A does not even ask us to contemplate.

In both A and B the Old Man's words inspire Faustus with despair. Mephistophilis gives him a dagger, but the Old Man tells Faustus not to despair. Faustus feels comforted by this, but in typically weak fashion asks the Old Man to leave him a while to ponder on his sins. The Old Man's reaction to this in A differs significantly from that in B:

I goe sweete Faustus, but with heauy cheare,
 fearing the ruine of thy hopelesse soule. (A: 1327-8)
Faustus I leaue thee, but with grieffe of heart,
 Fearing the enemy of thy haplesse soule. (B: 1841-2)

It is depressing to see how slavishly editors tend to follow B in a case like this. John Jump, for instance, in his prestigious edition of *Faustus* for the Revels series (London: Methuen, 1962), simply modernizes B, printing 'hapless'. But clearly it is A's 'hopelesse' which is correct; the Old Man fears that Faustus will ruin his soul because he is without hope, that his inclination to despair will lead him to perdition. Similarly B substitutes 'enemy' for A's 'ruine' because we are to fear the Devil, although later the Old Man shows, in his fortitude, that he — in contrast to Faustus — does *not* fear the Devil. A's point is that Faustus's destiny is ultimately in his own hands, while in B we are given a false sense of helplessness. The notion that the Devil will win out is merged in B with the sense that Faustus will undo himself quite specifically by embracing Helen.

This he proceeds to do almost immediately after (having first yielded to Mephistophilis's threat to tear his flesh piecemeal). In A the encounter is followed, quite logically, by a final speech in which the Old Man reproaches Faustus for the weakness of his flesh and apparent determination to exclude Heaven's grace, while B shows us how Faustus and Helen embrace and then leave the stage. Yet in B the moralism is far more heavy-handed and pedestrian; after the encounter with Helen, V.ii opens with Lucifer and other devils gloating about the fact (as B

presents it) that now, at last, Faustus is definitely theirs. This certitude is absent from A, as the whole assembly of the Devils does not occur there, so that Lucifer is *not* made to say (B, lines 1898-1901):

. . . *Faustus* we come to thee,
 Bringing with vs lasting damnation,
 To wait vpon thy soule; the time is come
 Which makes it forfeit.

Given such statements in B it is quite logical for Greg and others to conclude that the encounter with Helen has now quite definitely sealed his fate; but that is not a view justified by anything in A. Similarly the following exchange does not occur in A:

Faust. O thou bewitching fiend, 'twas thy temptation,
 Hath rob'd me of eternall happinesse.
Meph. I doe confesse it *Faustus*, and reioyce;
 'Twas I, that when thou wer't i'the way to heauen,
 Damb'd vp thy passage, when thou took'st the booke,
 To view the Scriptures, then I turn'd the leaues
 And led thine eye. (B:1986-92)

This absurd addition in B would lead us to believe that not only Faustus but we also have been duped all along. Faustus, it turns out, has no responsibility for his sin, for the Devil led him astray while he did not realize it. The addition is refuted, not only by the whole tenor of the play in A, but even by some telling things in B. For example, it was in B that II.ii opened with:

Faust. When I behold the heauens then I repent
 And curse thee wicked *Mephostophilis*,
 Because thou hast depriu'd me of those Ioyes.
Meph. 'Twas thine owne seeking *Faustus*, thanke thy selfe.

Mephostophilis's curious — but truthful — rejoinder is absent from A, where he merely asks Faustus whether he finds Heaven such a glorious thing. As the evidence stands in B, we would here have to accept that Mephostophilis in effect warns Faustus that his undoing is of his own making, while we must apparently forget that fact when Mephostophilis 'confesses' at the end of the play that he had misled Faustus all along. I submit that this kind of inconsistency has nothing to do with Marlowe, or with sophisticated characterization, but is a typical result of revision in B. In other words, I do not at all accept that Faustus was at any stage merely manipulated by the Devil; I consider him responsible for his own sin until the very end and I believe that in theory he can repent until the end and would certainly be forgiven if he did.

But in the B version a relentless effort is made to persuade us that Faustus already *is* damned, after his encounter with Helen, and the Good Angel oddly rubs in this message, saying:

Oh *Faustus*, if thou hadst giuen eare to me,
 Innumerable ioyes had followed thee. (1997-8)

and

O thou hast lost celestiall happinesse. (2007)

This resigned despondency is again absent from B. And again we must surely assume it is spurious. A good and omnipotent God would not abandon Faustus in this miserable way but would keep open the path to repentance and salvation. It is here worth noticing that Ormerod and Wortham warn that it is too easily assumed by critics that Faustus *has* had sexual intercourse with the spirit of Helen and, yet more importantly, state: 'The point made again and again in the witchcraft writings is that the repentant witch will always be forgiven' (p.xlv). Of course if God were not willing to do so, we would have to accept that either He is not totally benevolent, or that His power is restricted.

It is not often realized by advocates of B how little point there is to Faustus's final speech in B. If we accept the A version, Faustus can repent until the very end; it is his failure to do so which, once his period has expired, enables the Devil to claim him. This means that A makes us watch him in his final hour without knowing whether he will as yet repent or not. For one thing this means that the final speech makes for better *drama* in A — there is more suspense and intrigue. In B we already know, supposedly, that nothing will now save him. But in A we feel like exclaiming 'You are wrong!' when he commences his last speech with the assertion:

Now hast thou but one bare hower to liue,
And then thou must be damnd perpetually. (Scene xiv, 1451-2)

His 'must' implies a foregone conclusion which is not warranted by anything which has happened in A. Furthermore, A makes us see — in words which make no sense in B — that Faustus actually even now *chooses* to damn himself, especially in

. . . let this houre be but a yeere,
A moneth, a weeke, a naturall day,
That Faustus may repent, and saue his soule. (1456-8)

In his anxious wish to go on living, Faustus does not realize that he confuses that desire with what should be the proper attitude of a repentant sinner; such a person does not need a year or even a day to repent, and would not — as Faustus does — seek to postpone the moment of his repentance. As Faustus does not repent he makes his damnation inevitable. This is perhaps the most central point of *Dr Faustus* and has nothing to do with B's spurious claims to the effect that he might have been saved if only he had not touched the spirit of Helen, or that the Devil misled him all along anyway.

A ends effectively after Faustus's last speech, with the devils dragging him away. Not so in B, where less is left to the imagination, and a false moral note is also added. The Second Scholar finds Faustus's limbs, and the Third Scholar confirms superfluously that the devils have torn him thus. The most extraordinary addition, though, is this speech by the Second Scholar (V.iii, 2106-12):

Well Gentlemen, tho *Faustus* end be such
As every Christian heart laments to thinke on:
Yet for he was a Scholler, once admired
For wondrous knowledge in our *Germane* schooles,

We'll giue his mangled limbs due buryall:
And all the Students clothed in mourning blacke,
Shall waite vpon his heauy funerall.

The Scholar does pay lip-service to the fact of Faustus's transgression. But the starkness and intensity of the A version must have seemed unbearable and a strange kind of pious sentimentality makes the B reviser create a picture of a Faustus who is given 'due buryall' because he was such a learned academic. I cannot believe that Marlowe intended that distinction to outweigh the enormity of Faustus's sin.

I hope to have shown that a literary comparison of the A and B texts logically leads to the conclusion that B is a revision of A. Whatever the defects of A, it embodies a consistent and intelligent vision which is violated in B. It is impossible to assume that the A text (or something like it) was overhauled in an absolutely systematic fashion, though there may well have been more teamwork involved than we might at first glance think. It is certainly surprising to see how much in B looks like the product of a unified sensibility, even in areas where B is inconsistent. It would appear that the revisers not only wanted to 'entertain' more, but were determined to distort the play so as to make it reflect quite a different religious ideology. I believe that the decades just before and after 1600 were intellectually far too varied, complex and turbulent to make it possible for us to see the B text as merely the product of a later epoch. On the other hand, the changes are remarkably consistent, not only with the Act of Abuses of 1606, but also with the mentality exhibited by James I in his dangerous and silly treatise *Demonology* (first published in Edinburgh, 1597). The book both expressed and encouraged the belief that witches existed — that relations between human beings and the Devil did occur, and that such people should be destroyed; also, that 'spirits' were inevitably devils. This kind of thinking would appear to fit in with B's obsessive notion that Faustus had physical intercourse with a devil and thus damned himself. It is quite evident, however, that the A text was revised in stages after Marlowe (assisted or not) originally wrote the play circa 1590. There clearly were several people who had roughly similar wishes for revising his text, though no doubt Henslowe and his hacks were the chief culprits.

Bibliographically, Gill's notion as to what may have happened is at least promising, namely that 'B seems to be based on a copy of A3 [a 1611 version of A] augmented by a theatrical manuscript which has been "edited" by a book-keeper, censored in accordance with the Act of Abuses [1606], and altered by the two dramatists referred to in Henslowe's *Diary* [i.e. Bird and Rowley, the hacks who were paid £4 in 1602]'. But I should prefer to keep an open mind on these inasmuch as our recent return to A as the more authoritative of the two texts will no doubt spur a great deal of new bibliographical research.

My key point is that criticism, in a case like that of *Dr Faustus*, should be seen as an essential part of bibliography. The nineteenth-century scholars whose view of the relationship between A and B was primarily inspired by what seemed logical from a literary perspective appear in hindsight to have been nearer the mark than clever bibliographers like Greg who allowed themselves to be seduced into an implausible view held with great conviction because it was supposedly so 'scientific'.

Fredson Bowers was the first bibliographer to provide a substantial critique of Greg's case, though that case has also been questioned by other editors, especially Roma Gill. The question of the relationship between the A and B texts of *Faustus* has been (and remains) one of the most interesting and important ones to engage the minds of all those who are interested in the textual status of Renaissance plays. Bowers made a major contribution when he attempted to solve it. I think he would not have edited the text from B if he had addressed the literary questions more; at any rate, the present essay is intended to be a constructive addition to the work that Bowers did on *Faustus* and to make a contribution to debate on questions of methodology in which he was keenly interested and on which he has so much helped other scholars to focus.

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