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Historical evidence and the authorship of *Pericles* I-II

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Pericles was first printed in a Quarto text (henceforth Q1) dated 1609. Shakespeare's two sources were (a) a late fourteenth century poem by John Gower, reprinted in 1554, and (b) a prose version by Laurence Twine, called *The Patterne of Painfull Adventures*, published c. 1576 and reissued c. 1594 and again in 1607. A novella by George Wilkins, called *The Painfull Aduentures of Pericles Prince of Tyre* (henceforth *P. A.*), avowedly based on the play but also silently stealing Twine's title and as much as a third of his text, appeared in 1608.

Some modern theorists have asserted that Wilkins (c. 1576-1618) also actually wrote the first two acts of *Pericles*. That opinion, as I pointed out in these pages,¹ ignores common sense and the historical evidence, such as John Dryden's attribution of the entire play to the young Shakespeare, c. 1588. This article adds more such evidence. First, the Aegeon-Aemilia theme of *The Comedy of Errors*, the title of Shakespeare's earliest known play, was also taken from the same Gower source. Then Q1 was registered for publication in May 1608, together with *Antony and Cleopatra*, under the hand of Sir George Buck. He evidently intended to authorise the publication of two genuine Shakespeare plays, as performed by their sovereign's theatre company and written by its leading playwright. He had already been deputy Master of the Revels for the previous five years. The duties of that high office included the presentation of dramatic entertainments at the Court of King James, as well as stage censorship and the licensing of plays for printing. So far from being punished for the spuriousness of Q1, Sir George Buck was promoted to the Mastership in 1610 and retained it for the next thirteen years, the rest of his life.

No one else in that century, not even George Wilkins himself in *P. A.*, ever recorded any denial that Q1 was Shakespeare's own unaided work. On the contrary, five further Quarto editions and the Third and Fourth Folios again asserted his authorship. Further, there are reasons why he should have returned to his own early play twenty years later, at the height of his powers. First, he was a born reviser. Then he would recently have seen the tomb of John Gower, who still lies in effigy at Southwark Cathedral near the Globe theatre. There, on the last day of 1607, Shakespeare's brother Edmund, himself a player, was buried with rites including "a forenoone knell of y^e great bell", all surely arranged by the affluent playwright. There is no known connection with Wilkins. On the contrary; the idea of John Gower's rebirth from his own ashes to introduce his old tale of the Prince of Tyre newly arranged for the stage is praised by Wilkins in *P. A.* exactly as if it were someone else's idea. And it looks like one of Shakespeare's own many original inspirations, even in the opinion of a convinced Wilkinsite,² who says of Q1 that "its overall design, though unusual, seems Shakespearean". Further, resurrection became a favourite Shakespearean theme, which recurs in Q1 and later plays. So the manuscript of Q1 might well have been retrieved from its own dust in 1608 and duly rewritten.

That case was first argued by E.B. Everitt,³ who discerned the same young hand and mind in first two acts of Q1 ("which would appear to be little changed from their first composition", c. 1587) and also in the dumbshows and chorus of *Edmund Ironside* c. 1588.

Unsurprisingly, none of this has ever resulted in a clear consensus. The continuing controversy among stylometrists as well as littérateurs proves only that personal assessments are not universally acceptable. But the involvement of Wilkins was nevertheless announced as a definite fact by the statistician M. W. A. Smith⁴ and also by the Oxford editors Gary Taylor and MacD. Jackson,⁵ who further assured their readers that Q1 was a "memorial reconstruction by actors" despite the total absence of any evidence, or even of any text that could have been reconstructed from.

The strong cross-currents of these deep waters proved hard to navigate; and the academic debate became becalmed - until the recent Cambridge edition⁶, which has publicly rejected both Wilkins and memorial reconstruction. Its reading list includes some of Smith's many articles, but his various methods and results are left unmentioned. Its editors deal with Taylor (and perhaps also, by implication, with Smith) by pointing out that the former's function-word test, which allegedly rules out Shakespearean authorship of the first two acts, merely assumes that different styles must mean different writers. This notion is, as they say, "by no means proven". As they might have added, it is also in direct contravention of ordinary experience and that invaluable rule of thumb, Ockham's Razor. Jackson's 1993 study² of *Pericles* is singled out for special praise as "perhaps the most persuasive case so far made for Wilkins"; and its conclusions are said to be "fairly and moderately stated".

However, neither its title nor its contents will strike everyone as either fair or moderate. For example, it dismisses out of hand the self-evident explanation of plagiarism from Shakespeare, although this is the only reason for which Wilkins is now remembered.

Further, the Cambridge editors themselves reject Jackson's results as "not beyond the bounds of coincidence". They also reject all the "undeniably persuasive evidence so far collected that the composition of Pericles was shared or that the secret sharer was George Wilkins".

But such unargued rejection is itself irrational. Coincidence is not evidence; and what is truly persuasive cannot also be treated as unpersuasive. Those who rely on statistics should no doubt have studied the historical facts; but so should literary dissenters. The rest of this article therefore attempts to fill those lacunae, for the first time on record. Instead of personal and hence variable opinions, it relies on a conspectus of verifiable spelling and punctuation, together with the principle of economy in attributing these differences to known authors, not to any supposed intervention from any other quarter.

It begins by a direct comparison between the actual Wilkins, i.e. the first six chapters (henceforth A) of *P.A.* 1608 and the purported "Wilkins?", i.e. the first two acts (henceforth B) of Q1 1609. Those two texts share much the same length (9000-10,000 words); and they recount much the same story of Pericles before he put to sea with his wife Thaysa. But are they really both from the same hand? If so, how do we explain the hundreds of differences between A and B - and the frequent similarities between B and the undisputedly Shakespearean last three acts of Q1 (henceforth C, also about the same length as A and B)? Each of these plain facts serves to disprove any connection of authorship between A and B.

Here is a tabulation compiled from two extant texts: Wilkins, as published in A, and his source in B. Line references are added to facilitate verification.

TEXT A ⁷	TEXT B ⁸
Cittie...seate (11, 19-21)	Citie...Seat (I.18)
account'd (I.30)	accompted (14.19)
Faithfulnesse...Courage (16.7)	faythfulnesse...courage (I.i.63)
Viper...feede (16.19)	Viper...feed (64)
Flesh, that...breede; (16.20)	flesh which...breed: (65)
husband...labour (16.21)	Husband...labour, (66)
from a father: (16.22)	in a Father; (67)
milde, (16.23)	milde; (68)
I...Childe: (16.24)	I,...child (69)
this...liue, (16.25, 26)	they...liue (70-1)
forty...sonne (17. 29, 33)	fourtie...Sonne (116, 118)
curtesie...hypocrisie (18.11, 12)	courtesie...hipocrite (121-2)
father...sonne...child...mothers (18.7-9)	Father...Sonne...Child...Mothers (127-8,130)
<i>Thalyart</i> [thrice] (18.25, 27, 36)	<i>Thaliard</i> [four times] <i>Thali</i> [twice] (151f)
gold...poyson (18.28)	Poyson...Gold (155)
buriall (22.17)	buryall (I.iv.49)
shippes thither ward (22.26)	ships hitherward (61)
shippes..corne (23.12,14)	Ships..Corne (92-5)
statue (24.11)	Statue (II.14)
<i>Helycanus...Tharsus...Thalyart...murther</i> (24.20-5)	<i>Helican...Thaliart...murdred... Tharsis</i> (II.17,23-5)
tyred...on the shore (26.23,26)	tir'd...a shore (II. 37-8)
<i>Fishermen...nettes</i> (26.30,33)	<i>Fisher-men..Nets</i> (II.i.11,13)
finny...subjects...sea (27.10)	fenny...Subject..Sea (II.i.52)
fish...net (28.30,31)	Fish..Net (II.i.122)
Lawe...armour (28.30,34)	law..Armour (II.i.124, 5)
Thaysa (25.6, 29.14,24,31.10)	Thaisa..Thai. (II.ii.0, 8,16,18,29)
Device...shield...Ethiope (30. 1, 2)	device..Shield..Ethyope (II.ii.19,20)
Device...shield...armed (30.8.11)	deuce..Shield..Armed (II.ii.24,25)
habite (30.35)	habit (II.ii.57)
cloude...gold that's...touchstone (30.15-16)	Clouds...Gold, thats...Touch-stone II.ii.37)
shippes..shipwrecke shoare..(32.7-8)	Ships...shipwracke..shore (II.iii.84)
<i>Helycanus..Eschines</i> (33.31 34.1)	<i>Hellicanus..Hell... Escanes</i> [twice] (II.iv.1-2)
Charriot...bodies...adored..loathd (33.4,17,20-1)	Chariot...bodyes..lothing...ador'd (8,10-11)
vnwoorthy...schoolemaister (38.12-13)	vnwoorthy...Scholemaister (II.v.40)
displeasure...traitour...traytour [twice] 38.30,32-3)	displeasure...traytor [thrice] (54-5)
honour...rebell...his State (39.5-6)	Honour...Rebell her state (II.v.61-2)

This selection could easily be extended. But how can it be explained? Not, surely, by ignoring orthography altogether, or by assuming that the scores of necessary changes were obligingly effected by some unknown agency. No; the sex-change and demotion of the goddess Honour, together with all the other discrepancies, such as the quite different spellings of character-names (including Dyonysa and Symonides, as consistently preferred in A, as against Dioniza/Dyoniza or Siaonides/Simonydes in B) point much more plainly at two separate people. The same applies to differences of plot or action. Thus A (29.36f) makes the pageant at the court of King Symonides commence with "a prince of Macedon" and continue with "a Prince of Corinth", although the sequence adopted by B (II.i.18f) is first "a Knight of Sparta" and then "a Prince of Macedon". Further, A bestows the motto of B's second knight on his own third contestant, and conversely; similarly with the fourth and fifth. In B (II.iv.1f), one grave counsellor confides the incest story to the other before, but in A (34.3) after, the account of heaven's just punishment of the two sinners. Again the list could be prolonged. All such textual data plainly imply that Wilkins had seen and sometimes remembered Pericles but had not written any of it.

This is further confirmed by A's visual recollections; thus it records (22.22f) the entry of "a fainting messenger" who "came slowly in to them, his fearefull looks described that he brought sorrow, and in slowe wordes hoe deliuered this", which clearly recalls a stage performance. It follows that A may contain accurate recollections of B as spoken and presented on the stage; so the Oxford editors are right in accepting this possibility and the Cambridge editors are mistaken in rejecting it. But memory of performance, however reliable, remains a world away from actual authorship.

The table above provides another pointer to two different authors. Abstract nouns, such as Faithfulness and Courage, are capitalised in A, whereas B has faythfulnes, faythfulnesse and (three times) courage. The same applies to other shared abstractions and generalities; thus A has Absence, Affection, Charity, Desire, Iudgement, Perfection, Presence, Rule, Vengeance, as compared with B's absence, affections, charity, desire, Judgement, perfections, presence, rule, vengeance. A also has many more such words than B (e.g. Agents, Argument, Challenges, Communication, Conjunction, Enigma, Grauity, Impression, Incumbrance, Intersections, Toy, Madness, Maturity, Modesty, Nobilitie, Preferment, Zeale). The manifest inference is that A and B were set up from authorial copy in two different hands, one of which was much more given than the other to the use and capitalisation of abstract concepts. This can be confirmed from Wilkins's extant play *The Miserie of Inforst Mariage*; like A, but unlike B and C, it teems with just such capitalised words.

Shakespeare's C of course follows his system of capitalising the names and products of flora and fauna (Baboon, Caterpillar, Cherrie, Doue, Eagles, Eeles, Fly, Gosseling, Marigolds, Roses, Violets, Whale). The same system appears throughout B (Bee, Catte, Corne, Courser, Cricket, Dragons, Drone, Drones, Ducke, Fishes, Fly, Fry, Flesh, Gloworme, Gnats, Groves, Hony, Horse, Mole, Mouse, Porpas (=porpoise), Serpents, Viper, Whale, Whales). But such words are far rarer in A, which offers only Calues, Cox-sparrow, Dolphins, Fish, Flie, Flowers, Fox, Roses, Steede, and Whales, while the examples common to both A and B remain uncapitalised (come, flesh, horse, serpents, viper) in the former source. So again B and C are akin, and A is not.

Now for apostrophes. The table above, which shows four apostrophes in B and none in A, calls for a complete comparison. The result is that B has over 100, examples, and A has just *one*, in the word 'lou'd'. Not even the most convinced Wilkinsite, surely, will postulate an unevicted agent who removed a hundred apostrophes from A or introduced the same amount into B; the simple explanation is that A always avoided them, unlike B, which again makes their authors two different people. As it happens, we can check this hypothesis too; Wilkins also avoids apostrophes in his play *The Miserie of Inforst Mariage* (1607), with such spellings as callt (=call it), doot (=do it), dent (=done it), hems (=he is), sheele (=she will) and so forth. So Wilkins can hardly have written B, which reads (for example) "hoe's" twelve times.

There are many other striking differences between A and B, despite their similar length. Thus A is full of the ending -ing, in over 300 examples, whereas B contains only 80 or so. One main reason for this discrepancy is stylistic; Wilkins's A heaps such words together, by the handful, as in 'there might you have seen the sea searching the ship, the boards fleeting, the goods swimming' and so forth. But no such devices are found in B (or C). Again, apostrophes are often used in B (and C) to form past tenses, for example when -de is used instead of modern -ed. Diligent search discloses only three examples of this usage throughout A: bribde, subdude, tride. But B has sixteen of them, and C has eighteen. Similarly A has only ten past tenses ending in Shakespeare's favourite -t, compared with B's twenty-two and C's nineteen. In all these respects, yet again, Wilkins's A is the odd text out.

We can also compare the First Quarto of *King Lear*, which like A was printed for Nathaniel Butter in 1608. This edition of *Lear* was wrongly classified as a "memorial reconstruction by actors" for most of last century. It shares with *Pericles* Q1 the imprimatur of Sir George Buck, a title-page attribution to Shakespeare and his company, and strong evidence (such as copious apostrophes and blank verse

misprinted as prose) of being set up from authorial foul papers. Who could have penned such copy but Shakespeare himself, and why should not the same apply to the contemporary *Pericles* Q1? If so, its B and C would again both be by Shakespeare, not Wilkins.

Many other resemblances or differences of spellings contradict the contrary hypothesis. Thus several common abbreviations are found in both B and C but not in A, such as ath' or a' th (on the, of the), doo' t (=do it), heer's (here is), in't (in it), on't (on it, of it), shee'le (she will), there's (there is), 'you're! (you are). Of course it might be maintained that such abbreviated forms are unsuitable for the prose of A; but they are rare or non-existent in the play of *Miseries* also. Yet again the conclusion is that its author, Wilkins, wrote A but had no hand in B.

Further, we know from *Sir Thomas More* that Shakespeare could write "together" as "together", and this spelling recurs in C, the Shakespearean portion of *Pericles*. So it does in B. But A has "together" Other spellings and locutions shared by both B and C include anie, daunger, doo, fayth, goe, hie (=high), manic, melancholie, scholler, stop, Syr, vsde (=used), woondrous; but these are not found in A, which has any, danger, do, faith, go, high, many, melanchelie, Scholler, stoppe, Sir, vsed, wonder. So A and B had different authors.

Here is a selection of other equally surprising differences between A and B (in that order, separated by a slash). The comparisons are confined to instances where both Wilkins in A, and the disputed author of B, just offer only one sole spelling of the given word, no matter how many times it occurs. Then the verifiable pattern of variation between the two is abundance/abundance, approue/approue, braunch/branch, building/buylding, built/buylt, choice/choyce, denied/denyed, deuour/deuowre, driuing/dryuing, Ethiopie/Ethiophe, forty/fourtie, furnished/furnisht, guard/gard, harmony/harmonie, mighty/mightie, misery/miserie, mooued/mooude, pouerty/pouertie, sailes/sayle, Schoolemaister/Scholemaister, secresie/secrecie, sollicited/solicite, summers/Sommer, Speeches/speech, stayed/stayde, intoombed/tombe, vnwoorthy/vnworthy, vsed/vsde, vsd, watery/watry, woorth/worth. Such evidence again supports the thesis that B was not written by the author of A. Furthermore, these two different people are *prima facie* of different ages, because B (which often has medial y for modern i, and so forth) is generally far the more old-fashioned of the two. But C resembles B in this respect as in so many others; yet again, A is the odd text out.

In sum: if A and B had the same author he had decided, for unknown and unexplained reasons, to rewrite his own text. And indeed the Oxford editors claim that Wilkins, though allegedly the author of *Pericles* I-II, need never have possessed his own copy of his own contribution. However, there is no evidence for any such hypotheses, and no reason for believing them; nor do they in any way support the theory of collaboration. This article argues that the textual facts are in need of economical and evidenced explanation, not speculation.

NOTES

¹ E. Sams, "The painful misadventures of *Pericles* Acts I and II". *N&Q* 236 (1991) 67-70, and *The Real Shakespeare* 1995, 2/1997, 171-2, 187, 189-90.

² MacD. Jackson, "Rhyming in *Pericles*: more evidence of dual authorship", *Studies in Bibliography*, 1993, 239-49.

³ in *The Young Shakespeare*, 1954, i37-141; I can add scores of specific analogies between *Pericles* I-II and *Edmund Ironside*.

⁴ for example in "Counting Wilkins In: Stylometry Reveals Who Wrote Acts I and II of *Pericles*", *The Shakespeare Newsletter* ccviii (Winter, 1990), 60.

⁵ Gary Taylor and MacDonald Jackson, *Pericles*, in *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, '1987' [recte 1988], 556-92.

⁶ *Pericles*, ed. Doreen DelVecchio and Anthony Hammond. *The New Cambridge Shakespeare*, Cambridge University Press, 1998.

⁷ George Wilkins, *The Painfull Adventures of Pericles Prince of Tyre.*, 1608, reprinted ed. T. Mommsen, Oldenburg 1857 (also ed. K. Muir, Liverpool 1953).

⁸ *Pericles* 1609, facsimile ed. Walter Greg, London 1940.