

# Pericles

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A RECONSTRUCTED TEXT

## INTRODUCTION

ON 20 May 1608 *Pericles* was entered on the Stationers' Register to Edward Blount; but he did not publish it. Probably the players allowed him to license it in the hope of preventing its publication by anyone else, for it was one of the most popular plays of the period. Its success was exploited, also in 1608, by the publication of a novel, by George Wilkins, '*The Painful Adventures of Pericles Prince of Tyre, Being the True History of the Play of Pericles, as it was lately presented by the worthy and ancient poet John Gower*'. The play itself appeared in print in the following year, with an ascription to Shakespeare, but in a manifestly corrupt text that gives every sign of having been put together from memory. This quarto was several times reprinted; but the play was not included in the 1623 Folio (perhaps because Heminges and Condell knew that Shakespeare was responsible for only part of it).

In putting together *The Painful Adventures*, Wilkins drew on an earlier version of the tale, *The Pattern of Painful Adventures*, by Laurence Twine, written in the mid-1570s and reprinted in 1607. Twine's book is also a source of the play, which draws too on the story of Apollonius of Tyre as told by John Gower in his *Confessio Amantis*, and, to a lesser extent, on Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*. Wilkins not only incorporated verbatim passages from Twine's book, he also drew heavily on *Pericles* itself. Since the play text is so corrupt, it is quite likely that Wilkins reports parts of it both more accurately and more fully than the quarto. And he may have had special qualifications for doing so. He was a dramatist whose popular play *The Miseries of Enforced Marriage* had been performed by Shakespeare's company. *Pericles* has usually been regarded as either a collaborative play or one in which Shakespeare revised a pre-existing script. Our edition is

based on the hypothesis (not new) that Wilkins was its joint author. Our attempt to reconstruct the play draws more heavily than is usual on Wilkins's novel, especially in the first nine scenes (which he probably wrote); in general, because of its obvious corruption, the original text is more freely emended than usual.

The complex textual background of *Pericles* should not be allowed to draw attention away from the merits of this dramatic romance, which we hope will be more apparent as the result of our treatment of the text. If the original play had survived, it might well have been as highly valued as *The Winter's Tale* or *The Tempest*; as it is, it contains some hauntingly beautiful episodes, above all that in Scene 21 in which Marina, Pericles' long-lost daughter, draws him out of the comatose state to which his sufferings have reduced him.