

Sir George and Shakespeare

Peter Dawkins

Peter Dawkins is the founder-director of the Francis Bacon Research Trust, dedicated to showing how Bacon's work is based upon the Ancient Wisdom and is vital for us today. As an author and lecturer Peter deals especially with the symbology and hidden teachings within the Shakespeare plays.

In the evenings, on Sir George Trevelyan's periodic visits to our home in Edinburgh when I was a young architect working there, Sir George would invariably suggest (in his commanding voice that anyone who loved him could never disobey), "Right, let's read Shakespeare!" My knowledge then of Shakespeare was very slim, but we had some good reading sessions, of which my abiding memory is of Sir George trying to teach me the importance of the 'pregnant pause' and the use of the imagination in speaking.



Sir George with Peter Dawkins

"The pregnant pause," he used to say, "allows the idea to be born in the listener's mind. Without it they don't get the point you're making." Then he would explain – and teach – to me how to read a thought in the text, whether it was a full sentence or not, and then look up and tell the listener that thought. "Read the thought," he would say, "imagine it, and then look up and tell them that thought. Then, whilst they are taking in that idea and imagining it themselves, read the next thought to yourself. Then repeat the process." That is the nature of the pregnant pause; and Shakespeare, as Sir George clearly revealed to me, is the great master of such living ideas and

sense of timing. Under Sir George's tutorage, in front of the blazing fire in our cosy home, I fell in love with Shakespeare – and Sir George.

Years later, after Sir George had thrust me into the adventure of public speaking, completely challenging my basically shy nature, he and I used to put on Shakespeare weekends at the home we then had in Warwickshire. These weekends were in the nature of a house party and were very enjoyable affairs. On the Saturday he and I would introduce the group to a Shakespeare play, both in terms of the story and poetry and also in terms of the wisdom to be found in the play, then in the evening we would all visit the Royal Shakespeare theatre at Stratford-upon-Avon to hear and see the production.



Sir George with Mark Rylance, artistic director at the Globe Theatre

On the Sunday we would discuss the play and offer any further insights into it. In reading the play, or extracts of it, Sir George would farm out different parts to various members of the group, but he would always keep the best role for himself. No one minded. He was a great performer and charmed us all, his inherent egoism being of the sort that is cheerfully humble whilst at the same time knowing he is the best man for the job! Sometimes, because he was fairly deaf, when he couldn't hear other people read their parts he would step in and do a one-man show. The Merchant of Venice was his favourite for this, for he knew the play almost all by heart, and to watch him perform the parts of the various characters was both hugely entertaining and astonishing.

Perhaps the best I have ever seen Sir George perform in this manner was in the open-air Minnack theatre, carved into the Comish cliffs of Lands End. We often visited there together and, perhaps because the atmosphere of his early ancestors particularly inspired him (the Trevelyans are supposed to be descended from a knight of King Arthur's Round Table whose home was Lyonnesse, the land that sank

off the coast of Land's End), Sir George was always incorrigible. Those of us who witnessed his Shylocks, his Hamlets and his Macbeths against the backdrop of the roaring ocean will never forget this Shakespearean glory.

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