A STUDY OF Wordsworth's 'THE BORDERERS'
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ITS
SHAKESPEAREAN ECHOES

A DISSERTATION
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BY
NEERA JAIN

Under the supervision of
Professor Maqbool H. Khan

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY
ALIGARH (INDIA)

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A STUDY OF WORDSWORTH'S
'THE BORDERERS'
This is to certify that Miss Neera Jain has prepared her M.Phil dissertation on *A Study of Wordsworth’s ‘The Borderers’ with Special Reference to its Shakespearean Echoes* under my supervision. Miss Jain’s dissertation is an original piece of work based on her own study of the subject.

(Maqbool Hasan Khan)
Professor of English
To My Parents
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The following pages contain a critical study of Wordsworth's only and early play The Borderers. I was encouraged to undertake the study by my interest in two widely different fields - the history of Shakespeare appreciation and the present-day revival of interest in Romantic literature. As a matter of fact, the two fields converge in that the Romantics had played a significant role in discovering the sources of Shakespeare's true greatness. The recent studies of the literature of the Romantic period, specially what is known as the Romantic closet drama, have hinted at the fact that plays like The Borderers are much more than juvenile imitations of Shakespearean or Elizabethan drama. My study of The Borderers has convinced me that the play deserves serious attention, and also that the Shakespearean elements in it may be found to throw light on Wordsworth's moral and intellectual concerns during The Borderers phase of his poetic development.

The introductory chapter seeks to bring into focus the various aspects of the play's relevance today. In the second chapter I have presented my study of the major characters. The approach in this chapter is rather traditional and different from the one applied in the fourth chapter where I have tried to analyse the play's themes and imagery. The third chapter deals with certain dramatic elements. I have also discussed some important scenes in it as providing a clue to the sources of
Wordsworth's success as a dramatist. The last chapter discusses the Shakespearean echoes, parallels and analogues in The Borderers. A close study of the earlier chapters, however, would show that Shakespearean analogues have throughout been kept in mind while analysing The Borderers.

In my documentation I have used the British MHRA style rather than the American PMLA. The academic tradition in India is closer to the British model than to the American. Taking advantage of the freedom granted by the MHRA Style-Book I have removed the notes from the bottom of the page and gathered them together at the end of each chapter.

I am grateful to my supervisor, Professor Maqbool Hasan Khan, for encouragement, help and guidance. I am also grateful to Professor Jafar Zaki, Chairman, Department of English, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh for encouragement. The staff of the Maulana Azad Library deserve thanks for help at various stages of my work.
CHAPTER - 1

INTRODUCTION

Wordsworth's tragedy, The Borderers, published in 1842, though written in 1796-97, cannot be dismissed merely as one of his juvenile creations. There is no doubt that the play has been regarded unfit for the stage. Wordsworth did send it to Covent Garden but it was rejected. Most of Wordsworth's critics have agreed with Wordsworth himself that the play's many blemishes - its lack of variety, confused characterisation and the obscurity of its theme - have rendered it unfit for the stage. Conscious of these defects Wordsworth denied any intention on his part to have written the play with a view to stage presentation. He wrote that he 'incurred no disappointment when the piece was judiciously returned as not calculated for the stage'.

Its unsuitability for the stage notwithstanding, the play has merits of several kinds. We may here recall the great enthusiasm it inspired in Coleridge when he considered the play 'absolutely wonderful':

Wordsworth has written a tragedy himself... His drama is absolutely wonderful. You know, I do not commonly speak in such abrupt and unmingled phrases - and therefore will the more readily believe me. -- There are in the pieces those profound touches of the human heart; which I find three or four times in 'The Robbers' of Schiller, and often in Shakespeare - but in Wordsworth there are no inequalities.

Mature and well-considered opinion has insisted that Coleridge's enthusiasm was not an indication of his youthful partiality for
the work of a friend; he did find in The Borderers things of lasting value. So before undertaking a deeper study of the play it is pertinent to discuss its manifold significance.

The play can be approached from several standpoints. First of all it is an important document in the understanding of the mind of a great poet. Bateson called it 'a concealed autobiography' and a 'catharsis' of the poet's emotions after his experience with the French Revolution. Initially Wordsworth was sympathetic towards the Revolution and supported the cause of the revolutionaries. His youthful enthusiasm can be traced in the oft-quotefd lines of The Prelude: 'Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive/ But to be young was very heaven...'. However, his faith was shaken when the events in France took a violent turn and when he saw his own country fighting with the champions of 'Liberty, Equality and Fraternity'. The fall of Robespierre in 1794 revived his hope for the time being to be followed by a darker period of 'philosophic despair'. It was at that time that the composition of The Borderers took place. As Wordsworth writes:

During my long residence in France, while the Revolution was rapidly advancing to its extremes of wickedness, I had frequent opportunities of being an eyewitness of this process, and it was while that knowledge was fresh upon my memory, that the Tragedy of The Borderers was composed.

Wordsworth's mental agony and disillusionment is not directly presented in the play yet there are lines which may be regarded as expressions of his denial of the positive role of the French
Revolution. The superficial optimism of the revolutionary ideology is rejected in the famous lines of the play:

The deeper malady is better hid;
The world is poisoned at the heart.

(II, 1035 - 36)

Evil and suffering are deeper in origin than the revolutionaries thought them to be. A bloody and violent revolution is not the solution to the problems of human suffering.

Whether his desertion of Annette Vallon and her daughter is the motivating factor in writing this tragedy is debatable. It can, however, be suggested that the salience given by Wordsworth to remorse and penitence in the play owes something to that source. Bernard Groom points out that Marmaduke's relationship with Herbert is symbolic of his own feelings towards the French girl. After deserting Herbert on a lonely moor, Marmaduke feels bewildered and confused as if on the verge of madness. When the revelation of Oswald's wicked motives comes, it is too late: 'I am the man/Abused, betrayed but how it matters not ...' He willingly submits himself to the sufferings of the life of a lonely wanderer and a recluse. Moreover, it has been suggested that Mortimer—the name given to Marmaduke in the earlier version—was used by Wordsworth as his pseudonym in one of his early poems. This coincidence has led some of Wordsworth's readers to speculate that part of Marmaduke's character, as that of Oswald's, represents some aspects of Wordsworth's personality. Like Oswald, there is in him that egotism and sceptical realism which
Wordsworth, too, had come to acquire through blind revolutionary enthusiasm and impious love which passion had forced him to embrace in France. Thus both Marmaduke and Oswald are to some extent projections of aspects of Wordsworth's own hidden self.

Here we may also note the impact that Godwin's doctrines exercised upon Wordsworth. While critics agree that the play bears an important relationship to the philosophical ideas of Godwin, there is virtually no agreement as to the nature and extent of this influence. There are some like Legouis, Campbell, Mueschke and de Selincourt who consider the play a refutation of Godwinian ideas. Legouis argues that the play records a conflict between Wordsworth's personal experience and the Godwinian thesis. He, in this sense, joins hand with de Selincourt when he says that though the play rejects the worth of Godwin's thought yet it provides no other alternative to take its place. Campbell and Mueschke, however, hold the view that the tragedy offers an affirmation as well as a rejection of the rationalistic doctrines of Godwin. Garrod, while differing with these critics, points out that the play is the work of a man who is 'out and out Godwinian.' He gives chronological evidence to show that Wordsworth was under Godwin's influence during that period. According to him, at the time of the composition of the play Wordsworth could not make himself completely free of that unhealthy influence which he discarded completely in The Prelude. Professor Meyer disagrees with all this when he says that Godwin has been misinterpreted and that the play shows the positive
aspects of Godwin's philosophy.\textsuperscript{15}

In the light of these contradictory approaches, a study of *The Borderers* throws significant light on the extent of Wordsworth's allegiance to Godwin. It is true that during this period of life Wordsworth was attracted to Godwin perhaps because he hoped to renew his faith in Nature and in the essential goodness of human heart which the latest phase of the Revolution and his act of desertion had destroyed. However, the purpose of the dramatist in the play seems to be to point out the dangers of relying on any one faculty - mind or heart. It is only an ideal combination of reason and passion that helps a man in the full development of his personality. The play reveals (as we shall see in our later chapters) that Wordsworth's faith in the natural goodness of human heart is stronger than ever and in this play he lays the basis of his new theories of Nature and man both of which were fully developed in the pages of *Lyrical Ballads* and other poems.

Apart from its autobiographical significance a study of the play helps us in understanding the earliest phase of Wordsworth's poetic career. A casual survey of the major works of this period, *'An Evening Walk'*; *Descriptive Sketches*; *'Guilt and Sorrow'* and *The Borderers*, will reveal their common concerns.

*The Borderers* as well as *'Guilt and Sorrow'* is a study in some problems of criminal psychology as Mary Moorman\textsuperscript{16} has pointed out. The Sailor in the poem has been presented as a victim of unjust social order. Driven to commit murder as a
result of the treatment given to him by society and government he is tortured with remorse. His crimes, instead of turning him into a criminal, become instrumental in enlarging his sympathies. He, therefore, ends his life by resigning himself to the fate of a murderer.

In *The Borderers*, however, Wordsworth presents a different type of villain. His criminal actions are not the result of an unjust society or government. The themes of crime and villainy are treated here in a much more complex manner than in 'Guilt and Sorrow'. In the Preface Wordsworth writes:

...The study of human nature suggests this awful truth, that, as in the trials to which life subjects us, sin and crime are apt to start from their very opposite qualities, so there are no limits to the hardening of the heart and the perversion of the understanding to which they may carry their slaves.

As we shall see in Chapter 2, Oswald's crime is not the product of an unjust social order but originates in something deeper in his own nature, nor is Marmaduke a victim of unjust social order: 'the deeper malady is better hid; / The world is poisoned at the heart'.

Themes of suffering, isolation, sin and remorse are some of the common concerns of Wordsworth's early poems. The delineation of suffering in his early poems is, however conventional and very close to the artificial manner of eighteenth century poetry. There is a touch there of self-consciousness in the description of suffering. Sentimentalism and literariness can be seen in the account of the suffering of the dying woman and her dying child-
ren in 'An Evening Walk'. Though the story occasionally bears a touch of pathos, the treatment throughout remains conventional:

All blind she wilders o'er the lightless heath,
Led by fear's cold wet hand, and dogged by death.

Similarly 'Guilt and Sorrow' is a poem of protest against poverty and war. Inspite of its purposive and propagandist intention it is remarkable for its controlled pathos and the story of the female vagrant acquires a pathetic touch. The traveller in the poem is a lonely figure. His inner isolation finds a fitting image outside for the landscape is as dreary as his heart.

Thus, these early poems provide the starting point for The Borderers, and the play is a link between Wordsworth's crude early treatment of emotion and the compassionate restraint of 'The Ruined Cottage'. 'Solitude' - The Eagle lives in Solitude', says Oswald in the play, but this spiritual isolation is the result of the disruption of the bond of love and sympathy. He fails to perceive the link that unites all the objects of Nature. Marmaduke, too, withdraws from the active world into a life of solitude and penance. Suffering is a permanent fact of human life and it must not be allowed to tarnish our view - an important theme in The Borderers.

The study of the play is important also for its anticipation of the later poetry of Wordsworth. Fausset rightly calls it 'a logical precursor of Lyrical Ballads'. The themes which Wordsworth developed in the poems of the period of beauty and
fear were also explored in the play. For example, Wordsworth's apprehension of the glory of childhood as 'apparelled in celestial light' can be traced to the description of the 'cherubic child' in the pilgrim's account of Idonea's childhood:

...he had seen his child  
A face (no cherub's face more beautiful)  
Revealed by lustre brought with it from heaven  
And it was you, dear Lady! (II, 714-17)

R.F. Storch thinks that Idonea belongs to the childhood idyl of Marmaduke's dreams, to that security of childhood which is linked with the grave. She thus becomes a fore-runner of Lucy who is linked with the idea of ultimate reality - death.

Wordsworth's ambivalence towards the substantiality of the phenomenal world is a very serious concern with the poet which came to be fully expressed in The Prelude. There are passages in The Borderers, too, which reveal the tension between existence and non-existence of the mighty world of eye and ear. Marmaduke presents his creator's doubts when he says:

Last night, when moved to lift the avenging steel!  
I did believe all things were shadows - yea  
Living or dead all things were bodiless. (III, 1213-15)

The Borderers is important not only because it anticipates the themes of Wordsworth's later poetry and recapitulates those of his earlier poems, but also because it has its own intrinsic thematic significance. Some of the major themes in the play will be discussed in Chapter 4. There we shall present our own
analysis of the themes with some help from Wordsworth's critics. At this stage we would like to show how one of the important recent critics of Wordsworth, Hartman, has analysed a major theme of the play in his own excellent way. By summarising his views here we are not anticipating the contents of our chapter on the themes; we are only trying to illustrate how The Borderers has been found to be thematically important by major critics.

Hartman thinks that the play reveals 'the perils of the soul in its passage towards individuation'. It shows the transition from 'morality based on "nature" to one based on autonomous self'\(^1\). Wordsworth seems to believe that an awareness of self comes through action, positive or negative. Even an evil action or the perpetration of a crime though resulting in the sufferings of an unusual sort and thus causing the soul's alienation from Nature as well as God is also important in so far as it makes oneself aware of one's hidden self. This is a truth made manifest in great works of art, especially tragedies.

King Lear in the beginning of the play is a creature of idiosyncracies and whimsicalities. However, the consciousness of his own folly comes only after he is reduced to the position of a madman and beggar. His suffering is thus sublime as it purifies his soul and makes him conscious not only of his own follies but also of the suffering of others. The Borderers carries this theme forward. Oswald believes that Marmaduke has a sort of pristine naivete which prevents him from perpetrating great actions. Oswald's attitude towards Marmaduke's 'innocence'
is not characterized by envy: Marmaduke possesses what he himself has irrevocably lost. On the contrary, his egotism feeds on his realization that Marmaduke is still not aware of the state of being he has known so well. This realization nurses his pride and leads him on to bring about Marmaduke's spiritual downfall.

The Borderers is a play of lasting value as it is not concerned merely with topical issues. The surface meaning of the play helps us in tracing and exploring deeper patterns in the play. Wordsworth was, as a matter of fact, a poet and not a philosopher. However, as he says in the Preface to the Lyrical Ballads: 'Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge, and in his poetry he is able to raise questions which have haunted sensitive men throughout the ages and which still haunt us today.

The play is concerned with such issues as the dominating influence of evil, the conflict between means and ends in combating and remedying social evils, and lastly, the ultimate victory of good over evil.

The destructive power of evil can be seen in the perversity of Oswald's nature, 'who uses a consciousness born in betrayal to betray others. Treachery becomes for him an ideological weapon...'. Except Oswald all other characters in the play are basically good yet they fall prey to the wicked designs of Oswald. The end of the play, however, shows that evil may be temporarily victorious but ultimately it is good that has the capacity to win over the wicked. It shows how goodness and benevolence are raised
against the pervasive power of evil. Moreover, Idonea, like Lucy, symbolizes the link between man and Nature. Throughout, the play implies Wordsworth's basic philosophy (which came to its full flowering in *The Prelude* phase) that a man can not commit a crime as long as he listens to his intuitive voice.

Another significant question that the play raises is perhaps a result of Wordsworth's experience with the French Revolution. The failure of the revolutionaries forced him to think about the importance of adopting right means to heal the ills of society. Is a bloody and violent revolution the only solution to the problem? Can murder and violence be justified by the ends? Roger Sharrock, too, has drawn our attention to this fact. He says:

How far can the supreme good as proposed by the reformers or revolutionaries be pursued by means that are in themselves evil, or in short, can individual human life or happiness be sacrificed for a larger social good, or for another more valuable human life? Or if there is indeed a supreme social good, is it not logical for any number of individual lives to be sacrificed in its furtherance.23

That *The Borderers* raises questions of such importance is guarantee enough that it deserves careful study and constant revision of our view about its value as part of the Wordsworth canon.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

In the Note to 1842 edition Wordsworth wrote, 'This Dramatic Piece, as noted in its title-page, was composed in 1795-6'. It has been established, however, that the play is the work of 1796-97 Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth (Oct. 24, 1796; Feb. 27, 1797; May 28, 1797) published in The Early Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, 1785-1805, ed. De Selincourt (Oxford, 1935), prove that the work was completed in 1797. It was revised on Nov. 20, 1797 to be sent to Covent Garden.

This traditional criticism of the play, however, can no longer be accepted. The play needs a revised outlook and discussion in the light of the fact that it was successfully staged by Murray Biggs and Members of Yale Theatre Program on 12-15 Nov. 1987. See Julie Carlson, 'A New Stage for Romantic Drama', Studies in Romanticism, Vol. 27 (Fall, 1988).

In spite of Wordsworth's disinterested attitude expressed in the lines, the fact remains that Wordsworth remained anxious about the fate of his work throughout his life. He, therefore, decided to publish it in his lifetime (1842). Wordsworth's attachment to this work may be because it marks the beginning of some of his favourite ideas, which were developed fully in the later works.


The Poetical Works, ed. de Selincourt (Oxford, 1940). All subsequent citations from the text of The Borderers are from this edition.


H. I'anson Fausset, The Lost Leader - A Study of Wordsworth (New York, 1966), p. 179. He describes in detail the autobiographical
significance of the play and quotes various passages from the text to prove the facts. (pp. 178-184).


17 Wordsworth in 1842 Notes to the play, op. cit., p. 342.

18 Fausset, op. cit., p. 181.

19 John Jones has divided the poetic career of Wordsworth into three periods- the earliest phase is related to the world of suffering, the second to that of beauty and fear and the third to that of duty. Egotistical Sublime, A History of Wordsworth's Imagination (London, 1960), p. 39.

20 R.F. Storch, op. cit., p. 349.


22 Ibid., p. 127.


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Before coming to analyse Wordsworth's art of characterisation in the play, we must first give some thought to Coleridge's eulogy for the play. He says:

There are in the pieces those profound touches of human heart, which I find three or four times in 'The Robbers' of Schiller, and often in Shakespeare - but in Wordsworth there are no inequalities.

So far as Coleridge's appreciation of Shakespeare is concerned, it cannot be denied that he is perfectly justified since Shakespeare is able to depict his characters with the deft hand of a psychologist. He certainly possesses that remarkable power of 'Negative Capability' which makes him present his characters with complete objectivity. Coleridge's praise, however, for Schiller's characters seems due more to his inordinate enthusiasm for the German playwright and derives perhaps more from his sympathy for Schiller's themes rather than from an objective assessment of his art of characterisation.

A study of the play, The Borderers, justifies Coleridge's remark to some extent. An important thing to remember in this connection is that Coleridge would not like Wordsworth's characters to be judged in terms of any absolute criterion of verisimilitude. Nor should we apply to The Borderers any tests derived from our conception of the play as a pseudo-Shakespearean tragedy. That there are apparent and latent echoes of the major
Shakespearean tragedies in Wordsworth's play cannot be denied. In fact we are going to make a detailed study of these echoes, analogues and parallelisms in one of our latter chapters. What, however, we are here interested in is the element of Wordsworth's originality in so far as characterisation is concerned. It is this originality that Coleridge perhaps had in mind when he referred to 'those profound touches of human heart' in The Borderers. What Coleridge probably had in mind, as we have just pointed out, is not the fact that the characters in the play are life-like or that they recall Shakespeare's originals but that, scattered here and there in the play are experiential insights that are very much of the Shakespearean order. The play, therefore, Coleridge implies, should be judged in terms of its rare experiential relevance. The idea may be elaborated by pointing out that 'those profound touches of human heart' may be brought into light by focussing our attention on the mutual relationship between the main dramatis personae - the relationship between Marmaduke and Oswald or that between Herbert and Idonea. This, however, requires some study in detail of the play's major characters. It is while studying characterisation in the play that the element of originality - hinted at in Coleridge's remark - would be brought to light.

I

Marmaduke is introduced to us in the very beginning of the play. Lacy and Wallace introduce him to us before we actually meet him. They belong to a band of borderers who are engaged in
their activities on the borders between England and Scotland, and Marmaduke is their chief. They are worried that their 'young chief' has developed friendship with a man of villainous nature (I, 5-10). The epithets used by Lacy and Wallace - 'much loved captain', 'confiding', 'openhearted' - for Marmaduke point to one important quality of Marmaduke's character - that as the leader of the band he is loved by all.

Marmaduke's brief meeting with his servant Wilfred also gives a clue to his nature. Wilfred also warns him about his friend. Marmaduke, however, is too noble to allow fear and suspicion to envelop his warmhearted love (I, 21-23).

He appears to be a sensitive soul who, inspite of his awareness of Herbert's 'crime', can not hear much against him. When Oswald calls him an 'Arch Imposter', he asks Oswald to treat the old man gently.

Some revelation of Marmaduke's character is also provided by the comments made by Herbert and Idonea. Herbert is not happy that his daughter has started loving Marmaduke. He considers Marmaduke a 'broken reed' and warns her that she should not rely on him for he is:

...a wild Freebooter,
Who here, upon the borders of the Tweed,
Doth prey alike on two distracted Countries,
Traitor to both. (I, 204-209)

Idonea, however, does not agree with her father's opinion: 'what ill tongue has wronged him with you'. She strongly defends
Marmaduke for in her opinion he is a man capable of both strong
courage in the face of adversity and gentleness. Outwardly he
appears to be gentle, filled with the love of human kindness but
he is capable of great actions too:

His face bespeaks
A deep and simple meekness: and the Soul,
which with the motion of virtuous act,
Flashes a look of terror upon guilt,
Is, after conflict, quiet as the ocean,
By a miraculous finger stilled at once. (I, 168-172)

Idonea's passionate plea for Marmaduke can not be regarded as
the expression of a lover's blind faith, because she is equally
obedient to her father too. Herbert's opinion, however seems to
be the outcome of his prejudiced mind.

Wordsworth's attempt to endow his protagonist with nobility
of mind and geniality of soul also makes it necessary for him to
combine these virtues with a certain rashness of judgement and a
trustfulness which borders on credulity. It was necessitated
perhaps by the Shakespearean analogues, a subject that we shall
consider in detail in a latter chapter. It may, however, be
pointed out here that Marmaduke's weaknesses are dramatically
necessary since without them he would not have been duped by
Oswald. Marmaduke is thus a sensitive idealist and in his
enthusiasm to promote justice he overlooks facts. As soon as
Oswald informs him about the evil motives of Herbert who wants to
sell his daughter to Lord Clifford, he feels a strong impulse to
punish the offender. He is very much excited after overhearing
the talk between Idonea and Herbert: 'this instant will we stop him'. On being advised by Oswald that he should not make haste but 'sift the matter carefully', he says:

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What! leave her thus,
A prey to a deceiver? - no - no - no -
Tis but a word and then - .
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(I, 251-53)

His haste in punishing the evil doer may be regarded as his 'tragic flaw' which Bradley finds in all the great tragic heroes of Shakespeare. Marmaduke suffers, like Macbeth, from a morbid excess of imagination and the play's villain fully exploits this weakness. The superior intelligence of Oswald finally brings about his inner disintegration and leaves him incapable of distinguishing appearance from reality.

From a slightly different standpoint, however, Marmaduke appears to be somehow right in his approach. His meeting with the beggar-woman provides enough grounds for reasonable doubt. When she tells him that Idonea is her daughter and she parted from her because the old man flattered her with the words, 'What harvest it would bring us both', Marmaduke cannot resist his anger: 'The cruel viper - poor devoted Maid/Now I do love thee'. When she further tells him that now the old man wants to sell her daughter to Lord Clifford, he cries out:

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Father! - to God himself we cannot give
A holier name; and, under such a mask,
To lead a Spirit, spotless as the blessed,
To that abhorred den of brutish vice:—
Oswald, the firm foundation of my life
Is going from under me; these strange discoveries -
Looked at from every point of fear or hope,
Duty, or love - involve, I feel, my ruin. (I, 543-50)
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Thus in Act I, Marmaduke is presented as a noble and virtuous man full of love for his fellow beings and with deep sympathy for the suffering humanity. His sensitive nature, however, makes him susceptible to Oswald and he falls a prey to him.

Act II opens with a soliloquy of Oswald, in which he is disclosing his thoughts about Marmaduke. Contemptuously he calls him a fool of feeling who can easily be swayed by a strong appeal to his senses. Only 'a few swelling phrases' and a 'flash of truth' are 'enough to dazzle and to blind' him.

Marmaduke is very much perplexed and confused over the truth revealed by the beggar-woman. With an overwhelming sense of the enormity of Herbert's villainy—'the earthly law/Measures not a crime like this'—he comes to regard himself as a divine agent of vengeance. He is led towards this conclusion also by Oswald's exhortations to perpetrate justice. Oswald, though contemptuous of Marmaduke's sensitive nature, condescends to acknowledge his superior gifts (II, 610-14).

It is difficult to say how much of his praise is politic flattery and to what extent is it an expression of genuine admiration. There is little doubt that Wordsworth is capable of remarkable psychological subtlety when psychological delineation borders on moral perception. Oswald's ambivalence in his dealings with Marmaduke is brought into sharp focus in the passage referred to where villainous manipulative skill operates on rare moral qualities.

Marmaduke, however, disclaims any exceptional moral gifts in
his own nature and thinks that his mode of genial sympathy must be common. 'Compassion', he says, is to 'our kind natural as life'. So far as he himself is concerned, he:

... loved

To be the friend and father of the oppressed
A comforter of sorrow. (II, 634-36)

He plans to lead Herbert to a half-ruined castle so as to expose this 'mock father' before Idonea.

We next meet Marmaduke in a dungeon. He is torn by a conflict - the conflict between a deliberate desire to murder Herbert and an instinctive sympathy for the old man. His inner convulsions find poignant expression in the lines:

These drowsy shiverings,
This mortal stupor which is creeping over me,
What do they mean? Were this my single body
Opposed to armies, not a nerve would tremble:
Why do I tremble now? - Is not the depth
Of this Man's crime beyond the reach of thought?
And yet, in plumbing the abyss for judgement,
Something I strike upon which turns my mind
Back on herself, I think, again - my breast
Concentres all the terror of the Universe:
I look at him and tremble like a child. (II, 777-87)

On the one hand, there is call for action, his commitment to do justice, for the actions of the old man have been devilish. These strong convictions are, however, beset with equally strong doubts arising out of an instinctive sympathy for the poor old man. The very sight of him would quail me more/Than twenty armies!

Notwithstanding the doubts Marmaduke is sure that the old man must not go unpunished. He recalls Herbert's invocation of
divine justice at the time of thunder and lightning and finds the old man's perfidy to be outrageous. He undergoes a moral and spiritual anguish at his 'audacious blasphemy'. How can a man, who is guilty of such an unnatural act talk about God and His justice. He is filled with a strong desire to kill him. 'The spirit of vengeance seemed to ride the air'.

However, inspite of his firm determination he shudders at the very thought of betraying a blind, old, lonely, sleeping man. There is some strong inner repulsion. He can not kill him for the place is filled with the 'strangest echoes'.

He feels a cord tied fast around his wrist drawn by the old man's dog. He trembles to see that the 'features of Idonea/Lurked in his face' (II, 986-90). Finally a star prevents him from committing the deed. All this suggests that he is in direct communion with the objects of Nature. This aspect of Marmaduke's character is something beyond the ken of a rationalist like Oswald for whom, as we shall later see, egotistical self-regard is the only medium through which reality could be apprehended. Throughout the play Wordsworth presents a sharp contrast between Marmaduke and Oswald as moral beings. For Oswald there is nothing beyond the self. He does not conceive the world as an organic moral order. Self-regarding reason has brought about a petrification of imaginative sympathies in him. Marmaduke, on the other hand, feels a loving regard for the objects of Nature and they speak to him, through the language of images and symbols, of a latent moral order in the universe and of the link that exists
between the phenomenal world of Nature and the mind of man.

Marmaduke's meeting with Lacy and Wallace further reveals his thoughtful mind. They inform him of the restoration of the rights of those whose rights in these 'long commotions, have been seized'. Now it is their duty 'to stand upon [their] guards, and with [their] swords/Defend the innocent'. Marmaduke, disturbed as he is by his inability to punish the guilty, speaks the moral to Lacy:

Lacy! we look
But at the surface of things; we hear
Of towns in flames, fields ravaged, young and old
Driven out in troops to want and nakedness;
Then grasp our swords and rush upon a cure
That flatter us, because it asks not thought:
The deeper malady is better hid;
The world is poisoned at the heart. (II, 1029-36)

These lines coming from the tortured soul of a sensitive idealist acquire a universal sweep and significance. They also reflect Marmaduke's brooding and philosophising nature. Charles J. Smith suggests that this aspect of Marmaduke's nature has originated in Wordsworth's inability to distinguish between a tragedy of passion and that of contemplation. According to him, Othello is the real prototype of Marmaduke. Wordsworth, however, allows his protagonist to fuse temporarily into the Hamlet type. This, he thinks is a sign of his failure. Such a view, however, is difficult to accept. Wordsworth may have been unconsciously influenced by elements in Shakespearean drama, and his debt to Shakespeare, as we shall later see, was certainly deep, yet in this crucial passage he was driving more from his own keen
personal insight into experience than from analogous situations in Shakespeare.

It is necessary, however, to point out that Marmaduke's perception about the deeper malady being hid acquires, in its context, a significant ironic force. The protagonist has come to realize that the attempts made by his band of the borderers to establish social justice (a la revolutionaries in France) are bound to fail since evil is more deeply ingrained in human nature than was perceived by him and the members of his band. Marmaduke is obviously thinking of the supposedly evil acts of Herbert. This, he imagines, is the lowest point to which human nature can degenerate, and such evil cannot be removed by the means employed by simple-minded revolutionaries. The irony lies in the fact that while speaking these lines Marmaduke is totally unaware of Oswald's perfidy - something that overshadows the imaginary crimes of Herbert. The world indeed is poisoned at the heart though the idealistic Marmaduke is blissfully unaware of it.

He narrates the whole story to Lacy and Wallace and feels relieved when everyone agrees that such a man must be punished.

In Act III Marmaduke emerges as a very different man. The wavering attitude, the mental and spiritual anguish give place to a firm and determined outlook. He is now no longer interested in getting any more proofs. Herbert's guilt is so apparent that it hardly needs any proof: 'Fool was I to dream/ It ever could be otherwise'. He feels disgusted when Oswald tells him that the whole plan was devised by Herbert with the consent of Idonea. He
now firmly believes that doubts about Herbert's 'crime' were an indication of his weakness and they are all now resolved. He now imagines himself to be a hard-hearted 'realist' (III, 1213-20). He says that he was a fool to believe in the essential goodness of human heart. He now realizes (ironically enough) that virtues like love, sympathy and morality are all vain. Convinced of the need to sacrifice all tender feelings for the sake of a life of determined action, Marmaduke vows to wreck vengeance on Herbert (III, 1240-44). In the next scene Marmaduke is shown with Herbert on a lonely moor. He tries to overcome his passionate approach with a strong sense of determination. The very thought of Idonea fills him with a strong sense of disgust and dislike (III, 1308-12). The violence of imagery in this passage is suggestive of the complex of love-hate relationship between him and Idonea and Herbert. Do whatever he can, he can not remove the thought of Idonea from his mind. The result is not only emotional confusion but also moral anarchy. Marmaduke becomes a focal point for the expression of a view of life that at the time of its writing, was perhaps that of its author also:

I am cut off from man;
No more shall I be man - no more shall I
Have human feeling! (III, 1327-29)

Ultimately he decides to leave the old man on that solitary moor, where if a man dies, his spirit 'might have fine room to ramble'. The old man's passionate appeals even in the name of God do not have any effect upon Marmaduke: 'If he were innocent -
then he would tremble/And be disturbed, as I am'. If he is innocent God will save him but it is his duty to commit the old man to his 'final ordeal'. He, therefore, leaves him there at the mercy of God.

After this act of desertion Marmaduke is bewildered and confused. Perhaps the pangs of his guilty conscience have started afflicting his soul. Oswald's persistent efforts to cheer him up fail and he becomes gloomy and morbid. The weight of time is now very heavy on him. His short meeting with Idonea comes as a shock to him. Idonea's passionate words convince him of her innocence.

Act IV is a sort of revelation or anagnorisis to Marmaduke. Oswald, thinking that Marmaduke had killed Herbert, narrates his own past. He tells him how in his youth he was betrayed by the crew of a ship in which he was on a voyage to abandon the innocent captain on a lonely island. Marmaduke, unable to realize that he, too, has committed a similar crime, says: 'A man by man cast off/Left without burial'. Like Oswald it is now the turn of Marmaduke to console him: 'Banish the thought, crush it and be at peace'. Very confidently he says that he must have looked for proofs as he has done. His words, however, are ironic as he himself had not cared for proofs and was thus beguiled by Oswald. Gradually, however, as Oswald goes on disclosing his motives, Marmaduke begins to feel baffled.

Marmaduke's final moment of shocked and baffled awareness comes when Oswald utters the terrible words: 'Herbert is
innocent'. He now realizes his presumption in undertaking to do what his better instincts had warned him against. The irony of the situation is now fully revealed to him: the moment of his disintegration has come. With still some hope of retrieval he hurriedly leaves the stage to undo what he has so ignorantly done.

In Act V, Marmaduke is a man full of remorse and penitence. His mind is obsessed with the thought of his crime. It appears as if 'his senses play him false'. His distracted utterances show the anguish of his soul. He feels his limbs 'sinking' when he comes to know of Herbert's death from Eldred.

The agony of his soul finds powerful expression when he tells Idonea that a man so 'meek and unoffending — / Helpless and harmless as a babe' was killed by a man who was 'solemnly dedicated' to the 'world's protection'. When Idonea unknowingly curses the murderer, he says: 'My voice was silent, but my heart hath joined thee'. Idonea requests him for protection but he pathetically exclaims:

I am accurst:
All nature curses me, and in my heart
Thy curse is fixed. (V, 2173-75)

Marmaduke reveals the whole truth to Idonea how he had been beguiled by Oswald. 'Through me, through me/Thy father perished'.

It is important to note, however, that Marmaduke is too noble-hearted to blame anyone but himself for what he had been led to do. This is surprising since Wordsworth's model here was
**Othello.** No doubt, in Shakespeare's play too, the protagonist's final act is suicide - an indication of his firm belief that the responsibility for Desdemona's murder lies with him. However, in his moment of recognition, Othello does turn to Iago and, in words that express his bafflement, asks why Iago 'snared' his soul in the way he did. Marmaduke in a similar situation succeeds in focussing our attention only on his intense feeling of remorse.5

He now shows a calm fortitude. He realizes that in endurance alone lies a man's strength. He leaves the responsibility of Idonea on Lacy and Wallace, and stoically adopts the course of life of a lonely wanderer.

Thus in the character of Marmaduke, Wordsworth portrays a tortured soul, a sensitive idealist, passing through spiritual and moral anguish but at last subduing it with strong courage and fortitude. It is difficult to agree with those critics who believe that Marmaduke's character is not adequately idealized. It has been suggested that his proneness to fantasy and his naive idealism produce an effect of feebleness and, consequently, his suffering fails to achieve the necessary cathartic effect. He also gives the impression of being an easy dupe since he comes to believe the story of Idonea's corruption rather too readily.6 Our contention is that similar charges of credulousness and naivety may also be brought forward against Othello. Marmaduke, indeed, is not as great a character as Othello but Wordsworth does succeed in making him credible enough to the extent that we do
appreciate and sympathise with his central act of spiritual and intellectual presumption in undertaking to carry out justice in a world where evil is so deeply ingrained that it has poisoned life at the very source. We can also say that though in the early acts Marmaduke does appear to be a rather impulsive idealist, filled with naive reformative enthusiasm, yet through his spiritual crisis he achieves a tragic magnitude which in no case fails to impress us with its spectacle of a tortured soul engaged in an endless act of expiation.

II

Oswald stands sharply contrasted with Marmaduke. In the opening lines while paying rich tributes to their leader, Lacy and Wallace introduce Oswald too. According to them he is a man of 'crooked ways, /From whose perverted soul can come no good'. They further reveal that nobody loves Oswald, who has turned into a misanthrope owing to 'some dark deed' to which his 'passion drove him' during his voyage upon the midland sea.

A few lines later, Wilfred warns Marmaduke to remain cautious of this 'stranger' Oswald. Since Oswald is a proud man, says Wilfred, he never appreciates the idea of being obliged to anyone. Marmaduke has saved his life and, therefore, he must hate him secretly:

...gratitude's a heavy burden
To a proud Soul - Nobody loves this Oswald -
Yourself, you do not love him. (I, 30-32)

Marmaduke, however, contradicts him and praises Oswald for his
courage and strong feelings.

One thing that emerges from all this is that Oswald is not a lovable character. We have already seen Lacy and Wallace expressing their dislike of Oswald, now Wilfred also expresses strong aversion for him. Whatever other qualities he might have he does not possess that geniality of soul which would strike a sympathetic chord in others.

Just after this Oswald enters with a bunch of flowers including the 'wild rose, the poppy and the nightshade'. Marmaduke asks 'which is your favourite, Oswald?' Oswald's choice of a plant, that is 'strong to destroy and strong to heal', reflects his strong mental powers and his capability for action. He is 'overconfident of his ability to mould Marmaduke to his purpose' and 'proud of his proven powers'.

Oswald, cool and calculating, appears to have been conceived in terms remote from the ordinary villains of melodrama. He is calculating so that first he tries to know the weaknesses and passions of his opponent, and then works accordingly. Knowing full well Marmaduke's love for Idonea and his sympathy for her old father, he moves cleverly according to his plans. He is so deft in his handling of Marmaduke that not for a moment does any doubt stir in the mind of his victim. He instigates Marmaduke against Herbert by suggestions that Herbert is a jealous father who cannot tolerate that his daughter should love any person other than himself. Further, he abuses Idonea's trust as he wants to sell her to the lustful arms of the 'cold voluptuary',
Lord Clifford. Like Iago, he manipulates things according to his purposes. He knows fully well the sensitive idealist in Marmaduke and to convince him of Herbert's guilt, he muses:

Strange pleasures,
Do we poor mortals cater for ourselves!
To see him thus provoke her tenderness
With tales of weakness and infirmity!
I'd wager on his life for twenty years. (I, 242-46)

He bribes a beggar-woman (I, 364-69) to act as an instrument in his plot against Marmaduke. His handling of the beggar-woman shows his cunning and clever nature. When initially Marmaduke does not feel any interest in her 'babbling gossip', Oswald asks her to stop it. However, as soon as she comes to the point he asks cleverly: 'well but softly,/ Who is it that has wronged you?' Very cleverly he elicits the beggar-woman's story and confirms his own insinuations about Herbert's crime.

It may, however, be pointed out here that in his delineation of Oswald as an 'intellectual villain', Wordsworth has not always succeeded in rising above the level of mere theatricality and melodrama. As we have implied everywhere in this discussion of Oswald's character, Wordsworth was trying to create in Oswald a villain who, rising above stagy devices, succeeds in wounding the spirit of the protagonist. Among other things, The Borderers is also one person's attempt to undermine the moral and spiritual foundations of another person's consciousness. Wordsworth's theme in the play is intensely spiritual in character. To use, therefore, the devices of melodrama in order to induce belief in
Marmaduke is suggestive of Wordsworth's failure in maintaining the high intellectual level of his work. Moreover, it also takes away the tragic solemnity of the play since it leads to a situation where we begin to question if the protagonist is really a reasonably intelligent person.

In Act II Wordsworth presents a sharp contrast between Oswald and Marmaduke. The contrast is essentially theoretical and relates to two contradictory approaches to life. On the one hand, there is Oswald who stands for cold reason and is cool and calculating. On the other, we have Marmaduke who stands for geniality and strong feelings. The contrast between Oswald and Marmaduke may have been conceived in terms of the contrast between lago and Othello. Oswald denies his link with the human world and believes in reason. However, there is an undercurrent of feeling in Oswald too, though it is purely negative feeling. He is motivated by hatred and contempt:

The insult bred
More of contempt than hatred; both are flown;
That either ever existed is my shame:
'T was a dull spark - a most unnatural fire
That died the moment the air breathed upon it.

(II, 553-57)

His hatred is all-pervasive. He hates mankind and above all he hates himself. What is lacking in Oswald is not feeling but feeling of love. Oswald thus becomes an 'embodiment of the destructive energies' and the darker side of human nature. He 'omits the idea of love without which the Wordsworthian position becomes anarchic.'
His opinion about the poor country folk, 'tribe of vulgar wretches', and 'Men who are little given to sift and weigh', reflects his degenerate thinking about those, who imbibe the essential feelings and virtues of their heart from the objects of Nature. Like Oswald they cannot exercise reason but they do respect that bond which unites all the objects of Nature. Oswald, however, is unable to appreciate this quality.

In the Dungeon Scene, Oswald's qualities as a villain fully come out. As his main purpose is to persuade Marmaduke to adopt a course which in reality is sin and crime, he does not want that any sympathetic feelings should be roused in Marmaduke. As soon as Marmaduke begins to pity Herbert he exclaims, 'he is growing pitiful' and plays another trick to nullify the effect. He is a good strategist and changes his policy according to the situation. Throughout this interaction between the two we notice that Oswald's constant appeal is to Marmaduke's nobler instincts for executing justice. He taunts Marmaduke and tries to convince him of the need to punish Herbert by giving an exaggerated account of his supposed 'misdeeds'.

Oswald is a pure rationalist whom even the meek and humble figure of Herbert does not move to pity:

We kill a worn out horse, and who but women
Sigh at the deed? Hew down a withered tree,
And none look grave but dotards. (II, 927-29)

It may be noted that Oswald represents the intellectual position of Godwin's rationalistic and anarchist philosophy.
Wordsworth rejects this intellectual stance just as Shakespeare had rejected the Machiavellian standpoint of Iago and the proto-Hobbesian outlook of Edmund. We feel a natural revulsion for Oswald's cool rationalism as soon as he has stated it. It is a denial of all human and humane values.

In his soliloquy Oswald analyses the character of Marmaduke. For him, Marmaduke is a romantic character who lives in the world of dreams and illusions. He expresses his determination that he would demolish the idealistic and romantic creed of Marmaduke and bring him down to the realities of life, or in Oswald's words, 'the unpretending ground we mortals tread' (II, 930-35). Oswald's characterisation of Marmaduke highlights the irony of his own life. Oswald cannot perceive that Marmaduke is not a prisoner of illusion. Values to which Marmaduke is attached are the most cherished values of life - love, sympathy and fellowship. Thus it is Oswald himself who is a prisoner of illusions since he regards his cynicism and nihilism as reality.  

Oswald knows where to strike and when, and it is because of this capability that he can easily win over the heart of others. Marmaduke narrates the whole story before Lacy and Wallace. When both of them feel sorry for the old man, Oswald very reasonably puts forward the whole case. First he mocks at them for their cowardly attitude, 'Are we Men/Dr own we baby spirits?' After this through his high-sounding words he exercises a strong influence upon their minds. Justice must be perpetrated, says he, according to the enormity of the crime. The verdict must not be influenced
by any other consideration like that of age or outward appearance particularly when the culprit is using the infirmities of old age as a 'sanctuary' to save himself from punishment: 'Justice / Admitting no resistance, bends alike / The feeble and the strong (II,1074-94).

The arguments he puts forward are, no doubt, idealistic and altruistic but throughout his aim is to exercise a strong influence on the mind of the idealistic victim. Hearing his words Lacy exclaims: 'By Heaven! his words are reason!' and herein lies the success of Oswald as a villain.

In Act III Oswald is seen revealing his thoughts. He discusses the use of passion and proof in achieving his end - to induce belief in Marmaduke. He must not adopt the path of presenting proofs and details about persons, places and things: 'Passion, then/Shall be a unit for us'. It is only by playing upon his passions that Oswald can gain control over Marmaduke. He would inflame the passions of Marmaduke to such an extent that the latter would not need any proof. A creature of pure passions Marmaduke would destroy Herbert out of intense and irrepressible hatred and rue it after throughout his life. Thus would Oswald achieve his purpose.

Revealing, in the manner of a doctrinaire Elizabethan villain, his world-view and mentality, Oswald begins to talk about suffering. He condemns the moralists who preach that misery ennobles heart and soul. Oswald's attitude towards suffering shows his attitude towards life itself:
A whipping to the Moralists who preach
That misery is a sacred thing; for me,
I know no cheaper engine to degrade a man,
Nor any half so sure. (III, 1959-62)

Lacy and Wallace, (as they come to know about the wicked designs of Oswald), while analysing the causes of Oswald's malignity, give us an idea of the inner workings of his mind. Their indictment of Oswald reminds us of Iago's character: Hungry for power, he would destroy where he can not govern. Lacy, however, suggests that they need not hunt for motives because he is a man that would not shirk from any crime. He 'racks not human law' and when the 'name of God is uttered, a sudden blankness overspreads his face'. What Lacy goes on to say about 'loveless' natures, guides us to Wordsworth's own analysis of Oswald's character in the preface.¹²

We next meet Oswald exulting and congratulating Marmaduke. He is under the impression that Marmaduke has killed Herbert: 'You have thrown off a tyranny/That lived but in the torpid acquiescence/Of our emasculated souls'. Since Oswald's only aim is to 'repudiate conscientious scruple, pity and remorse, and act as the circumstance and reason only direct'¹³ he tells him:

You have obeyed the only law that sense
Submits to recognise; the immediate law,
From the clear light of circumstances, flashed
Upon an independent Intellect. (III, 1493-96)

He exhorts him to take refuge in action as great actions lead us to fortitude: 'Fortitude is the child of enterprise'. He says:
Action is transitory — a step, a blow,
The motion of a muscle — this way of that —
'Tis done, and in the after-vacancy
We wonder at ourselves like men betrayed:
Suffering is permanent, obscure and dark,
And shares the nature of infinity. (III, 1539-44)

His attitude to suffering presented here is very different from
that which he had expressed previously. This shows that Oswald
can practise guile and duplicity. What he preaches here is very
different from what he himself thinks and acts upon. He
consolcs Marmaduke with the thought that he had not bidden
eternal 'Farewell to unmingled joy' for all these are 'toys of
fools'. The chief pleasure lies in the renunciation of these
superficial pleasures. The wise live in the 'entire forgetfulness
of pain'. The essence of Oswald's character is presented in the
following lines:

Compassion! — pity! — pride can do without them;
And what if you should never know them more! —
He is a puny soul who feeling pain,
Finds ease because another feels it too.
If e'er I open out this heart of mine
It shall be for a nobler end — to teach
And not to purchase piling sympathy. (III, 1553-59)

A man need not feel remorse for his acts. When we do not
repent 'if a cat had sneezed' or 'a leaf had fallen', then why
repent for a man 'whose very shadow gnaws us to the vitals'.
Since the old man's crimes are against nature, says Oswald, they
need not seek the permission of the band in punishing him: 'if a
snake/Crawl from beneath our feet we do not ask/ A licence to
destroy him'.
Oswald's short meeting with Idonea further highlights the hypocrisy of Oswald. Idonea and Herbert consider him their friend but he belies the trust of all. We may here quote Hartman who perceptively remarks:

What is great and strong in Oswald is certainly related to his hatred of nature, of natural law and natural piety. He keeps his intellect independent of all but present circumstance and mocks those healthy 'prejudices' Burke defended against the revolutionary mentality. ... In isolating Marmaduke from all beings, from Idonea, from his loyal band of borderers, Oswald is hastening a separation which might allow a purely rational, autonomous mode of life. He acts on Marmaduke as Mephistophelies, that necessary devil, acts on Faust. 14

In Act IV, revelation of the real motives of Oswald takes place. Without any 'preface' he tells Marmaduke how in his early life he was an object of love for all and a 'darling of all hearts'. It was during a voyage that the crew of the ship hatched a 'foul conspiracy' against his honour. To get rid of the 'tyrannic master' they used Oswald as their instrument. He was beguiled by them in causing the death of an innocent man by exposing him on a 'naked spot' at the mercy of 'a swarm of minute creatures'. 'Not one of them could help him while alive,/Or mourn him dead'.

Thus betrayed into that crime, he found his powers 'shrank' from him. He 'lay passive as a dormouse in mid winter'. Afterwards he combined 'sceptical analysis with restless actions to keep down the powerful but "silent and progressive" feelings associated with his guilt.'15 Wherever he turned he beheld a 'slavery compared to which the dungeon/And clanking chains are
perfect liberty'.

Often, Oswald continues, he wandered alone amidst the objects of nature 'through woods of gloomy cedar'. Amid these 'lonely wanderings' he realized how the mighty objects of Nature 'impress their form/To elevate our intellectual being'. He no longer cared for 'sickly food of popular applause'. On the contrary, he realized that 'obloquy' was a surer test of 'merit'.

After this period of moral crisis he threw off the soft chains of the world. He was no longer in harmony with the bonds of Nature and customs of society. He became alienated — alienated from man and Nature. He discarded 'false Shame' and despised 'spurious Fame'. Morality was now meaningless to him: 'Priests might spin/ Their veil, but not for me'. His only aim was the 'enlargement of man's intellectual empire'. When he saw in Marmaduke an image of his own youthful self, he tried to bring him down to his own level.

Critics like de Selincourt have criticized Wordsworth's portrayal of Oswald on the ground that he was more interested in Oswald's philosophy than in his character. At one time the dramatist presents his philosophy and at other, his character. He lacks the dramatic skill to combine these two. We are, therefore, unable to understand how far Oswald himself accepts his philosophy.16

We may here agree with Professor Meyer who says that these two motives are no doubt diametrically opposed to each other. 'Wordsworth however deliberately split Oswald's personality,
cursed him with ambivalence and kept him in constant struggle in order to portray the evil consequences of following the dictates of the secondary power called reason'.

Having confided in Marmaduke, and after revealing to him the source of his malignant nature, Oswald sees no reason why he should still hide the fact of his perfidy. He plainly tells him that Herbert was innocent. He had so far concealed the fact because 'the seed must lie/ Hid in the earth or there can be no harvest' for 'tis Nature's law.'

In Act V, we see little of Oswald. He is content that his goal is reached: 'my master shall become/ A shadow of myself - made by myself'. He advises Marmaduke to overcome his remorse as they should now move to Palestine, 'a paltry field for action'. As the borderers seize him to kill he scornfully but exultingly says:

If I pass beneath a rock
And shout, and, with the echo of my voice,
Bring down a heap of rubbish and it crush me,
I die without dishonour. Famished, starved,
A Fool and Coward blended to my wish! (V, 2282-86)

Thus in the character of Oswald, Wordsworth has powerfully presented remarkable grandeur of an 'intellectual villain' and, as the play ends, we begin to feel that he is 'strong to overturn, strong also to build up'.

III

We meet Idonea in Act I when she enters leading her blind father. From the very beginning she appears to be a dutiful,
obedient daughter, careful of her father's needs and comforts. She is anxious about his poor health. She holds herself responsible for this poor condition of Herbert: 'that you are thus the fault is mine'. Again and again she recalls those tormenting experiences when her father had lost his eyes and holds herself responsible for his ruin.

Her love for Marmaduke, however, is not less. When Herbert cautions her against Marmaduke, she asks 'Is he not strong? Is he not valiant?' She assures him that Marmaduke is a man possessing all virtues necessary to be called an ideal man (I, 165-73). The bold manner in which she defends Marmaduke against the charges of Herbert, shows that she is mentally and morally strong. Her reply to Herbert's request (in Act I, 315-20) to be accompanied by some guard shows that she possesses extraordinary courage and can withstand all difficulties and misfortunes.

In Act II, Idonea is seen with a group of pilgrims in a wood. She is exultant hearing the news of the restoration of her father's right. She is happy that she has been with her father till now and swears not to part from him in his misfortune. She would be with him 'through every change of misfortune' and make 'every sacrifice his peace requires'.

It may be noted that in Wordsworth's delineation of Idonea's character, there is no element of inner conflict. Her choice between filial obligation and womanly aspirations is clear cut. Her old and helpless father commands her entire duty and she is willing to sacrifice her love for the sake of her duty. In Act
III, she meets Marmaduke after his act of desertion. Having no idea of his changed attitude, she attributes it to her negligence of him and pleads for forgiveness. She frankly admits that she could not leave her father when he needed her most. 'Twice had he been to me a father, twice/ Had given me breath'. So, as a daughter, she asks Marmaduke, if it would not have been improper to leave him in such a helpless state. She would ideally have wanted to strike a balance between her duty as a daughter and her hopes as a woman. However, she had to sacrifice her wishes and hopes in order to fulfil her obligations as a daughter(III,1613-18). This absence of inner conflict is intended to avoid focussing attention on a potential source of interest in the play. It is also intended to motivate Marmaduke's misunderstanding of Idonea.

Apart from this Idonea wins our admiration by her inward grace, dignity and charm. Her charity and love are reflected in the following lines:

The storm beats hard - Mercy for poor and rich,  
Whose heads are shelterless in such a night!  
(IV, 1882-83)

When Eleanor tells her about the injustice done to her husband Eldred, she asks her not to worry for she has a 'noble Friend/ First among the youths of knightly breeding', who 'lives but to protect the weak or injured'. Hardly does she realize the irony of her statement. Her moment of anguished and horrified enlightenment comes when Marmaduke reveals the truth and, as she
listens to him, she sinks senseless.

In conclusion, it can be said that Idonea is a remarkable creation of Wordsworth's imagination, though modelled, as we shall later see, on Shakespeare's tragic heroines. Her ardent love for her father, the nobility and simplicity of her character, her faithfulness and devotion to Marmaduke combined with her readiness to sacrifice her love at the altar of filial affection, and, finally, the extraordinary charm of her femininity which stands her in good stead in the final moment of crisis - all these qualities lend to her character a distinctness that would remain so even in a better dramatic composition than *The Borderers*.

IV

An aged, blind, lonely figure, a specimen of suffering humanity, is a frequent figure in Wordsworth's poetry. The old Baron Herbert who appears as a symbol of 'wronged Innocence' reminds us of the blind beggar and the ghostly soldier of *The Prelude*, the old man of 'Resolution and Independence', and the old man of 'Animal Tranquility and Decay'.

It would be interesting to speculate about the causes - psychological and other - of the appearance of such a figure in Wordsworth's poetry. It may be noted that most such old men are specimens of suffering humanity. Wordsworth's imagination seems to have discovered in the patient suffering of his poor, old men a symbol of man's struggling spirit that would not be dominated by adversity. Be that as it may, the fact that Wordsworth's
imagination was fascinated by such a figure makes Herbert an interesting character in *The Borderers*.

When we meet Herbert in Act I he appears to be a loving father, careful of the needs and comforts of his daughter Idonea. He is worried about her future and asks, 'But when thy Father must lie down and die,/ How wilt thou stand alone?' He is afraid that her daughter has started loving Marmaduke, 'a wild freebooter'.

Old and weak he is, but not devoid of mental strength. He still possesses a strong heart and mind. Though tired of his long journey, he is ready to go with Idonea: 'I have measured many a league' and now 'I will not play here sluggard'.

In Act II we get another impression of the strength of his parental affection, when he is talking to Marmaduke.

Oh! but you are young;  
Over your head twice twenty years must roll,  
With all their natural weight of sorrow and pain,  
Ere can be known to you how much a Father  
May love his child.  

(II, 819-23)

The image of Herbert - a suffering, old man - accompanied by his young innocent daughter going long journeys on foot brings to Wordsworth's mind memories of the last act of *King Lear* when the old King is about to accompany his loving daughter to prison. It is important to remember here that Wordsworth is not just being imitative. The situation occasioned by the Shakespearean echoes is much more complex and poetic than would appear at first sight. The image of Herbert and Idonea is fused in the reader's mind.
with that of the suffering Lear and Cordelia. The Shakespearean context comes to enrich the situation in Wordsworth's play. Moreover, it is also worthwhile to note that the passage has a typical Wordsworthian ring. We recall Herbert in terms of passages like the following:

Troops of armed men,  
Met in the roads, would bless us; little children,  
Rushing along in the full tide of play,  
Stood silent as we passed them! I have heard  
The boisterous carman, in the miry road,  
Check his loud whip and hail us with mild voice,  
And speak with milder voice to his poor beasts.  

(III, 1330-36)

Herbert is a religious-minded man with firm faith in God. He strongly believes that God protects the innocent and helpless and punishes the evil doer. He recalls how in his misfortunes he never lost faith in God and 'remembering Him who feeds/ The Pelican and Ostrich of the desert' he did not loose courage: 'I looked up to Heaven/ and did not want glimmerings of quiet hope'.

Thus, apparently meek and humble, his face 'doth play tricks with them that look at it', as Oswald acknowledges in one of his soliloquies. Some of the pathos of Herbert's figure is derived from biblical associations that surround him. He has greater affinity with the suffering Job than with figures out of Greek tragedy. The proximity with Lear should not lead us to criticise Wordsworth for creating an entirely passive figure in Herbert. The Borderers is not the tragedy of Herbert but of Marmaduke. So, Marmaduke is the tragic figure in the play and not Herbert. The passivity of Herbert and Idonea may be compared with that of
Desdemona in *Othello*. There is no doubt that like Desdemona, Herbert is pathetic rather than tragic but there is equally little doubt that as a pathetic figure he fits into the tragic scheme of the play. The pathos created by his suffering, his lonely figure and agonised cries, add to the tragic horror of Marmaduke's act of desertion and his pathetic death is the irrevocable end to which Marmaduke's intellectual presumption, his tragic error, brings him to suffer endless pangs of remorse.

Among the few remaining characters in the play there is the beggar-woman whom Oswald uses as his tool in his evil design. She succumbs to Oswald's temptations and thus plays a large part in his conspiracy against Marmaduke. It was mainly because of her revelations that Marmaduke was convinced of Herbert's guilt. Inspite of her importance in the plot, she can hardly be described as an independent entity. In portraying her, Wordsworth makes good use of his own knowledge of the life of the rural people:

...if you knew
What life is this of ours, how sleep will master
The weary worn, - you gentlefolk have got
Warm chambers to your wish. (I, 418-21)

She appears to be helpless and ignorant but familiar with the ways of wild things like poor Martha Ray in 'The Thorn'.

She, however, is good at heart. As soon as she comes to know about Oswald's sinister plans, she repents: 'Indeed we meant no harm'. It seems that she presented false evidence against Herbert.
believing that only thus could Idonea be saved. Later on she reveals everything to Idonea.

It would, therefore, be correct to say that she is more a dupe than a willing agent of Oswald in his plot. Presented, on the whole, sympathetically, the beggar-woman is one more of Wordsworth's studies in humble poverty. She recalls the soldier's widow in 'An Evening Walk' and a few other similar characters in Wordsworth's poems. Drawn to take part in Oswald's conspiracy partly by poverty and partly by a misunderstanding of Oswald's motives, she presents in her humble way some contrast to the play's villain. She is a specimen of the humblest and lowest strata of society and yet in her simplicity and essential goodness she is morally superior to him who, though exalted in the social hierarchy, is yet nothing but an embodiment of moral degeneration and intellectual corruption. She participates, Emilia-like, in the exposure of the villain but, it must be admitted, that, again like Emilia, she exists only on the fringe of the villain's intellectual and moral world: she can not comprehend the world in which she is made to participate.

There is hardly anything to be said about the other characters. They are too minor to deserve separate treatment. Lacy, Wallace and Lennox are devoted to their leader and serve to highlight the noble qualities of Marmaduke. Their attitude to Oswald helps the reader in shaping his response to the villain. They represent simple-minded goodness, and their reactions to Oswald focus attention on the sense of unease that essential.
goodness feels in the presence of intellectual subtlety not
guided by moral rectitude. Wilfred is a study in old world
loyalty of the servant towards his master. The old shepherd and
his wife are traditional characters, stock figures not
individualised.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

Letter to Josiah Cottle, 8 June, 1797. See Collected Letters of

Marmaduke means 'sea-leader' in Anglo-Saxon.

C.J. Smith, 'The Effect of Shakespeare's Influence on Wordsworth's

R.F. Storch in his essay, 'Wordsworth's The Borderers: The Poet
as Anthropologist', ELH XXXVI (1969), pp. 340-60, has studied
in detail the relationship among Marmaduke, Idonea and Herbert.

Campbell and Mueschke while pointing out the importance of
remorse in the article 'The Borderers : A Document in the History
of Wordsworth's Aesthetic Development' say, 'Marmaduke's
tragedy lies not so much in the hideous nature of the attempted
remedy (i.e. Godwinian Philosophy), as in the persistence of
remorse. In other words, all of the emotions in the play gather
round an individual's struggle with "remorseless remorse".' -
Modern Philology XXIII (1926), pp. 465-82.

J.K. Banerjee, The Dramatic Writings of Wordsworth and Coleridge

This characterisation of Oswald comes very close to Bradley's
analysis of Iago's character. The idea is that Wordsworth was
influenced by that trait in Iago's character (pride) which was
later isolated and analysed by Bradley. What was intuitively
appreciated by Wordsworth was later explicitly praised by
Bradley in his Shakespearean Tragedy (London, 1904).
Hartman analyses the actions of Oswald and points out that he is like 'a modern villain who betrays the hero for the specific purpose of planting in him an irremediable self-awareness. A "lucifer", a light bringer, he uses his intellect to betray others into enlightenment, as he himself was betrayed. He is probably the first explicit proponent in literature of intellectual murder: of a murder planned by the intellect for ostensibly intellectual result'. See Wordsworth's Poetry, 1787-1814 (London, 1967), p. 125.

Oswald's self-gratification and rejection of the common norms of society shows his utter disregard for the moral values of life. We have no evidence on what models from personal experience Wordsworth based his conception of Oswald's character. We can, however, find analogues and parallels in Jacobean tragedy. Apart from the Shakespearean models we also have a character like D'Amville in The Atheist's Tragedy by Tourneur. Like Oswald, D'Amville too is a philosophical villain whose cherished system of values, is, however rejected by the dramatist.

The motives and character of Oswald are described by the dramatist in the 'Preface' with a remarkable psychological insight. See The Poetical Works, ed. de Selincourt (Oxford, 1940), pp. 345-49.


John Jones in his The Egotistical Sublime, A History of Wordsworth's Imagination (London, 1960), p. 58, regards Herbert as 'a pale character, a mere sufferer' while G.W. Knight says that his 'function is mainly passive, to be hideously and irredeemably wronged'. See The Starlit Dome (New York, 1960), p. 29.

Mary Moorman, op. cit., p. 306.
CHAPTER - 3

THE PLAY

I

Wordsworth wrote to James Tobin in March 1798: 'If ever, I attempt another drama, it shall be written either purposely for the closet, or purposely for the stage. There is no middle way'.¹ This comment of the dramatist shows that he himself was quite conscious of the lack of dramatic qualities in the play. Later on he admitted, 'Had it been the work of a later period of life, it would have been different in some respects from what it is now. The plot would have been something more complex, and a greater variety of characters introduced to relieve the mind from the pressure of incidents so mournful'.² Wordsworth's comment on the deficiency of the plot and characters has perhaps led John Jones in our own day to comment on Wordsworth's 'reckless inattention to coherence of plot and consistency of character'.³

In the light of the frequent adverse criticism of The Borderers it is necessary to analyse the plot of the play in some detail and to determine if the incidents are so arranged as to provide what may be called as legitimate aesthetic pleasure.

The plot of The Borderers is organised round the basic conflict of the play - that is, the attempt made by one person to undermine the moorings of another character's consciousness. We first find the enunciation of this conflict in the speeches of
Lacy and Wallace. We come to know that Marmaduke, a man of ideal nature, is under the spell of the villainous Oswald. Marmaduke’s remark ‘I honour him’, in answer to the cautions of Wilfred points to the inevitability of tragic action. With Oswald’s appearance the mystery deepens as he instigates Marmaduke against old Baron Herbert. Marmaduke, however is unable to give credit to Oswald’s insinuations and would like Oswald to ‘treat him gently’ After the Eavesdropping Scene, Marmaduke is excited to the extent that he is ready to stop Herbert instantly : ‘This instant will we stop him’. To induce belief in Marmaduke about Herbert’s guilt, Oswald uses the vagrant whom he has taught ‘to win belief’ such as his plot requires.

The next stage in the development of the action consists in the success of Oswald in making Marmaduke believe that Herbert is a criminal. The crime Herbert is supposed to have committed is against nature’s law and he must be punished for it. Marmaduke’s unintentionally ironical words. ‘I have loved/To be the friend and father of the oppressed’ shows the triumph of Oswald in subduing and overpowering Marmaduke’s consciousness.

So far, we have a sort of external conflict between two persons representing two different outlooks on life. From now onwards an internal conflict starts in the soul of the protagonist. His own conscience forces him to sympathise with the lot of Herbert and thus comes into collision with his supposed duty to punish the guilty. He begins to feel ‘drowsy shiverings’ and ‘mortal stupor’. Inspite of his best efforts to
overcome his weakness, he can not kill Herbert. Oswald’s further revelations about Idonea’s willingness in the plot of Herbert fills him with deep disgust. He leads Herbert to a lonely moor and leaves him there to die alone. Herbert’s passionate words sound like the height of hypocrisy. He commits him to his ‘final ordeal’ to a ‘righteous judgement’.

However, after the perpetration of the action the turning point comes. Marmaduke is assailed by moral and spiritual conflict. Oswald appreciates his bold step: ‘Henceforth new prospects open to your path’. Oswald’s revelation of his own past comes as a rude shock to him and he feels sympathy for Oswald. Oswald discloses his motives: ‘Let us be fellow labourers then, to “enlarge Man’s intellectual empire”’. His heart almost breaks when he hears Oswald’s words ‘Herbert is innocent’. Marmaduke leaves the place to find Herbert alive or dead. The last Act is concerned with the effects of Marmaduke’s action on his mind. When he comes to know of Herbert’s death, his conflict becomes totally internalized. He reveals the truth to Idonea. Leaving her to the care of Lacy and Wallace and filled with remorse and penitence he decides to lead the life of a lonely wanderer.

The plot is thus simple and unified only by the pattern of Marmaduke’s tragic act and its consequence. There is no sub-plot as such, and the incidents are lacking in variety. The defect is, however, remedied to some extent by the analogous story of Oswald’s crime and its consequence. The narrated events serve a two-fold purpose. On the one hand, the story of Oswald’s past
has the pattern of the incidents that gives a tragic twist to Marmaduke's life. In this way, Oswald's story brings that of Marmaduke into sharper focus and clarifies its tragic implications. Thus, its role in the play may be compared to that of the sub-plot in *King Lear*: it reinforces the main theme. This, however, is not its only function. Apart from focussing on the main tragic pattern, Oswald's narrative, also widens the emotional and intellectual range of the play. The similarities between the tragic actions in Oswald's and Marmaduke's lives are obvious: What Oswald does to Marmaduke (i.e. duping him into deserting Herbert) was done to him by the sailors -- he too had been duped by them to believe that the captain deserved punishment. The differences, however, are equally important. Oswald's 'crime' led him into a course of life that is totally different from the one that Marmaduke adopts after his desertion of Herbert. Oswald found refuge in cynicism, cold rationalism, anarchism and total isolation from society -- something that was not unknown to the author of *The Borderers*. Marmaduke, on the other hand, ends up by seeking to restore his link with life through remorse and expiation. The contrast, therefore, serves to widen the range of the play's intellectual and emotional reference.

II

Having briefly examined the central conflict that shapes the structural pattern of *The Borderers* and gives the play its emotional and intellectual range, let us now go on to consider
the structural unity and dramatic effectiveness of a few important scenes in the play.

The opening Scene of the play takes us right into the heart of the action. The setting of the scene is a road in a wood. Two of the band of the borderers are ready to go on some expedition: 'let us hie/Back to our post' and 'strip the Scottish Foray/ Of their rich spoil'. The conversation between Lacy and Wallace focusses attention on the two main characters of the play—Marmaduke and Oswald. Their adulation of Marmaduke as their 'much loved', 'confiding', 'openhearted' captain comes into direct contrast with their denunciation of Oswald as a man of 'crooked ways' and 'perverted soul'. Their appraisals are, however, quite direct and without preparing a background for the audience, describe the characters in abstract terms. Both of them show their partisanship of virtue. These sharp antithetical views, however, serve an important dramatic function. They clearly lay down the moral outline of the play. Wordsworth probably intended to make us interested not in the question whether Oswald was good or bad but in the way a known evil person gains the confidence of the protagonist and leads him into the crooked path of sin and crime.

Soon after the departure of Lacy and Wallace, Marmaduke appears on the scene with Wilfred. Having earlier established the villainous role of Oswald, Wordsworth now moves a step forward and assigns to Wilfred the task of analysing the nature and motives of the play's villain. This kind of analysis is no
doubt undramatic but the short scene does serve another important purpose. We learn through Wilfred how Marmaduke and Oswald came together. The nature of their first encounter explains why Marmaduke felt protective towards Oswald and why his assessment of Oswald was different from that of his companions. Marmaduke's generous view of Oswald's character however, appears to be a kind of foreboding, the intuition of the destiny that is awaiting him.

The appearance of Oswald on the scene with a bunch of flowers in his hands arouses our curiosity, and his answer in reply to Marmaduke's question deepens the suspense. Two persons with opposite qualities are now face to face with each other. Knowing full well Marmaduke's genial attitude, Oswald cleverly moves forward. He is aware of Marmaduke's love for Idonea and Herbert and, therefore, it is necessary to provide circumstantial evidence. He shows Marmaduke a letter which he says is written by her with tears in her eyes. He instigates Marmaduke by suggesting that Herbert is a jealous father who can not tolerate that his daughter should love any person other than he himself. He further says that Herbert does not like the reformative zeal of Marmaduke and in his opinion, Marmaduke's enthusiasm to perpetrate justice is only a 'garb' adopted by him to hide his 'indolence'.

As soon as Marmaduke starts giving credence to his suggestions, he poses a question: 'But if the blind Man's tale/Should yet be true?' He, thus tempt Marmaduke into believing that Herbert is an 'arch imposter' who has cunningly devised the tales of his 'quandom Barony.'
Marmaduke, however, requests Oswald to treat the old man gently (87-97). This passage is, so to say, Marmaduke's oblique answer to all that Oswald stands for, though till now the nature of the conflict has not been clearly brought out in dramatic terms. Its symbolic configuration of the elm tree, tales of suffering and the image of the old man is not without its dramatic significance as well: nowhere are the moral values being subverted by Oswald more clearly defined than in this passage.

After the eavesdropping part of the scene, Marmaduke is excited. Oswald, however, very calmly advises him not to be hasty. The scene shows the hypocritical nature of Oswald. It is an essential part of his technique that he himself should raise objections to what he has earlier insinuated. With this end in view he suggests that Herbert's stories might really be true. As expected, Marmaduke strongly reacts to this pretended defence of Herbert. To intensify his sense of disgust, Oswald says that Herbert must not go unpunished for he torments Idonea with the pretended stories of his sufferings and thus derives a sort of unnatural pleasure out of the sufferings of that innocent girl. He, thus, Iago-like, poisons his mind gradually by further hinting that the old man probably wants to sell Idonea to Lord Clifford. To the list of Herbert's crimes, Oswald thus adds perversity born out of personal revenge.

Throughout the scene, the main conflict is kept consistently in the centre of our attention. Tension immediately builds up as we see Marmaduke disturbed over the revelations made by Oswald.
The scene is remarkable for its dramatization of the confrontation between a destructive intelligence of narrow sympathies and an idealistic, though vulnerable, benevolence which suspects little since its contact with the world is only in terms of faith, hope and charity. The paucity of incident and lack of variety serve only to bring the central conflict into sharp relief. The scene in its rather abstract design and clarity of outline, anticipates the absurdist drama of the present century rather than the mimetic stagecraft of the Jacobean period.

The Dungeon Scene in Act II is another significant scene as it marks the initiation of an internal conflict in the soul of the protagonist - a conflict between conscious and deliberate intention to kill Herbert and an instinctive sympathy which he feels for the blind old man. Apart from this inner disturbance, there is an outward conflict too, though not so apparent. Marmaduke, a sensitive idealist is set against Oswald for whom there exists nothing beyond self. The very opening of the scene gives us an insight into this tension between these two contradictory approaches to life:

Mar. : 'Tis a wild night
Osw. : I'd give my cloak and bonnet
For sight of a warm fire.
Mar. : The wind blows keen;
My hands are numb
Osw. : Ha' ha! 'tis nipping cold. (725-29)

The 'wild night' and harsh wind symbolize the agitation in
Marmaduke's heart while Oswald is merely endorsing him without sharing Marmaduke's inner apprehension. For Marmaduke it is a critical moment as there is call for action - his commitment to do justice needs the concentration of all his energies. His strong convictions are, however, beset with equally strong doubts arising out of an instinctive sympathy for the poor old man. 'The sight of him would quail me more/ Than twenty armies'.

Oswald, on the other hand, goes on exhorting Marmaduke. He makes every effort to arouse Marmaduke's hatred against Herbert. Oswald's exhortations (768-70) begin to exercise their influence. Marmaduke recalls Herbert's invocation of divine justice at the time of thunder and lightning and finds the old man's perfidy to be outrageous. He undergoes a sort of moral and spiritual anguish at his 'audacious blasphemy' and the 'spirit of vengeance seemed to ride the air'.

Inspite of his strong motives for action there is some strong inner inhibition, too. A strange faintness overpowers him, and he asks Oswald to bring a 'draught of water'. As soon as Oswald departs he tries to console himself, 'No, I am not lost'. Having recovered what he regards as his 'courage', Marmaduke speaks in bitterly ironic tones to Herbert. He is again possessed by his extreme disgust at Herbert's supposed crimes; 'Heaven is just;/Your piety would not miss its due reward'. Soon after the departure of the old man into the dungeon, Marmaduke, again begins to feel shaky. Oswald tries to convince him:
Twelve honest men, plain men, would set us right;  
Their verdict would abolish these weak scruples.  

(882-83)

His exhortations, however, fail to influence Marmaduke, who is still disturbed because of his inability to punish the 'guilty'. Twice does he try to kill Herbert but fails. He shudders at the very thought of betraying a blind, old, sleeping man. Oswald taunts him and points out the bad consequences of letting Herbert go scot free.

Recollecting himself again, he descends into the dungeon but returns because he was haunted by some 'strangest echoes in that place'. He felt a cord tied fast round his wrist drawn by the old man's dog. He trembled to see that 'features of Idonea lurked in his face'. Finally, a star prevents him from doing the deed:

Idonea's filial countenance was there  
To baffle me – it put me to my prayers.  
Upwards I cast my eyes, and, through a crevice,  
Beheld a star twinkling above my head,  
And by the living God, I could not do it. (986-90)

When the last arrow of Oswald fails to hit the mark, he hypocritically asks for forgiveness. 'I grieve/ That, in my zeal, I have caused you much pain'. Perhaps, he says that in trying to kill Herbert they were going beyond their limitations. God possesses the sole authority and it may be the wish of God that the crime of this man should not be brought to light.

Thus, the scene serves to highlight the characters of Oswald and Marmaduke. Oswald's alienation from Nature prevents him from
perceiving the bond which unites all the objects of Nature. Marmaduke, on the other hand, so far as he listens to his intuitive voice, is helped by natural objects and is temporarily prevented from perpetrating the deed that would alienate him, Oswald-like, from Nature.

That the Dungeon Scene is built on echoes from some great Shakespearean plays, particularly Macbeth, cannot be denied but Wordsworth’s originality in delineating the inner struggle in his protagonist’s mind, too, cannot be ignored. The real clash in the scene is not between personalities or wills; what we see grappling with each other are contrasted world-views. The scene is successful not because the protagonist succumbs, Macbeth-like, to temptation through the adoption, by his perverted will, of dreams of grandeur alien to his instinctive response to life; the scene works because Marmaduke’s hesitation and his failure to murder Herbert bring into focus a coherent world-view characterized by an affirmative attitude to life. A direct stage-presentation of Marmaduke expressing his inhibitions in soliloquies would not have been as effective as the indirect report to his arch-deceiver of how and why he was prevented from executing what both of them regarded as an act of ‘justice’. The affirmative view unconsciously held by Marmaduke is represented symbolically by three ‘redemptive’ images used in Marmaduke’s report to Oswald: the reflection of Idonea’s face in that of Herbert, the figure of the dead dog pulling at Marmaduke’s sleeves, and finally the image of the star viewed through a
crevice. The failure of Marmaduke to execute 'justice' owing to the potency of these 'redemptive' images gives to the scene its crucial importance in the development of the play.

The Desertion Scene (Act III) again highlights the main conflict of the play. Here the contrast between appearance and reality which constitutes the moral dilemma of Marmaduke, deepens. Herbert seems noble and saintly but 'his crimes/Have roused all nature up against him --'. Idonea seems innocent; 'A flower, /Fairest of all flowers ...', but she, too, was 'besoiled with mire'. The contrast between what actually is and what appears to be, add to the protagonist's moral perplexity.

The scene presents the triangle of love-hate relationship among Marmaduke, Idonea and Herbert. Marmaduke's love for Idonea is deep. He cannot forget her inspite of his best efforts. However, his love for the old man is no less deep: 'I loved the maid;/And for his sake I loved her more'. He, therefore, shudders at the very thought of punishing the old man: 'A masterpiece /Of Nature, finished with most curious skill'. He finally decides to leave Herbert on the moor.

The conversation between Herbert and Marmaduke is marked with underlying irony. Herbert, being simple-minded and religious is unable to realize what fate awaits him. His faith in God is unshaken as he tells Marmaduke how he was once helped by Him who 'fed/The Pelican and Ostrich of the desert'. Marmaduke is agitated as soon as he hears the name of God. He, however, fails to listen to his inner voice and unknowingly
causes the death of the old man.

The tragic design of the scene, the bareness and simplicity of its outline, the intensity of feelings evoked by its situation, the scriptural echoes that widen its intellectual and philosophical range - all these make the Desertion Scene one of the most memorable scenes in the play. The charge that the delayed action - the final desertion of Herbert - deprives this scene of its theatrical effectiveness is not correct. It arises from misconstruction of Wordsworth's intention here as elsewhere in the play. We are reminded of the playwright's contention in the Preface, already referred to, that Marmaduke's abandonment of Herbert is not an intentionally evil act. The tragic act issues indeed from an error of judgement on the part of the protagonist. At worst, it may be regarded as arising out of moral presumption. However, the 'punishment' finally inflicted on the supposed villain is an act of judgement mixed with mercy: Herbert would be saved through divine intervention if he were really innocent. The delayed action is thus a natural result of Wordsworth's attempt to delineate Marmaduke's inner struggle, and there is little doubt that he has greatly succeeded in this attempt.

In the last Scene (Act V) of the play we see Idonea seated near the door of Eldred's cottage. She considers Eldred responsible for her father's death. As soon as she meets Marmaduke, she laments for her father who had perished 'without a dog to moan for him'. These are moments of high tension and irony. Unknowingly she curses the murderer (2142 - 54). Marmaduke
remains silent. The irony is heightened when Idonea's mood changes and, instead of invoking curses on the unknown murderer, she turns to the horror-stricken Marmaduke for succour and help. Little does she know that the man to whom she has turned as protector and guardian is the real target of her erstwhile curses. Her moment of anguished and horrified enlightenment comes when Marmaduke himself reveals the truth, 'All nature curses me, and in my heart/Thy curse is fixed'. He shows him the letter and tells him how he was duped by Oswald. The beggar-woman, too, discloses her part in the conspiracy. Oswald invites Marmaduke to move to Palestine, 'a paltry field for enterprise'. He was, however, killed by the members of the band. Marmaduke willingly accepts the course of the life of a wanderer. Leaving the responsibility of Idonea to Lacy and Wallace he is ready to undergo remorse and penitence.

The significance of the last Scene, its importance as the culmination of a tragedy, is linked up with the issue of Wordsworth's success or failure as a dramatist. As students of Wordsworth's art we may not concern ourselves with final judgements; our aim is only to study the design of the play and analyse the elements that go to make it a unique work of art. In short, we are not going to indulge in value judgements but only try to understand what happens in the play.

George Steiner has pointed out that the tragic point of view implies an ultimate puzzlement over the basic issues of suffering and death. The tragic point of view suited the
Elizabethan-Jacobean age because of its sceptical and puzzled outlook about the meaning and value of human life. The Romantics, on the other hand, lived under the shadow of the Rousseau-esque myth of human perfectibility and were, therefore, precluded from appreciating the tragic point of view. We may add here the idea that for the Romantics tragic redeemability was an alternative to tragic negation. The Ancient Mariner, with the possibilities of redemption through prayer open before him, is the archetypal figure in Romantic literature, and Marmaduke's character in the last Scene of _The Borderers_ conforms to this pattern.

Alternatively we may posit another feature of Romantic literature as an explanation of Marmaduke's behaviour in this scene. We all know about the Romantic fascination for endless suffering. Suffering is a recurring theme in Wordsworth's poetry. It may have been this keen involvement of the poet in the idea of suffering that made him choose the fate of an eternal wanderer for his hero rather than death. Physical suffering and death, as Marmaduke tells Herbert in the Desertion Scene, is nothing compared to endless pangs of conscience and remorse. It is possible to believe that what Marmaduke chooses for himself is more tragic than death - if the tragic can be equated with suffering alone. Be that as it may, the fact cannot be denied that the Last Scene of _The Borderers_ does achieve tragic catharsis, and so the scene may be included as among the more successful ones in the play.
Reference may here be made to an important quality of the play intrinsic to its dramatic structure, i.e. the tempo of the play. A study of The Borderers shows that very little deliberate attempt has been made by the dramatist to introduce a formal rhythmic pattern in his manipulation of incidents and the feelings evoked by them. Most commentators agree that too much happens in Act I, and that this serves to detract us from the generation of dramatic tension. Revelations made by Lacy and Wallace, the tempting of Marmaduke into crime by Oswald, the employment of the beggar-woman into conspiracy and further revelations made by her - all these events follow in quick succession and this weakens the intensity of effect and leads to the dilution of rhythmic variations.

In Act II, the pace of action is a little slower. The act concerns itself with the efforts made by Oswald to deepen in Marmaduke's mind the impression of Herbert's guilt. The slow movement of action gives us an insight into the nature of a man of 'Philosophical questionings, of morbid doubts and hesitations, of sharp conscience, of comprehensive imagination and of brooding speculation'.

The delayed catastrophe in Act III, necessary though it is for the delineation of Marmaduke's inner struggle, does however lead to a weakening of dramatic tension. Marmaduke's procrastinations even after full knowledge of Herbert's 'crime' mar the logical progression and prevent the play from acquiring
the quickness of tempo that would make the action look logical and inevitable.

The turning point comes in Act IV, but there is no real confrontation and the emphasis is on the clash of ideas. The elaborate confession by Oswald of his own past crime and deliberate intent to poison Marmaduke is an attempt at making the action complex but it only causes confusion and slows down the pace of action. Even after Oswald's confession the events do not move quickly and there is an excess of sentimentality before the final movement brings the play to a close.

IV

Aristotle and his sixteenth century Italian commentators formulated the three unities of drama - those of time, place and action. It is a well-known fact, however, that Shakespeare, the greatest practitioner of the art of drama in modern times freely violated all the three unities because, as Dr. Johnson suggested in his Preface, life itself does not admit such limitations, and that drama itself is a mirror of life. Shakespeare made himself free from the rigid formalities of classicism and the only unity he followed was the unity of impression or thought. In The Borderers, which is apparently modelled on Shakespearean drama, Wordsworth too, allows himself complete freedom from the observance of the unities.

The action of the play does not confine itself within the prescribed time limit as the duration of action is extended beyond twenty-four hours. In the beginning of the play (I, 322-
23) Idonea, while proceeding alone on her journey to some convent promises Herbert to return within three days: 'Three days at farthest/Will bring me back'. We next meet Idonea, with a group of pilgrims (returning probably from her journey) in Act II, lines 675 onwards. This violates the unity of time.

Wordsworth however, maintains the unity of place. The entire action takes place on the border between England and Scotland. The dramatic effect thus produced with this concentration of action is powerful and intense. The setting also allows Wordsworth, freedom from the necessity to depict life in terms of exact verisimilitude.

So far as the unity of action is concerned there is only one plot in the technical sense of the term: the duping of Marmaduke by Oswald. Oswald's story, however, serves as a sub-plot as it presents a parallel to that of Marmaduke. The parallelism between Marmaduke's and Oswald's betrayals is apparent. The two stories, however, differ in depicting the destiny that finally awaits the protagonists.

V

Wordsworth's use of irony as a dramatic device to achieve tragic effect also needs brief comment in a discussion of The Borderers as a play. Both types of irony - the irony of situations and verbal irony - have been successfully used by the playwright. Without the use of irony, The Borderers would have been a much weaker play than it is.

Irony is somewhat integral to the very structure of
the play as its basic theme itself is ironical. Oswald poisons the mind of Marmaduke and Marmaduke, under the impression that Herbert is guilty of the most unnatural crime perpetrates 'justice' and unconsciously becomes instrumental in his death. It is only in the end that shocking recognition comes to him and he realizes the horrible irony of his situation.

Irony is skillfully woven with the very fabric of the play and all other situations and scenes as they gradually unfold the action, serve to intensify this basic ironic pattern.

As an example of the play's pervasive irony we may refer to the beginning of the play where we find Marmaduke and Wilfred talking to each other. Marmaduke is very much confident of his friendship with Oswald, and in spite of Wilfred's repeated warnings does not pay attention to his words. His words, 'I do more, I honour him' are ironic since we are already made aware of the crooked nature of Oswald and the play shows how these generous feelings of Marmaduke's heart will be destroyed by the attempts of Oswald.

We find another example of irony during the conversation between Idonea and Herbert. The old man accuses Marmaduke and cautions her against him. Idonea boldly defends him: 'Is he not strong? Is he not valiant?' and 'strong feelings to his heart are natural'. The whole situation is ironic since she will realise later in the play that the same man has caused her father's death.

The Dungeon Scene is filled with ironic overtones.
Marraduke is unable to realize that he is going to commit a crime even worse than that he is accusing Herbert of. His words in reply to the old man's query; 'No wonder; this is a place/ That well may put some fears in your heart' and 'Heaven is just/ Your piety would not miss its due reward' are ironic since he himself is undergoing the same conflict in his heart, and all the apprehensions and fears of his own mind are due to his guilty conscience.

In the beginning of Act III, Marraduke is very sure of Herbert's crime. The crime of the old man has become apparent to him now. He now realizes, ironically enough, that his belief in the essential goodness of human heart was entirely ill-founded and, therefore, he is ready to wreck vengeance on the old man, 'He shall howl and I will laugh a medley most tunable'. Similarly the Desertion Scene and the last Scene are filled with subtle touches of irony (as we have already discussed and analysed).

VI

Critics have castigated Wordsworth for the use of greatly undramatic language in *The Borderers*. They think that the lack of dramatic language weakens the dramatic and theatrical effect. Language, in a drama, to be effective on the stage must be used to convey what is going on between and in the minds of characters. 'Drama' as Styan says, 'particularly poetic drama, is not an exercise in putting prose dialogue into verse'. Moreover, dramatic speech must express character as it is through language that the dramatist's 'negative capability' is revealed.
Wordsworth's blank verse in the play becomes an instrument in the hands of the dramatist to transmit his own philosophical ideas and to reveal his own speculative and meditative mood. The presentation of Godwin's ideas in *The Borderers* may be debated but several of the lines in the play leave an impression of abstract argumentation. As example of this, reference may be made to lines 1487-96 (Act III). Many of the speeches of Oswald and Marmaduke reflect their creator's philosophy and brooding attitude (III, 1523-30; IV, 1822-31). No doubt, they contain deep ideas and impressive diction but they are lacking in conversational tone. Occasionally the words of Idonea and Heabert achieve a rare musical quality so characteristic of Wordsworth's later poetry but they lack the modulation of true speech.

'The blank verse in *The Borderers*', says Mary Moorman, 'is clumsy, and abrupt except for some passages when it suddenly bursts into great poetic splendour'. It is difficult to disagree with the above judgement since what is worthwhile in the dramatic language and versification of the play is decidedly an anticipation of the poetry of Wordsworth's middle years. It may be remarked that the frequent moments of visionary intensity in poems like 'Tintern Abbey', *The Prelude* and the 'Immortality Ode' are not the only sources of greatness in Wordsworth. That these moments raise the level of poetic excellence to great heights is undeniable. Equally undeniable, however, is the fact that, specially in the longer poems, Wordsworth achieves excellence of a different order. What we have in mind are the passages in poems
like *The Prelude* where Wordsworth is doing his best to portray faithfully and with great exactness the movements of mind and the interior landscape. It is the poetry of this kind that is anticipated in the best passages of *The Borderers*. Excellence there is in the language and versification of the play but it is not an excellence of the dramatic variety. Where Wordsworth fails as a dramatist he gains as a poet of the lyrical and the profoundly meditative.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES


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CHAPTER - 4

THEMES AND IMAGERY

I

In the Preface while describing the character of Oswald, Wordsworth writes:

... the character we are now contemplating will have a strong tendency to vice. His energies are most impressively manifest in the works of devastation. He is the Orlando of Ariosto, the Cardenio of Cervantes, who lays waste the groves that should shelter him.1

These words of the dramatist lay bare the soul of the villain as well as highlight one of the main themes2 of the play, that is, the attempt made by an evil man to undermine the moorings of another man's consciousness.

There is some reason in redefining this aspect of Oswald's character (discussed in Chapter 2) in terms of an important, perhaps central, theme in the play. It is to be remembered that The Borderers is a poetic play requiring critical examination in terms of imagery, symbolism and themes just as well as in those of character and plot. We know how Elizabethan and Jacobean drama in general and the plays of Shakespeare in particular have been subjected to a poetic as well as dramatic treatment in the present century. Critics like Bradley and his twentieth century followers have approached Hamlet, for example, in terms of character study just as other critics, like L.C. Knights and C.S. Lewis have devoted their attention to the themes, imagery and
symbolism in the play.

Looked at from the point of view of thematic study, The Borderers seems to concern itself not so much with an objective presentation of everyday life as in modern prose drama but with an important aspect of subjective experience as in poetic drama. From his early years Wordsworth appears to have been keenly interested in the nature of consciousness and its relationship with objective reality. He seems to have begun with the eighteenth century view of 'correspondence' between the outer and the inner, between the image in the mind and the corresponding reality outside. Wordsworth's development consisted in his movement from empiricism through scepticism to transcendental idealism. It was his later position that forced on him the necessity to look back on the development of his own consciousness from early childhood in order to discover in his own experience all possible evidence of extra-sensory and transcendental forms of awareness. This is not the place to go into the details of this development the various stages of which are clearly marked in The Prelude and, earlier, in 'Tintern Abbey'. The point that we are here trying to make here relates to the fact of Wordsworth's keen interest in modes of consciousness: Wordsworth makes great poetry out of his concern with the nature of consciousness and its varying transmutations through interaction with objective reality.

It is in the context of this over-all interest that the theme of the undermining and consequent transmutation of the
protagonist’s consciousness in *The Borderers* should be approached. Wordsworth seems to have been highly impressed with Shakespeare’s treatment of the dramatic possibilities of this theme in *Othello*. Iago’s attempt at disrupting the protagonist’s spiritual integrity and cohesiveness has predominantly moral and psychological implications. The drama of interaction between wills and modes of consciousness - played out superbly in the Temptation Scene - aims primarily at subverting the validity of Othello's subjective world-view. At the end of the Temptation Scene the protagonist's inner world is in shambles - the world that had hitherto been sustained by absolute faith and love. Iago has invaded Othello's subjective universe with his own version of a world mainly motivated by sensuality and peopled by 'goats and monkeys'. F. R. Leavis is right in suggesting that Othello’s world crumbles because it was fragile since it had not taken into account the fact of human sensuality.

What is more relevant to our purpose is Shakespeare’s dramatization of the interaction between two contrary world-views and its consequences in terms of a psychological conflict and clash of wills. This is what probably led Wordsworth to the dramatization of a similar conflict in *The Borderers*. The interaction between two opposite world-views and the vulnerability of the protagonist while in confrontation with the subversive tactics of the play’s ‘intellectual’ villain are the elements in *The Borderers* that bring it close to its Shakespearean prototype. However, Wordsworth’s approach to the conflict dramatized in the
play is more intellectual than dramatic. The theme of the subversion of consciousness in the play is therefore treated more poetically than dramatically. The point needs some elaboration.

The Borderers is essentially a play of ideas. The two central characters in it - Marmaduke and Oswald are less individualized than intellectualized. Marmaduke is the representative of a unitive vision of life, a consciousness that can perceive through intuition the unity of all existence. Faith, love and charity are the foundation-stones of the edifice of his being. His earlier attitude towards Herbert (before it was radically transformed through Oswald's machinations) was an expression of his holistic world-view characterized by love. His charity had been fostered by the image of the old man during the formative years of his life. As we learn (I, 89-95), Marmaduke's imagination had been made active, and was nurtured, by the image of Herbert's suffering as communicated by Idonea's tale of her father's adventures. It was this image that sustained him through the vicissitudes of his later years:

And, through all converse of our later years,
An image of this old Man still was present,
When I had been most happy. (I, 69-71)

It is interesting to note that the tales of Herbert's sufferings which made 'the band of playmates' weep was an ingredient of Marmaduke's consciousness when he had been 'most happy'. Suffering had thus been transformed by love into a source of joy.
Herbert is, therefore, more of a symbolic counter for a particular mode of consciousness possessed by Marmaduke than a 'character' in the play just as Desdemona ideally exists in the consciousness of Othello. In Shakespeare's play Iago and Desdemona represent two ideal and contrary principles in the consciousness of Othello. In the quasi-allegorical scheme of the play, the Iago-mentality destroys the Desdemona-principle: sensuality overwhelms and replaces love. A similar semi-allegorical scheme is also present in *The Borderers*: both Oswald and Herbert ideally exist in Marmaduke's consciousness and the play dramatizes the subversion of one mode of consciousness by another. Marmaduke's tragedy lies in the fact that he can not withstand the onslaught of cold rationalism and scepticism as represented by Oswald and allows it to overwhelm his more genial intuitions of love and charity.

The desertion of Herbert by Marmaduke is, in dramatic terms, a moment of triumph for Oswald, the play's villain, and the stages by which he succeeds in undermining the protagonist's consciousness have already been delineated in Chapter 2. What we have done in our discussion above is to show that a thematic approach to the problem brings us close to the realization that the conflict and interaction between the protagonist and the villain is in fact a dramatization of an inner struggle in the consciousness of the dramatist himself: *The Borderers* faithfully records Wordsworth's slow and painful movement away from Godwinian rationalism towards a more unitive vision of life.
In *The Borderers*, we find anticipations of Wordsworth's philosophy of Nature which was later to find fuller expression in 'Tintern Abbey' and other poems. His view that Nature has a soothing influence in moulding the personality of a man, and that it is in the lap of nature that a man can learn to fulfil his obligations, finds dramatic expression in the play. The idea that it is the primary duty of an individual to respect the bond that unites man to other men and the world of Nature is made the main focus of interest in the plot.

The setting of the play between England and Scotland in the reign of Henry III is perhaps intended to show Wordsworth's emphasis on the principle of individual freedom as well as individual responsibility. The absence of any formal social order reveals Wordsworth's 'belief in a transcendent ethical principle whose existence and value are independent of prevailing institutions and modes of government'. Wordsworth seems to imply that the all-pervasive principle of transcendent and self-effacing love is independent of time, space and external order. It is obvious that Wordsworth has moved away from the Rousseau-esque view of the externality of evil. The problem of evil (and consequently that of goodness and love) are much more complex than were believed to be in Rousseau's perfectionist view of human nature. 'The World is poisoned at the heart', says Marmaduke but the play as a whole implies that the solution to the problem of evil lies in embracing the all-inclusive principle.
of transcendental love. The principle is not far to seek: it can be discovered within the human heart, and it can be found everywhere in Nature. This aspect of the play underlies the importance of the fact that even before the composition of 'Tintern Abbey', Nature to Wordsworth was 'the nurse,/ The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul/ Of all my moral being.'

It is, however, in the character of Marmaduke that we find a concrete manifestation of Wordsworth's philosophy of Nature. It is the working of this principle in Marmaduke's heart that prevents him from believing Oswald to be a villain. Moreover his decision to perpetrate justice is an act of 'disinterestedness', that results from his sense of responsibility and his feeling of sympathy towards the innocent. In fact he loved to be the 'friend and father of the oppressed, a comforter of sorrow'.

Marmaduke may be called a creature of Nature, and therefore natural objects prevent him from committing the crime. Sympathy and pity that he feels for Herbert, when he tries to kill the old man proves Wordsworth's thesis that a man cannot commit a crime if he listens to his conscience, which is nothing but an embodiment of Nature's vital force:

Mar.: I whispered to him thrice
    There are the strangest echoes in that place!

Osw.: Tut. let them gabble till the day of doom,

Mar.: Scarcely, by groping, had I reached the spot,
    When round my wrist I felt a cord drawn tight,
    As if the blind Man's dog was at it.

Osw.: But after that?
Mar.: The features of Idonea
    Lurked in his face --

Osw.: Pshaw! Never to these eyes
    Will retribution show itself again
    With aspect so inviting. Why forbid me
    To share your triumph?

Mar.: Yes, her very look,
    Smiling in sleep --

Osw.: A pretty feat of Fancy!

Mar.: Though but a glimpse, it sent me to my prayers.  
     (II, 961-77)

However, the climax comes when the sight of a star, foils his attempt to murder the old man (II, 984-90). This clearly suggests the benign influence of natural objects which serve as guides to right conduct.

Marmaduke is not only a friend of suffering humanity; he possesses genuine sympathy for low creatures. When Herbert is being conducted to the dungeon, his old dog named Leader falls in a torrent and dies. We learn later that Marmaduke gave a 'piercing outcry' for the poor being. Consequently, even Herbert who calls him a 'wild freebooter' is forced to change his opinion. (II, 833-36).

However, as soon as Marmaduke abandones his philosophy of Nature and fails to listen to the voice of his inner conscience, he becomes a pathetic figure. He now resembles Oswald who is devoid of this instinctive sympathy towards his fellow brethren and leads a life divorced from Nature and natural sympathy.

Herbert-Idonea relationship, too, endorses Wordsworth's
philosophy of Nature. Early in the play (Act I) we meet Idonea leading blind Herbert. He, being tired of the journey, is gloomy and full of dark thoughts. Idonea, in order to restore his faith and rejuvenate his spirits, says:

Ido.: Believe me, honoured Sire! 'Tis weariness that breeds these gloomy fancies, And you mistake the cause: You hear the woods Resound with music, could you see the sun, And look upon the pleasant face of Nature —

Herb.: I comprehend thee — I should be as cheerful As if we too were twins; two songsters bred In the same nest, my spring time one with thine.

(I, 144-51)

Idonea is a child of Nature and expresses the basic philosophy of Wordsworth that Nature is a source of rejuvenation. It provides a healing touch to those whose feelings are burdened with the weight of suffering and sorrow. Like Lucy, Idonea is the symbol of the glory of childhood.

The humble characters in the play aptly prove Wordsworth's thesis that those who are brought up under the benign influence of Nature are good at heart. The peasant, whom Idonea and Herbert meet in Act I, offers his services to these strangers. He tells them about a hostel and realizing that Herbert is 'worn out with travel' is ready to support him. When they politely refuse the offer, he wishes: 'God speed you both!' Similarly the host in whose Inn Herbert and Idonea take shelter is benevolent. Idonea leaves Herbert in his care before proceeding alone on her journey. The beggar-woman whom Oswald has bribed is also good at heart. Towards the close of the play she repents
the role she had earlier played in Oswald's plot and reveals everything to Idonea: 'God is my judge, / I thought there was no harm...'

Finally there are Eleanor and Eldred who are kind-hearted and provide shelter to Idonea in a stormy night. When Eldred, afraid of the unjust society, leaves Herbert to die on the moor, Eleanor rebukes him:

Oh, Eldred, you will die alone. You will have nobody to close your eyes - no hand to grasp your dying hand - I shall be in my grave. A curse will attend us all. (IV, 1954-56)

She asks him to 'return to the spot' so that they can 'restore' him.

The fact that almost all these low-life characters habitually turn towards goodness seems to prove the Wordsworthian thesis, developed in his days of maturity, that the proximity to Nature amounts to a proximity to the source of all being - love. Thus, the theme of the moral force of Nature contributes a good deal to the range and variety as well as the poetic power of *The Borderers*.

III

That the theme of sin and expiation is one of the basic themes of the play is not surprising since it dominated the whole tradition of Romantic literature. The early years of the nineteenth century were characterized by a strange concern with the morbid - crime, sin and evil in its most bizarre forms. As Professor Mario Praz has shown it was a European phenomenon. It would be difficult to analyse the reasons for the prevalence of
such themes in the literature of the Romantic period but the fact must be noticed that these morbid themes were paradoxically combined with a strange faith in the essential goodness of human nature and the possibilities of moral and spiritual rejuvenation through expiation.

The theme of sin and expiation is specially present in Romantic drama. There seems to underlie an almost archetypal pattern of suffering and remorse in the plays of the romantic poets. The pattern is that of the tragic hero or hero-villain who has committed a terrible, almost nameless, crime. This archetypal sinner is haunted by pangs of conscience and becomes, in his remorseless quest of spiritual peace, an eternal wanderer. Salvation, however, comes in the end and, like the Ancient Mariner, he regains the ability to pray.8

Wordsworth's treatment of the theme is in keeping with the pattern noted above. His particular aim in *The Borderers* was to prove that 'sin and crime are apt to start from their very opposite qualities'.9 Both Marmaduke and Oswald commit crimes similar in nature. While Marmaduke chooses the path of a sufferer to remove the pangs of his conscience, Oswald, after a temporary remorse, becomes a hard-hearted rationalist and follows the path of evil.

Marmaduke, a man of reformative zeal cannot allow a criminal like Herbert to go unpunished. Since Herbert's crimes have 'roused all Nature up against him', it is his duty to punish him. Herbert's crimes are enormous and, therefore, he must be left
there on the bleak waste which is 'destitute of obvious shelter, as a shipless sea'. If he is innocent God will save him. Otherwise, he will get his due punishment and that will purify his soul (II, 1398-1400).

By leaving Herbert there he thinks that he has performed his duty, i.e. his self-appointed task to punish the criminal. But ironically enough, he has unconsciously committed a crime that has 'roused all Nature up against him'. After his act of abandonment, Marmaduke is bewildered and restless. All efforts of Oswald to restore his better spirits fail. The final revelation comes as a shock to him but now he submits himself to all the pains and sufferings of life. When Idonea curses the murderer, he stoically remarks: 'My voice was silent but my heart hath joined thee'. He cannot provide shelter to Idonea because 'never more/Shall blessings wait upon a guilt of mine'. He is ready to undergo all sufferings (V, 2264-66). He does not punish Oswald for his crime and for him, too, he suggests the way of penitence. He knows that by committing Herbert to his final 'ordeal' he has taken the authority of God in his own hands. He is thus guilty of hubris; his punishment, therefore, must be equal to his crime. He does not commit suicide, nor does he want to live a life divorced from Nature and natural sympathy. He, therefore, declares:

... a wanderer must I go,
The spectre of that innocent Man, my guide.
No human ear shall ever hear me speak;
No human dwelling ever give me food,
Or sleep, or rest; but over waste and wild,
In search of nothing, that this earth can give,
But expiation, will I wander on -
A Man by pain and thought compelled to live,
Yet loathing life - till anger is appeased
In Heaven, and Mercy gives me leave to die.

(V, 2112-21)

The character of Oswald serves as a foil to that of Marmaduke. Oswald reveals to Marmaduke that like him he, too, in his early life was 'a pleasure of all hearts, the darling /Of every tongue'. He, however, had fallen a prey to the wicked motives of his friends. He was deceived by the crew as he had left an innocent man - the leader of the ship - to die on a naked spot. As the tales of his crime spread abroad, his powers at once 'shrank' from him and his plans and schemes, and lofty hopes - all vanished. He felt betrayed (IV, 1765-68). He spent three sleepless nights in constant meditation, and then 'beheld a slavery compared to which the dungeon/And clanking chains are perfect liberty'. He sought refuge in action and made himself free from the 'soft chains' of customs and feelings. Here may be noted the difference between the behaviour of the two persons. While Marmaduke on committing a similar crime willingly accepts actual damnation, Oswald justifies his actions after the crime and succumbs to the temptation of false freedom which leads to moral and spiritual enslavement.

His advice to grief-stricken Marmaduke is not to feel sorry for his acts (III, 1560-62). He remains unmoved till his death, and, in his inability to feel remorse, highlights the inadequacies of narrow and rationalistic individualism. Unlike
the Ancient Mariner and Marmaduke he has allowed the spiritual barrenness of his self-centred nihilistic outlook to overwhelm the possibilities of moral regeneration and renewal.

IV

The theme of social justice is another important aspect of The Borderers. The attack on the evils inherent in society is not as explicit here as it is in the poems of this period, particularly in 'Guilt and Sorrow'. In this poem the attack is direct as Wordsworth is criticizing the entire social structure of England. Here Wordsworth found 'England an evil place, not only because she forced her peasants and mechanics to risk or give up their lives in futile and murderous imperialistic contest, but also because of the manner in which she dealt with the dependants of these men - the wives and children who had been left behind'.

In The Borderers, too, the theme of social justice can be traced. Legouis and others have pointed out that the play makes a significant departure from 'Guilt and Sorrow'. In that poem Wordsworth puts the entire blame on society and its institutions for these are the means to corrupt the individual. However, in The Borderers he seems to have realized that the source of evil lies deeper than this. We can to some extent accept the view that the social and political reformer in Wordsworth is no longer seen in the play and his attack on the evils rampant in society is not direct. However, the seeds of evil are still seen to be somewhere in the soil of social institutions, and they germinate
as soon as they get proper nourishment.

The theme of social oppression is the basis of Herbert-Idonea relationship. Herbert's earlier suffering and misfortune in the play are the result of the unlawful usurpation of his domains. That he loses his wife and infant son as well as his eye-sight is a direct result of social injustice. Left alone with his daughter, he clasps her to his bosom and becomes a wanderer (I, 175-203). It was because of the pitiable condition and blindness of Herbert that Idonea's hopes to marry Marmaduke were thwarted.

'Even more striking than the effects of injustice upon Herbert and Idonea is Wordsworth's description in The Borderers of the extremes of poverty and wealth, and of the moral consequences of the inequitable distribution of economic powers'. On the one side, there are people like Lord Clifford who enjoy wealth and position in society. He lives in a castle where he performs 'infernal orgies' and seduces young girls. He represents those aristocratic lords who were living a life of luxury and rolling in the mire of corrupt practices. On the other side, there is the beggar-woman and the shepherds. They do not have enough means to keep their body and soul together but they are good and of helping nature. Because of her poverty the beggar-woman may fall a prey in the hands of Oswald but she has the courage to repent and reveal everything. Eldred, too, suffers, like the Shepherds in 'Guilt and Sorrow' in an unjust society. He had been punished for no fault of his own. 'Good
Eldred', says Eleanor:

> Has a kind heart; but his imprisonment
> Has made him fearful, and he'll never be
> The man he was.  

(IV, 1900-1902)

Eleanor's words remind us of the cowardly act of Eldred when he had left an old, wounded, blind man dying on a lonely moor. His inhuman cowardly action is the result of his unjust suffering. The plea he puts forward in his defence before his wife: 'I am spited by the world' and: 'Have you forgot your own troubles when I was in the dungeon?', shows that he cannot be held responsible for his depravity.

Thus it were the social institutions that were responsible for the sufferings of the people in 'Guilt and Sorrorrow' and it is again society that destroys the natural virtue and humanistic creed of the people in The Borderers and teaches them to put their interest above the cause of suffering humanity.

Be that as it may, the fact cannot be denied that The Borderers also marks some advance towards maturity in Wordsworth's treatment of the theme of social justice just as it does with regard to the theme of evil. The central act of the play - the deception played on Marmaduke by the villain and its consequence - brings out the vulnerability of the reformer and the agent of social justice in the face of evil. The world cannot be easily reformed. The revolutionary zeal of Wordsworth's early youth had once supposed that external change in social organization could usher in the Golden Age. That the dream was a
Another theme in the play is that of the conflict between narrow rationalism and the genial sympathies of the soul. It is through the two main characters that Wordsworth depicts this conflict. The character of Marmaduke, as we have already seen in the previous chapter, is an almost allegorical representation of the attitude to life characterized by charis or all-embracing love. Wordsworth was later going to call it Higher Reason since this attitude is not a denial of reason but a more comprehensive version of it.

Oswald, on the other hand, professes himself to be a rationalist. In his first important soliloquy, which is a comment on Marmaduke's character, he vindicates pure rationalism (II, 551-65). He exalts 'reason' at the cost of human feelings and emotions. These feelings are baser aspects of a man's nature and these must not be allowed to interfere with the dictates of reason in the administration of justice: 'Justice, Admitting no resistance, bends alike/The feeble and the strong' (II, 1088-90). These feelings and prejudices must not exercise their influence on the mind of a really wise man, i.e. a 'reasonable' man. According to him, a man must make himself free from the bonds of conventional morality and after his act of desertion his only purpose is to enlarge the 'intellectual empire' of man. However, a deeper study of the play would reveal the hollowness of Oswald's 'rationalism'. What is lacking in Oswald is not just
feeling but positive feeling. To achieve his purpose he can practice guile and duplicity. Though he talks of the liberation of Marmaduke from the petty emotional bonds (II, 930-35), he does not use rational means to induce belief in Marmaduke; he resorts to falsehood, bribery and distortion of facts. His pessimistic and sometimes nihilistic feelings are more a result of his despair after his unconscious crime. He can say that he has freed himself from the 'slavery' of the 'world's opinion and her usages', and can consider himself a man who:

...had passed alone
Into a region of futurity,
Whose natural element was freedom - (IV, 1817-19)

However, his freedom is a result of his misguided energy, or the 'energy liberated by it is only a restlessness'. In one of his soliloquies (III, 1142 ff.) he rejects reason, for he thinks that passion is the best instrument to deceive Marmaduke. Storch has pointed out: 'Oswald rejects moral conventions ... not in the name of Godwin's reason, but in the name of nature's law. ... "Nature", Oswald goes on to day, "must be given free rein" and then "Your faculties should grow with the demand"! Thus it is through Oswald that Wordsworth expresses the opinion that 'nature in a nihilistic mind turns destructive. Oswald turns nature's amorality (the rejection of conventions and appeal to opportunuity) into chaos'.

Looked at thus, Oswald's rationalism is found not to be rationalism at all but a destructive form of passion. What
really motivates him is the energy released by unrestrained egotism and vanity untramelled by any sense of responsibility towards the universe. That there is a gap between Oswald's profession and inner motivation is a measure of Wordsworth's success in highlighting the irresponsibility of founding any philosophy of action on 'pure' rationalism. What masquerades itself as 'rationalism' is discovered to be nothing but negative and destructive passion in conflict with an affirmative view of life and being.

VI

There are a number of reasons why it has been decided — after careful thought — to assign to a discussion of imagery only a brief section in this chapter. Modern studies of imagery in a work of art start with the assumption that imagistic patterns are compulsive and organically related to the thematic or 'visionary' structure of the work under study. Alternatively, it is assumed that the personality of the author, his experiential preferences, are brought to light through the study of the 'subject-matter' of the images in a poem or a play. Another view is that imagery, specially in a play, is a means of character-differentiation or atmosphere-creation.

The chief value of The Borderers lies in the fact that it is the early work of a major poet. No claim to greatness can be made for it on its own behalf. Among the reasons for its failure to achieve success may be mentioned the fact that, unlike the great masterpieces of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, The
Borderers is deficient in its imagery in that there is no compulsively organic and unifying pattern in it. The world of the play, so to say, fails to come alive through the fabric of its verbal associations. There are no iterative patterns in the imagery of the play — unlike, for example, the clothes imagery in Macbeth, the disease and sickness imagery in Hamlet or animal imagery in King Lear. There is no doubt that some significance can be attached to the fact that a larger number of images from the natural world are applied to the human world than vice versa. It is equally worthwhile to point out that some of the important images in the play have a haunting quality about them so much so that they acquire some kind of symbolic force and help in intensifying the embodied vision in the play. Notwithstanding the above, imagery in The Borderers does not have much unitive force nor does it vivify the world of the play in the way that imagery does even in some minor Elizabethan and Jacobean drama.

It is for the reasons discussed above that we are going to comment briefly on the play's imagery as a means of character differentiation. In this respect what follows may be regarded as an extension and further elaboration of our discussion of characterisation in Chapter 2. The two main characters in the play speak in different languages and employ widely divergent kinds of imagery. We get a glimpse of Oswald's character in the very beginning of the play. Flower symbolism is exploited by him as a means of oblique communication. His choice of a plant that which 'while, it is/ Strong to destroy, is also strong to heal —'
is echoed in the play when he says 'strong to overturn, strong also to build up'. Oswald, though a rationalist is not devoid of imagination. This imaginative bent of mind is reflected fully when he is alone and reveals himself to us in his soliloquies. It is important to note that there is no direct self-revelation in them; he talks only about Marmaduke, never about himself. The comparison of Marmaduke to a migratory bird in his first important soliloquy brings out the passionate nature of Marmaduke while giving an insight into the hypocritical nature of Oswald:

These fools of feeling are mere birds of winter
That haunt some barren island of the north,
Where if a famishing man stretch forth his hand,
They think it is to feed them. (II, 558-61)

In his second soliloquy in the same Act (925-35) he contemplates the consequences of killing Herbert. 'We kill a worn-out horse, and who but woman/Sigh at the deed?' Similarly we 'hew down a withered tree/And none look grave but dotards'. He expresses his firm resolve to break the romantic illusions of Marmaduke:

Rainbow arches,
Highways of dreaming passion, have too long,
Young as he is, diverted wish and hope
From the unpretending ground we mortals tread:—
Then shatter the delusion, break it up
And set him free. (II, 930-35)

In his third soliloquy (1142-70), too, he expresses his cold rationalistic attitude in passionate language. 'Two columns, one for passion, one for proof; Each rises as the other falls', and 'passion then, Shall be a unit for us.' His images show that
like Iago he stands 'not in an emotional but in a rational relationship to his images.'

Oswald seeks to influence Marmaduke's mind with his bombastic words and highsounding images. Consider for instance the image of robbery which he uses to poison the mind of Marmaduke:

No less;
For that another in his child's affection
Should hold a place, as if 't were robbery, ...
he calls us "outlaws",
And, for yourself, in plain terms he asserts
This garb was taken up that indolence
Might want no cover, and rapacity
Be better fed. (I, 55-65)

He knows Marmaduke's anxiety to perpetrate justice and, therefore, uses language as the medium so as to arouse in him his sense of justice:

We have seen you
Stand like an isthmus twixt two stormy seas
That oft have checked their fury at your bidding. (II, 607-609)

He appeals to him to perpetrate justice because by the unnatural act of Herbert 'justice had been most cruelly defrauded'. He exhorts him: 'shall it be law to stab the petty robber/Who aims but at our purse; and shall this parricide' etc. His words are measured with cool and calculating guile, adjusting them to the person he has to deal with. He uses highsounding comparisons, antitheses and parallelisms to turn the scale in his favour.

In Act IV, when Oswald narrates the incident of his betrayal by the crew of the ship, he says that after overcoming his sense
of guilt he 'lay passive as a dormouse' and found a change in his attitude towards life:

False shame discarded, spurious Fame despised
Twin sisters both of Ignorance, I found
Life stretched before me smooth as some broad way
Cleared for a monarch's progress, Priests might spin
Their veil, but not for me - 'twas in fit place
Among its kindred cobwebs. (IV, 1834-39)

Now his purpose was to 'enlarge man's intellectual empire'. He sought relief in great actions because 'Fortitude is the child of enterprise'. He tells Marmaduke very confidently:

Young Man, the seed must lie
Hid in the earth, or there can be no harvest;
'Tis Nature's law. (IV, 1857-77)

Thus, the images used by Oswald are intended to reveal his character: a cool, calculating rationalist who employs language to inflame his hearer's passion through the aptness and logicality of his comparisons. This may sound paradoxical but this is in fact the effect achieved by Oswald's imagery. The propriety and reasonableness of his implied and expressed figures help him to lead his victims, Iago-like, by the nose - as asses are

Marmaduke, on the other hand, uses imagery very differently. In the beginning of the play he uses simple and austere language. He is confident of his powers. When Wilfred warns him about Oswald, he says:

Fear is like a cloak which old man huddle
About their love, as if to keep it warm. (I, 22-23)
It is only after the disturbing revelations of Oswald that he begins to feel 'the firm foundation' of his life shaking. The imagery afterwards shows the sensitive idealist in him (II, 776-86). When he begins to speak, images come to him effortlessly not as similes or metaphors but as immediate and spontaneous expression, which shows that he is a passionate soul. He cannot remove from his mind the thought of Herbert's injustice towards Idonea:

Could he look
To the unnatural harvest of that time.
When he should give her up, a Woman grown,
To him who bid the highest in the market
Of foul pollution --

(II, 1052-55)

Thoughts of corruption and poisoning abound in his imagery which show his disgust with the world. Herbert appears to him a 'cruel viper', Idonea is no more innocent now. She is also spoiled by this corruption (III, 1309-15). His imagery undergoes a significant change as soon as he is able to overcome his inner conflict. He is no longer interested in any proof as the crime of Herbert is so obvious that it hardly requires any proof.

'Ay, prove that when two peas
Lie snugly in a pod, the pod must then,
Be larger than the peas —! (III, 1240-43)

He is sure of the success of his plan. He will 'plant' himself near Lord Clifford's castle, 'a surly mastiff kennels at the gate', and then 'he shall howl and I will laugh, a medley/Most tunable'. Herbert is still a 'mole' and a 'viper' but he
will now remove him from his path.

Various themes of the play are also mediated again and again through the imagery. Marmaduke, while making a general comment on the situation, points out the real cause of evil and corruption. He raises those fundamental questions with which the play is concerned (II, 1029-35). He thus shifts our attention from the social and political aspects of a problem to the individual causes. The real source of evil lies in human nature itself. Evil operates through the latent malignity of human nature. Marmaduke takes the authority of God in his own hands to punish an evil man and leaves him on a 'bleak waste'. His aim was good, but the means he adopts cannot be justified. This theme of the baseness of human nature recurs in the speeches of Marmaduke:

We all are of one blood, our veins are filled
At the same poisonous fountain! (IV, 1738-39)

Animal imagery is employed by Oswald and Marmaduke for different purposes. Oswald highlights his own isolationist view of human life and the world of Nature when he tries to convince Marmaduke that killing a criminal is not a crime at all: 'If a snake crawl from beneath our feet we do not ask/A license to destroy him...' Later on when Marmaduke repents of his sins, Oswald says:

What! feel remorse, where, if a cat had sneezed,
A leaf had fallen, the thing had never been
Whose very shadow gnaws us to the vitals

(III, 1565-67)
Animal imagery serves a different purpose for Marmaduke. This kind of imagery is a part of Nature imagery and is characterised by Marmaduke's vision of Nature in which love and charity unify the human with the animal world. The childhood image of Herbert in Marmaduke's mind is associated with the huge Elm tree casting its shade over the village school. The emblematic figure of this tree expresses Marmaduke's unitive vision of life: Idonea's narration of the tales of her father's sufferings are inextricably associated in Marmaduke's mind with this overshadowing tree, and the tales in their turn were the occasion of the beginning of Marmaduke's love.

The animal world is characterised by the symbolic figure of the snake for Oswald marking the gulf that divides it from the human world. Reason and self-regard lead man to adopt an attitude of hostility towards the animal world. Oswald banks on the archetypal pattern of animosity between man and the serpent. Marmaduke, on the other hand, recognizes the animal world in terms of another representative and emblematic figure - that of the dog, friend to man and symbolic of the vital link that unites various forms of life. At the critical moment when he was about to murder Herbert, he was prevented from doing it by the image of the old man's dog:

Scarcely, by groping, had I reached the Spot,
When round my wrist I felt a cord drawn tight,
As if the blind Man's dog were pulling at it.

(II, 964-66)

Many more passages could be analysed to show that
Wordsworth's imagination has invested the play's language with two divergent visions of life - a means by which character-differentiation through imagery leads us to an appreciation of life-negating and life-affirming attitudes towards the world of Nature and of Man.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES


The importance of this theme was brought into sharp focus in 1987 staging of the play by Murray Biggs and members of the Yale Theatre Studies Program. On his first appearance Rivers (Oswald) uncovers his bald head emphasizing the fact that 'the dramatic focus of the play is on the mind of man'. See Julie Carlson, 'A New stage for Romantic Drama' in Studies in Romanticism, vol. 27 (Fall, 1988).

See, for example, 'Guilt and Sorrow', XXXVIII in The Poetical Works, op. cit., p. 113.


Wordsworth's concern with the vital link between Nature and humanity may be found to anticipate the vitalistic thought of the later nineteenth century. Vitalism found its fullest expression in the work of thinkers like Nietzsche and Bergson but its beginning may be traced in the Romantic poetry of the early nineteenth century. The Romantics, reacting against the mechanistic world-view of the eighteenth century, envisaged a living universe in which man and the world of Nature were organically united with each other.


George Steiner in his *The Death of Tragedy* (London, 1961), pp. 127-135, has pointed out that the optimistic outlook of the Romantics was one among the several causes of the decline of drama during this period.


2 Meyer, op. cit., p. 213.


"It was around Shakespearean drama that the romantic sensibility gathered its main force", says George Steiner. Shakespeare became an object of reverence for the romantic poets including Wordsworth. Shakespearean echoes and parallelisms abound in the poetry of Wordsworth's earlier period. The Borderers, too, is closely modelled upon Shakespearean tragedies. Shakespearean themes, situations, characters and imagery haunted Wordsworth when he was writing this play and they got embedded in The Borderers. Before going into details it would be pertinent, however, to trace briefly when and how Wordsworth came in contact with Shakespeare's plays.

The absorption of Shakespeare by Wordsworth is far more extensive than is generally realized. To Shakespeare, Wordsworth owed special allegiance. 'To Shakespeare he paid cordial and reverent homage, styling him, as I remember, the unapproached first of poets', writes Graves in one of his essays.² His attitude to the great master is made clear in one of his remarks which he made to defend himself from the charge of leaning towards Milton. He writes:

This is monstrous! I extol Chaucer and others because the world at large knows little or nothing of their merits. Modesty and deep feeling [-] how superfluous a thing it is to praise Shakespeare [-] have kept me often and almost habitually silent upon that subject. Who thinks it necessary to praise the Sun?³

The comparison of Shakespeare with the sun shows the
intensity of Wordsworth's feelings towards Shakespeare.

Wordsworth was not a frequent theatre visitor. A reference in *The Prelude*; 'a country-playhouse, some rude barn/ Tricked out for that proud use', shows that during his school days he was interested in the theatre. As a grown up man, he probably went with Dorothy to see the performance of Mrs. Siddons in *The Merchant of Venice* in December 1797. He seems to have attended the staging of *Julius Caesar*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Richard II* during the later period of his life (1812-15). Wordsworth might not have visited the theatre frequently, but he was interested in Shakespeare's plays. The fact becomes clear through a letter to his friend Beaumont, where he shows his serious concern at the poor performance of players while playing Shakespeare's characters:

I wish much to hear your further opinion of the young Roscius, above all of his Hamlet it is certainly impossible that he should understand the character, that is the composition of the character. But many of the sentiments that are put into Hamlet's mouth, he may be supposed to be capable of feeling, and to a certain degree of entering into the spirit of some of the situations. I never saw Hamlet acted myself nor do I know what kind of play they make of it. I think I have heard that some parts which I consider as among the finest are omitted; in particular, Hamlet's wild language after the Ghost has disappeared. The players have taken intolerable liberties with Shakespeare's plays, especially with Richard the Third, which though a character admirably conceived, and drawn, is in some scenes bad enough in Shakespeare himself, but the play, as it is now acted, has always appeared to me a disgrace to the English stage. Hamlet I suppose is treated by them with more reverence; they are both characters far, far above the abilities of any actor whom I have ever seen. Henderson was before my time, and of course Garrick.

Here, while making a comment on contemporary theatre, he
frankly admits his lack of knowledge of Shakespeare on the stage. His knowledge of his master was, therefore, confined more or less to his reading of Shakespeare's plays. A reference in The Prelude shows that the names of Shakespearean characters were 'household terms' in his childhood (vii, 527-29). Moreover, the poet's father set him very early to learn portions of the works of the best English poets by heart, so that at an early age he could repeat large portions of Shakespeare, Milton and Spenser. He owned copies of Enfield's The Speaker, Knox's Elegant Extracts and Bysshe's Art of English Poetry, each of which contains a number of Shakespeare's passage including the famous ones like the Dagger Scene in Macbeth and the Ghost Scenes in Hamlet. He also owned four editions of his plays, two of his poems and one of the sonnets. Moreover since his library included editions of the plays dated 1767, 1790 and 1796, it can be assumed that a lot of his reading was done before and during the composition of The Borderers. Dorothy, too, had a collection of her own as she writes to Jane Pollard:

I ha[ve] a very pretty little collection of Books from my Brothers [...] which they have given me ...and my brother Ric[hard] intends sending me Shakespeare's plays and the Spec[tator].

It is quite natural, therefore, to assume that the brother and the sister discussed the plays of Shakespeare.

All this is sufficient to prove Wordsworth's love for Shakespeare, and in his writings he tried to imitate and recreate the spirit of his master. With a mind saturated with Shakespeare
he started writing the play and, therefore, echoes and parallelisms of Shakespeare's plays abound in themes, characters, situations and even the phraseology of The Borderers. It is unfortunate, however, that no adequate study has been made of these numerous echoes sprinkled throughout the play. Critics and scholars have 'taken for granted' the influence of Shakespeare on the play and have not pursued the subject thoroughly. De Selincourt in his Oxford Lectures has confined himself mainly to the influence of Othello and in his edition of The Poetical Works gives a few parallels from other plays too. Peter Burra leaves the matter with the view that the study of the 'verbal reminiscences' of King Lear and Hamlet in The Borderers 'might prove a rewarding labour'. John Jones briefly discusses the relationship of King Lear with The Borderers but he does not touch on other tragedies. C. J. Smith takes upon himself the responsibility to deal with the matter in his elaborate article. Inspite of his exhaustive study several of the parallels and analogues either consciously or unconsciously seem to have been overlooked. Moreover, he joins hands with other critics in pointing out that this 'imitation' of Shakespeare is servile and mechanical and weakens the play. He writes:

The Borderers is modelled so closely upon Shakespeare's tragedies that its characters, scenes and dialogue are frequently adopted ready-made and never quite assimilated; moreover considering Wordsworth's purpose and the kind of play he was attempting, it is imitation of the wrong models.

Meyer, too, points out that the influence of Shakespeare is
'more apparent than real'.

Coming as it does from an eminent critic, the judgement would discourage a student of *The Borderers* from undertaking a close study of the Shakespearean analogues, echoes and parallelisms in Wordsworth's play. What Meyer seems to imply in his denial of the Shakespearean influence is the idea that Wordsworth was too keenly involved in the exploration of his own thematic concerns to care much for the imitations of Shakespeare. The heart of *The Borderers*, so would go the argument, is Wordsworthian rather than Shakespearean. Oswald is not a Machiavellian villain undermining the faith of his superior in his wife. He is a Godwinian rationalist trying to show that his opponent's quasi-mystical faith in Nature is ill-founded. The idea, thus, is that the play is rooted in Wordsworth's own struggle to grapple with intellectual and moral problems and not in his admiration for the art of a bygone age. Now if this is what is implied in Meyer's argument it may be rejected at once. For one thing, the Shakespearean imitations in Wordsworth's play are not imitations as such but analogues that act in a two-fold way. On the one hand, Wordsworth clarifies to himself the problems he is confronted with by referring to analogues in Shakespeare. On the other hand, through his attempts to clarify his own problems, he throws light on the meaning and significance of aspects of Shakespearean drama. We will see in what follows how Oswald makes the character of Iago a little better understood and, surprisingly, anticipates the Bradleian analysis of his character. We hope to show in what follows that interaction
between Wordsworth and Shakespeare is a clue to the study of both Wordsworth and Shakespeare.

I

That The Borderers is modelled on Shakespeare's plays becomes clear if we analyse the prefatory essay prefixed to the manuscript version of 1796-97 text, in which the dramatist makes an attempt to interpret the motives of the villain in the play in psychological terms. As J. B. Owen suggestively hints, this preface bears a resemblance to eighteenth century essays like Richardson's 'Philosophical Analysis and Illustration of some of Shakespeare's Remarkable Characters' and Whatley's 'Remarks on Some of the Characters of Shakespeare'. The character of Oswald, as it is analysed in the Preface, has its antecedents in some of Shakespeare's villains.

Wordsworth probably had in his mind the characters of Richard III and Edmund, when he describes the character of Oswald as guided by 'pride and love of distinction' with a 'strong tendency to vice'. He is a 'moral sceptic' who seeks relief from two sources, 'action and meditation'. Like Macbeth, Oswald is 'perpetually chasing a phantom; he commits new crimes to drive away the memory of the past'. The epithets used by Wordsworth for Oswald, 'the mild effusions of thought, the milk of human reason, are unknown to him' echoes the famous words of Lady Macbeth: 'It is too full o' th' milk of human kindness'. (I, v, 114-15).

He resembles Edmund in so far as he becomes 'an empiric, and a daring and unfeeling empiric. He disguises from himself his
own malignity by assuming the character of a speculator in morals, and one who has the hardihood to realize his speculations'.

The reference to Iago and the explorations of the motives of Oswald's malignity, which, as Wordsworth points out, are 'intelligible to all but careful observers' has its parallel in the 'motive-hunting of motiveless malignity' of Iago:

But there are particles of that poisonous mineral of which Iago speaks gnawing his inwards; his malevolent feelings are excited, and he hates the more deeply because he feels he ought not to hate.

Thus the preface to the play shows Wordsworth's indebtedness to Shakespearean villains.

II

One of the themes of Shakespearean tragedy is echoed in *The Borderers*. It may be noted that the villains in Shakespearean tragedies are all apostles of a very narrow conception of reason. Iago and Edmund both are rationalists in this sense. Their reason tells them that self-regard is the only criterion in their lives. Edmund is a worshipper of Nature but the meaning he puts into the word Nature is not that of traditional regard for values. On the other hand, it is only a justification of self-centeredness and self-regard. In his tragedies, on the whole, Shakespeare seems to contrast the shallow rationalism (a form of Machiavellianism) of his villains with a traditional set of values sanctioned by Christian ethics and religion. The death of
the protagonist or the suffering of the good character is immaterial. What actually matters in the play is the affirmation of certain traditional moral values. Particular characters do not embody these values. Actually they grope their way towards a recognition of these values. However, his plays are constructed in such a way that the theme of the inadequacy of shallow rationalism or individualism comes to the forefront. This theme is also present in the works of Shakespeare's contemporaries and successors. For example, in Cyril Tourneur's *The Atheist's Tragedy*, the villain D'Amville represents the inadequacy of shallow rationalism. It is to be noted that Wordsworth has put this theme in *The Borderers*. Oswald is a descendent of Iago and Edmund. In the very first soliloquy of Act II of the play he sneers at the 'fools of feeling' like Marmaduke because Marmaduke is not an apostle of shallow rationalism. Throughout the play this theme has been brought into the forefront through the two persons representing two contradictory approaches to life, and in our previous chapters we have already discussed this aspect in detail.

Another theme of the play that echoes through the entire series of Shakespeare's great tragedies is the responsibility of the protagonist to reestablish justice and restore moral order in society. In *Othello* and *Hamlet* the protagonist is placed above the existing conditions of society. The hero, takes upon himself, though reluctantly, this responsibility of executing justice. While doing so he has his own conscience to guide him.
for his belief in the capability of ordinary institutions of law is shaken. In Macbeth and King Lear, too, there is a 'suspensión or disruption' of moral order. Here also the protagonist has to work in his own individual capacity as 'the conventions of society do not cover the situation'. The Borderers in this respect is closer to Hamlet and Othello. The hero, Marmaduke, is of noble nature and he considers it his self-appointed task to punish the guilty and thus restore order. It must be noted, however, that while in these two Shakespearean plays the hero fights against evil or corruption solely because his own personal interest is at stake, in Wordsworth's play the hero is guided more by his reformative temperament to perpetrate justice. The lawlessness and anarchic conditions of the Border in which he is placed, provide him enough opportunities to do so. Moreover, the 'crimes' of the old man are enormous - beyond the reach of human thought: 'Earthly law/ Measures not crimes like his' and, therefore, as a divine agent it is his responsibility to punish the criminal. Though, there is Oswald who convinces him of Herbert's 'crime' by providing enough 'proofs'; he is left alone with his own intellect and conscience to guide him. The tragedy lies here in the fallibility of human judgement. Othello, misguided by Iago, comes to rely on his tainted judgement and is responsible for committing an 'honourable' murder. Hamlet suffers agonies trying to grope his way through moral and metaphysical uncertainties. Marmaduke, too, realizes in the end what 'intellectual and moral presumption he has been guilty of'. The
tragic theme of the fallibility of reason is thus something that Wordsworth shares with Shakespeare in his great tragedies. He also shares with him the idea that virtue itself may turn into vice through the fallibility of reason, and it is in this transformation that the tragedy of a great soul may be discovered to lie.

The theme of solitude and suffering as embodied in The Borderers can be traced to King Lear. The sufferings of Lear, though a necessary outcome of his own actions are further aggravated by the fury of nature till in the Storm Scenes he becomes a moving figure - deserted and isolated. He achieves a heroic grandeur because even in that state of isolation he can look beyond pain and suffering.

Wordsworth in his portrait of Herbert seems to have been inspired by Lear. The meek and humble figure of Herbert reminds us of the physical presence of Lear. His utter helplessness, his exposure to the fierceness of the stormy night where he moves like a ghostly shadow in a state of bewilderment seems to have its affinity with the isolation of Lear. With his death a shift in the focus takes place, and in the last two acts, Wordsworth 'dwells upon the contrasted solitudes of Oswald and Marmaduke'. Wordsworth is concerned here more with Marmaduke who now shares the spiritual isolation of Lear. Marmaduke refers at the end of the play to a state of mind beyond suffering when he advises Idonea:
Conflict must cease, and, in thy frozen heart,
The extremes of suffering meet in absolute peace.

In accepting the path of a lonely wanderer he accepts eternal suffering.

Another theme of *The Borderers* - the vital link between human and the natural universe - is both pseudo-Elizabethan and Wordsworthian.

Finally, the basic theme of the play, that is, inducement given to an innocent man to commit a crime, is analogous with that of *Othello* as we have seen throughout our discussion of the play.

III

As portrayed in the Preface, Oswald is the true descendent of Richard III, Iago and Edmund and the play shows how these models, particularly that of Iago, have been closely followed by Wordsworth. The description of Oswald in the Opening Scene: a man of 'crooked ways' from whose 'perverted soul can come no good' reminds us of Iago. There are several lines in the play that would exactly fit in the mouth of Iago also. For example, in the following lines Wordsworth seems to anticipate Bradley in his description of Iago's character:

...gratitude is a heavy burden.
To a proud soul.

Similarly the analysis of Oswald's character by Lacy and Wallace, in which they try to trace the motives of his villainy can be
applied to Iago also:

Natures such as his
Spin motives out of their bowels, Lacy
I learn'd this when I was a Confessor.
I know him well; there needs no other motive
Than that most strange incontinence in crime
Which haunts this Oswald. Power is life to him
And breath and being; where he can not govern
He will destroy. (II, 1427 - 34)

Oswald's motives, like those of Iago, include a craving for power. He is loath to accept the reality that a man whom he considers intellectually inferior to himself is loved by all. Like Iago, he has a contemptuous disregard of Marmaduke:

They chose him for their chief! - what covert part
He, in the preference, modest youth, might take,
I neither know nor care. (II, 551 - 53)

Oswald, like Iago, is proud and vain. The only important difference between the two is that while Iago's motives for villainy are shrouded in mystery, those of Oswald are made apparent through his soliloquies. Wordsworth's friend Coleridge thought that Iago had no motives; he was actuated by 'a motiveless malignity'. However, in Shakespearean Tragedy (1904), Bradley analysed Iago's motives and came to the conclusion that it was his vanity which motivated Iago's jealousy and his desire to bring about Othello's ruin. This analysis of 1904 seems to have been obliquely anticipated by Wordsworth in his conception of Oswald's character. We may describe Oswald as a Iago whose motives for villainy are made clearer than they are in
Shakespeare's play.

Oswald vaguely resembles Macbeth also when he seeks refuge in great actions in order to justify his previous criminal action and thus to rid himself of his feelings of guilt.

Marmaduke, too, has Othello and Hamlet as his prototypes. He is an Othello-figure, loving, noble, generous and trustful. A born leader who is favoured by the band as their 'much loved captain' has its parallel in the characterisation of the Moor. However, in his morbid doubts and gloomy fears, in his philosophical questioning and disgusted outlook, he is more like Hamlet. His delayed act of 'justice' unlike that of Othello is reminiscent of the 'to be or not to be' tendency of Hamlet-the noble idealist. Like him, he insists on proofs and lets slip the opportunities offered to him. His sympathetic feelings towards Herbert in the dungeon are like those of Othello, who, inspite of his firm belief in the degradation of Desdemona, has some instinctive love for her. His intuitive voice keeps whispering to the end that no one so lovely could be so impure. His vivid imagination which makes him see various symbolic figures in the dungeon is like that of Macbeth, committing a similar act.

Idonea, leading the blind Herbert in Act I, resembles Edgar in King Lear, who leads blind Gloucester. Then, she is like Cordelia too, careful of her father's needs but not unmindful of her lover. Like her, she tries to maintain a balance between her filial duties and womanly passions:
I was a woman;
And, balancing the hopes that are the dearest
To womankind with duty to my Father,
I yielded up those precious hopes, which nought
On earth could else have wrested from me:—if erring,
Oh, let me be forgiven. (III, 1613-18)

The Herbert-Idonea relationship also recalls the relationship between Lear and Cordelia.

C.J. Smith tries to equate Idonea with Ophelia also in so far as 'both weakly obey their father's injunctions against seeing their lovers, both are treated with scorn and cruelty by their lovers, and both blame themselves for what happens'.

The figure of Herbert as a blind, old weak and humble man is reminiscent of the image of Lear. His pathetic state and passionate plea remind us of Desdemona who in a similar manner pleads for her life.

The beggar-woman performs the function similar to that of Emilia. Like her, she too, though unknowingly, plays a large part in the conspiracy of the villain and later on discloses her part in the plot.

Wilfred, like Adam, in As You Like It is a loyal servant who remains faithful to his master.

Apart from themes and characters, various dramatic situations, too, in The Borderers are closely modelled upon scenes and situations in Shakespeare's tragedies.

Early in the play Oswald appears with a bunch of plants, including the wild rose, the poppy and the night shade. On being
asked about his choice by Marmaduke, he answers:

That which, while it is
Strong to destroy, is also strong to heal.

(I, 44-47)

A similar situation in which flower symbolism is exploited to reveal character occurs in Hamlet too, though in a different dramatic context, where Ophelia distributes flowers to each character (IV, v, 182-86).

Oswald's technique, in tempting Marmaduke into a crime, is precisely that of Iago. He would not like his victim to give easy credence to his fabrications and falsehood. He also plays Iago-like, the role of an honest counsellor. Like Iago, he moves very cleverly and as soon as Marmaduke starts giving credence to what he says, he himself raises doubts about Herbert:

Mar.: Ne'er may I own the heart
      That can not feel for one, helpless as he is.

Osw.: Thou know'st me for a Man not easily moved,
      Yet was I grievously provoked to think
      Of what I witnessed.

Mar.: This day will suffice
      To end her wrongs.

Osw.: But if the blind Man's tale
      Should yet be true? (I, 67-73)

This is similar to Iago's tempting of Othello. We are reminded of Marmaduke in the reactions of Othello after hearing the devised story of Desdemona's corruption, (which Iago says, he came to know from Cassio while he was talking in sleep):
Oth. : O monstrous! monstrous!
Iago.: Nay this was but his dream
Oth. : But this denoted a forgone conclusion
Iago.: 'Tis a shrewd doubt, though it be but a dream
Oth. : I'll tear her all to pieces
Iago.: Nay, but be wise: Yet we see nothing done
She may be honest yet. (III, iii, 431-36)

In the same scene Marmaduke narrates to Oswald the story of
his past — how he fell in love with Idonea. This narration
resembles faintly Othello’s description in Act I, Sc. iii.
Marmaduke began to love Idonea while hearing the tales of her
father’s adventures and Othello wooed Desdemona while telling her
about his own thrilling experiences.

The situation where Idonea appears on the scene, leading
blind Herbert has its parallel in King Lear where blind
Gloucester is led by an old man (IV, i).

Herbert’s recollection of his unfortunate past is
reminiscent of the speeches of Prospero (I, ii) in which he tells
his daughter Miranda about the events just before and after her
birth. Dramatically too, both the scenes serve the same purpose.
The device of ‘retrospective narration’ is used so as to make the
audience aware of those events which had happened off-stage.

Oswald’s soliloquy in the beginning of Act II, lines 551-61,
where he expresses contempt for Marmaduke resembles that of Iago
in (III, iii, 325-36). The jubilant triumph of Oswald is
similar to that of Iago, who after getting the handkerchief of
Desdemona plans to drop it in Cassio’s lodging. Oswald too,
gloats over the success of his plans as he has already poisoned
the mind of Marmaduke and now a few swelling phrases will do the business.

Oswald's suggestion (I, 595-98) is an open provocation to Marmaduke to take law in his own hand. He is suggesting the ways in which Herbert can be punished. It recalls Iago in a similar situation suggesting to Othello that Desdemona could be strangulated in her bed (IV, i, 203-204).

In the Dungeon Scene (Act II), various exhortations by Oswald to motivate Marmaduke remind us of Iago who, too, constantly appeals to Othello's nobler instincts. Both exhort their respective victims in the name of justice. The sarcasm in the following lines is very much like that of Iago when Othello falters:

We should deserve to wear a cap and bells,  
Three good round years, for playing the fool here  
In such a night as this.  

The comment is an echo of the Fool's words in King Lear:  
The cold night will turn us all to fools and madmen.  

Marmaduke's state of mind, his 'mortal stupor' and 'drowsy shiverings', his unknown fears, when he tries to kill Herbert is very much like that of Macbeth before and after the murder of Duncan. Oswald's advice to Marmaduke after he returns without killing Herbert:

In the torrent hard by there is water enough to wash away all the blood in the universe.
echoes Macbeth's words after the murder of Duncan:

Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? (II, ii, 60-61)

Marmaduke's imagination prevents him from murdering the old man. The plea he puts forward:

The features of Idonea
Lurked in his face - (II, 967-68)

recalls Lady Macbeth's words:

Had he not resembled
My father as he slept, I had done't. (II, ii, 12-13)

After hearing the false account of Idonea's infidelity, Marmaduke is bewildered. However, he tries to seek refuge in the philosophy of Oswald:

Now for the corner stone of my philosophy:
I would not give a denier for the man
Who, on such provocation as this earth
Yields, could not chuck his babe beneath the chin,
And send it with a fillip to its grave. (1240-44)

His speech reminds us of Lady Macbeth's invocation of spirits after getting the news of Duncan's arrival:

Come you spirits
Come to my woman's breasts
And take my milk for gall, you murd'ring ministers
Wherever in your sightless substance ...(I, v, 37-45)

Oswald's attempt to calm down the agitated mind of
Marmaduke:

Osw.: I see I have disturbed you.
Mar.: By no means
Osw.: . . . .
      Nay you are pale, (III, 1552-69)

reminds us of Iago in a similar situation:

Iago.: I see this hath a little dashed up your spirits
Oth. : Not a jot, not a jot.
       . . . . .
Iago.: My lord, I see you are moved (III, iii, 219-28)

The cave image in the pilgrim's account of his association with Herbert bears resemblance to the one in King Lear while the following words of Idonea:

The storm beats hard - Mercy for poor or rich,
Whose heads are shelterless in such a night!  
      (IV, 1882-83)

remind us of several comments of Lear in the Storm Scene.

C. J. Smith helps us in pointing out that the ending of The Borderers has close verbal echoes of Othello and other tragedies of Shakespeare. In Wordsworth's play Marmaduke at the end of the play recapitulates his noble past:

Many there be whose eyes will not want cause
To weep that I am gone.  
      (2292-93)

and Othello is sure that:

I have done the state some service, and they know 't.  
      (V, ii, 342)

Both are anxious that posterity must be made aware of their
deeds. Marmaduke's words:

Raise on that dreary waste a monument
That may record my story ... (2294-95)

echo Othello's who says in a similar manner:

I pray you, in your letters,
When you shall these unlucky deeds relate .... 
(V, i, 343-44)

Hamlet, too, is anxious:

And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain
To tell my story. 
(V, i, 340-41)

Marmaduke's words where he condemns suicide:

. . . have fallen,
Like the old Roman, on their own sword's point. 
(V, 2310-11)

echo Macbeth's words at the close of his life:

Why could I play the Roman fool, and die
On mine own sword? 
(V, viii, 1-2)

The close Shakespearean echoes and parallelisms in The Borderers are too numerous to be regarded as a matter of chance. Any one who has carefully gone through our discussion of the themes and characterisation in Wordsworth's play given in earlier chapters must have realized that the relationship between The Borderers and Shakespeare's great tragedies is not just a matter of juvenile imitation. We have tried to show that in spite of its drawbacks, the play is a serious and moderately successful
attempt on the part of Wordsworth to grapple with profound moral and psychological truths. It is now our contention that in his groping towards these truths, Wordsworth was greatly helped by Shakespearean analogies.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES


Wordsworth's Library, 232-3, 304. See Jonathan Bate, Ibid.


C. J. Smith, op. cit. p. 625.


C. J. Smith discusses this theme in detail in his article (op. cit., pp. 629-30).

John Jones traces the similarities in Wordsworth's delineation of the theme of suffering in The Borderers and in *King Lear* (op. cit., pp. 57-61).

Wordsworth's use of archaic words is partly to give a medieval touch to the play but mainly, because of Shakespeare's influence.

C. J. Smith, op. cit., p. 635.

Smith points out many Shakespearean echoes in the 1797 version of the play (op. cit., pp. 34-38).

Meyer points out that Marmaduke's behaviour in the third act is suggestive of the feigned madness of Hamlet (op. cit., p.206).

APPENDIX

Even a casual reading of The Borderers makes it clear that its language has various words and phrases in common with Shakespearean vocabulary and phraseology. Some of the verbal echoes are given in C.J. Smith and others. In this Appendix we give only those close verbal echoes which have so far escaped the attention of other scholars.

In the beginning of the play Herbert and Idonea are talking to each other. The following words of Herbert:

As if we were two songsters bred  
In the same nest, my spring time one with thine.  
(I, 150-51)

echo Lear's words in the famous 'gilded butterfly' passage in King Lear:

We two alone will sing like birds i'th' cage ...  
(V, iii, 9)

Similarly Idonea's words to her father:

But let this kiss speak what is in my heart.  
(I, 212)

recall those of Cordelia, who speaks to her mad father in the same manner:

... and let this kiss  
Repair those violent harms ...  (IV, vii, 27-28)

Oswald's contemptuous tone, 'Ha! as I live' (I, 332) is remarkably similar to that of Iago: 'Ha! I like not that'. (III, iii, 35).
Moreover, his words about Marmaduke 'fools of feeling' are an obvious echo of Iago's comment on Othello, 'credulous fools' (IV, i, 44).

Oswald's exhorting words to Marmaduke before Lacy and Wallace, 'Are we men ... ?' (II, 1073) echo Iago's words, while he exhorts Othello: 'Are you a man ?' (III, iii, 378). Oswald's words in the same line of the above quoted passage, '... Or own we baby spirits' are close to Lady Macbeth's words when she rebukes her husband:

'tis the eye of childhood,  
That fears a painted devil. (II, ii, 54-55)

Marmaduke's love for Herbert as he leaves him on the moor is reflected in the words: 'A masterpiece of Nature' (III, 1275-76). His words recall Othello's when he is about to kill Desdemona: 'pattern of excelling nature' (V, ii, 11).

'Misery !' - (III, 1207) Marmaduke utters one word after hearing the story of Idonea's corruption, very much in the manner of Othello who, too, on a similar occasion unburdens the anguish of his heart in a brief phrase: 'O Misery!' (III, iii, 175).

Marmaduke's words to Idonea, 'Thou art a woman/To bring perdition on the universe' (III, 1636-37) faintly echo Othello's: 'Perdition catch my soul' (III, iii, 91).

Finally, Idonea's feelings of grief, expressed in words: '... no, no, no, ...' (V, 2220) is like that of Lear in the last act 'Never, never, never, never, never' (V, iii, 308).
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