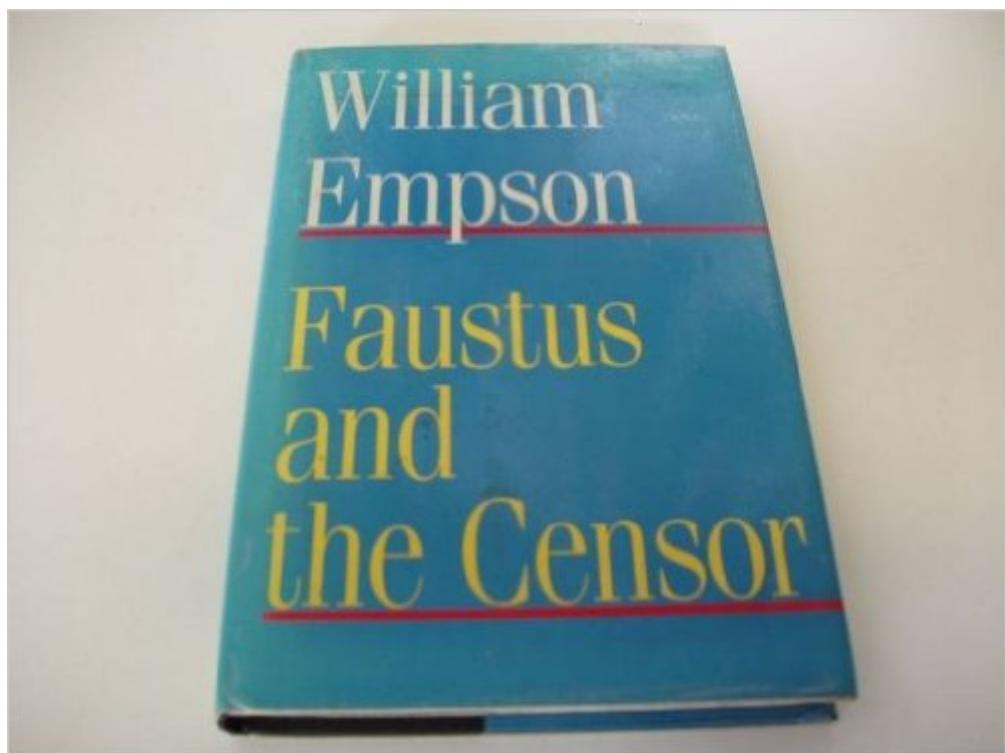


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Faustus And The Censor: The English Faust-Book And Marlowe's Doctor Faustus



Synopsis

Marlowe's "Dr Faustus" is the play that has, more than any other, given us the legend of Faustus, the man for whom the price of knowledge was eternal damnation. But in this, his last major and sustained piece of work, the author challenges the integrity of the text as we have it, and with it, the shape of the Faust myth it inspired. The book presents the play as a crowning instance of the growing 16th-century preoccupation with magic, no longer the rank broth-boiling of the middle ages, but the home of the restless, questing philosopher. But it is also more crucially an instance, it argues, of severe religious censorship. The text we have can be seen to differ significantly from its closest sources, signalling the attentions of a religious censor unable to sanction so bold a challenge to orthodoxy by the questing Faustus. In its place, the author recreates the original and authentic "Dr Faustus" in which man and spirit are bound by far more complex mutual attractions than those of demonic pact, and which culminates in a scene not of abject damnation, but of Faustus' safely achieving his real physical and spiritual ends. This work advances a controversial thesis that not only questions our knowledge of the play, but our familiarity with the Faust-legend as well.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Christopher Marlowe was one of England's most famous playwrights, a contemporary of Shakespeare and his rival for a brief period until his life was cut short by a mysterious dagger-thrust to the eye. The result of a tavern brawl? Political assassination? No one knows. The mystery

survives to this day. As with his life, one of Marlowe's classic dramas, "Doctor Faustus", the tragic legend of the man who sold his soul to the devil, is also the subject of much debate for the simple reason not one but two different manuscripts exist, the A and B Texts, and no one has been able to adequately explain why there is more than one version for this remarkable work. The A text was first published in 1604, and republished twice, but the B Text, which contains far more material than the A Text, eclipsed this version in 1616 and was republished five times. For years, Marlowe scholars have attempted to discover how these two texts came into existence and why the B Text seems more complete than the A Text, however, all they have provided are theories, but no definite answers. William Empson had his own unique theory, which is the subject of this scholarly work. Empson, a literary critic famous for his close reading of texts and his controversial analysis of them, proposed Marlowe was attempting to introduce something dangerous into this particular drama, something that would have rang alarm-bells for the theologians of his day, and therefore attracted the attentions of the state censor.

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