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To the Committee on Graduate Study:

I am submitting to you a thesis written by Mary Weaver Sweet entitled "The Influence of Shakespeare upon Wordsworth." I recommend that it be accepted for nine quarter hours of credit in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in English.

Alwyn Thaler
Major Professor

We have read this thesis
and recommend its acceptance:

Kenneth Curry

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Accepted for the Committee

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THE INFLUENCE OF SHAKESPEARE UPON WORDSWORTH

A THESIS

Submitted to
The Committee on Graduate Study
of
The University of Tennessee
in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the degree of
Master of Arts

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by

Mary Weaver Sweet

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	iii
I. WHAT WORDSWORTH SAYS ABOUT SHAKESPEARE . .	1
II. RECOLLECTIONS OF SHAKESPEARE IN *THE BORDERERS*	37
III. ECHOES OF SHAKESPEARE IN *THE PRELUDE* AND OTHER POEMS	57
IV. CONCLUSION	81
BIBLIOGRAPHY	86

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INTRODUCTION

Many notable influences are apparent in the writings of William Wordsworth, as, indeed, in the works of many creative artists. Arnold, Grierson, De Selincourt, Legouis, Havens, and other Wordsworth scholars have written much concerning the influence of Milton upon Wordsworth. Certainly his poetry has many "Miltonic echoes" which testify to the "completeness with which he had absorbed his master."[1] His early poems, "Descriptive Sketches" and "Evening Walk," bear "painful witness" to the influence of the minor eighteenth-century writers: Warton, Thomson, Gray, Collins, and others. Seventeenth-century and eighteenth-century philosophers influenced his thinking in his search for a metaphysical basis of his theory of life.[2] His poetry is filled with simile, metaphor, and allusion drawn from the pages of books of travel and exploration.[3] Another influence upon the great nature poet, although less obvious than some of those mentioned above, is none the less real--the influence of William Shakespeare, for Wordsworth's poetry "abounds

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[1]William Wordsworth, The Prelude, edited by Ernest De Selincourt (London, 1926), p. xxx.

[2]Arthur Beatty, William Wordsworth, His Doctrine and Art in Their Historical Relation, University of Wisconsin Studies (Madison, 1922), XVII, 17.

[3]De Selincourt, op. cit., p. xxix.

in reminiscence of Shakespearian scene and phrasing."[4]

It is easy to overrate or underrate, very hard to weigh with precision the influence of one writer upon another. The task here attempted is that of sketching the influence Shakespeare had upon a mind differing from his in a thousand ways, but a mind "gifted with a penetrative imagination that none of our poets, save Shakespeare, can surpass."[5]

There are three possible ways to discover Shakespeare's influence upon Wordsworth: first, to collect and analyze what Wordsworth actually says about Shakespeare in his prose writings, his conversations, and his poetical works; second, to observe the similarities in ideas and in phrasing between the two poets which indicate that Wordsworth echoed, consciously or unconsciously, the thoughts and the words of his great predecessor; and last, to co-ordinate these findings with those of the many critics of Shakespeare and of Wordsworth who have already contributed valuable information on the subject.

I wish to make grateful acknowledgement to Dr. Alwin Thaler for suggesting the theme of this study and for supervising and directing its completion. Also my sincere thanks go to Dr. Kenneth Curry and Dr. John A. Hansen for the valuable assistance and criticism they gave in its development.

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[4] Ibid., pp. xxix-xxx.

[5] Ibid., p. li.

CHAPTER I

WHAT WORDSWORTH SAYS ABOUT SHAKESPEARE

> If by existence we mean not merely the act of appearing bodily in the world during a certain time, but also the bequeathing of a train of influences visibly affecting the whole subsequent course of things, and especially the thoughts of men, then no man of the modern world can be said to have existed more largely than Shakespeare.[1]

Truly great minds recognize and acknowledge greatness in others. That Wordsworth recognized the genius of Shakespeare is evident by his own words; that he admired him to the point of imitation is undeniable. Few poets were better acquainted with their great predecessors than Wordsworth. He says:

> When I began to give myself up to the profession of a poet for life, I was impressed with a conviction, that there were four English poets whom I must have continually before me as examples--Chaucer, Shakespeare, Spenser, and Milton. These I must study, and equal if I could; and I need not think of the rest.[2]

Emile Legouis, Wordsworth's French biographer, says it was no accident that Wordsworth knew these poets. In his youth the boy's mother had been his first teacher, giving him instruction in reading, while his father had required him to

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[1]David Masson, Shakespeare Personally (London, 1914), p. 1.

[2]Christopher Wordsworth, Memoirs, II (London, 1851), p. 470.

memorize long passages of Shakespeare, Milton, and Spenser.[3] This early training was of greater use to him than any teaching he received at school, for through it the boy Wordsworth "came alive" with the thoughts, the ideas, and the ideals of his forerunners. Wordsworth himself attributed his intellectual development to his private reading, rather than to the tasks which were prescribed for him at school.[4]

"Fair seed-time had my soul,"[5] wrote Wordsworth in middle life of his happy, carefree childhood at Cockermouth before his mother's death, and of the joyous school-time at Hawkshead. William Taylor, the headmaster at Hawkshead (idealized as the "Matthew" of his poems), was the first to encourage the boy to write poetry. Taylor, an ardent lover of nature, "kindled the flame" in young William. These happy hours Wordsworth regarded in later life as holy and mysterious.

> Oft in these moments such a holy calm
> Would overspread my soul, that bodily eyes
> Were utterly forgotten, and what I saw
> Appeared like something in myself, a dream,
> A prospect in the mind.[6]

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[3]Emile Legouis, Early Life of Wordsworth, 1770-1798, translated by J. A. Matthews (New York, 1918), p. 27.

[4]Ibid., p. 37.

[5]The Prelude, Book I, 301. (All references to Wordsworth's poetry are to De Selincourt's edition of Wordsworth's Poetical Works unless otherwise indicated.)

[6]Ibid., Book II, 348-352.

When he was at Cambridge, he continued his free contacts with nature. In The Prelude he describes the hours in which he "paced alone the level fields,"[7] and "perused The common countenance of earth and sky."[8] Of these rich impressions he says:

> I had a world about me--'twas my own;
> I made it, for it only lived to me,
> And to the God who sees into the heart.[9]

But while thus "perusing" the face of nature, he also read the great poets. Beside the pleasant mill of Trompington he "laughed with Chaucer";[10] he called Spenser "Brother, Englishman, and Friend!"[11] and he saw "our blind Poet, who in his later day, Stood almost single."[12] Through the world of nature and of books he roamed

> As through a wide museum from whose stores
> A casual rarity is singled out
> And has its brief perusal, then gives way
> To others, all supplanted in their turn.[13]

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[7] Ibid., Book III, 93.

[8] Ibid., Book III, 109-110.

[9] Ibid., III, 144-146.

[10] Ibid., III, 278.

[11] Ibid., III, 285.

[12] Ibid., III, 286-287.

[13] Ibid., III, 620-623.

Thus his early life, besides nurturing his love for nature, also developed his understanding for all which was best in books.

In the years following his graduation at Cambridge in 1791, and his settlement at Racedown in 1795, Wordsworth experienced what M. Legouis calls a "moral crisis," which came as a result of his disappointment over the turn of the French Revolution, his repudiation of Godwinism, and his remorse over leaving his French sweetheart, Annette Vallon. It was during these "years of strife" that Wordsworth wrote his play, The Borderers, which in characterization, in plot, in situation, and in language shows the influence of Shakespeare upon his writings at this time.

In 1795, Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy settled at Racedown, where their friendship with Samuel Taylor Coleridge led to an "outburst of poetic activity."[14] The Wordsworth-Coleridge association is important in this discussion, because Coleridge revered Shakespeare to the point of adoration. In his Biographia Literaria Coleridge says:

> During the first year that Mr. Wordsworth and I were neighbours, our conversation turned frequently on the two cardinal points of poetry, the power of

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[14]Thomas Hutchinson, Wordsworth's Poetical Works (London, 1916), "Chronological Table," p. xxvii.

> exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colors of imagination.[15]

After a lengthy discussion of these two points Coleridge adds:

> In the application of these principles to purposes of practical criticism as employed in the appraisal of works more or less imperfect, I have endeavoured to discover what the qualities in a poem are, which may be deemed promises and specific symptoms of poetic power. . . . In this investigation, I could not, I thought, do better, than keep before me the earliest work of the greatest genius, that perhaps human nature has yet produced, our myriad-minded Shakespeare.[16]

That Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Dorothy spent many hours in similar discussions is not mere supposition. They formed a friendship

> so close and constant, and the genius of the three was so glowing with early fire, that it was a real creative fusion, like the welding of metals. 'We are three people,' said Coleridge, 'but only one soul.' And the first tangible result of this friendship was the Lyrical Ballads, which changed the face of English literature.[17]

Since the poetry in the Lyrical Ballads broke away from the neoclassical tradition which had ruled during the

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[15]Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, edited by J. Shawcross. 2 vols (Oxford, 1907), II, 5.

[16]Ibid., p. 13.

[17]David Watson Rannie, Wordsworth and His Circle (London, 1907), p. 67.

previous hundred years, Wordsworth, encouraged by Coleridge, wrote a prose preface to the publication giving his views on the nature of poetry, on the truth of language, and the function of metre. In 1802 he wrote an appendix to the preface in which he discussed poetic diction. Then in 1815, when he first collected his poetical works, he wrote another preface enumerating the various forms of poems contained in his collection, and discussing the powers requisite for the production of poetry. The "Essay, Supplementary to the Preface" analyzes the poetic taste of the public and contains many references to Shakespeare.

Professor Arthur Beatty, in his study of the mature theories and poetry of Wordsworth, says that one must know these prefaces in order to understand Wordsworth's poetic practices and beliefs. The theories which he sets forth in them reveal the strong influence of seventeenth and eighteenth-century philosophers, notably David Hartley, Lord Kames, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Hugh Blair, Archibald Alison, and Erasmus Darwin.[18] Professor Beatty cites passages in Wordsworth's prefaces which parallel the ideas of Reynolds, Hartley, Blair, and others, indicating that Wordsworth began his literary

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[18] Beatty, op. cit., p. 33.

criticisms as an adherent of the school of taste. These writers and Wordsworth share certain fundamental principles. They hold that: (1) Taste is acquired by a study of the masters. (2) Every poem or painting must have unity or uniformity and its contradictory quality, variety. (3) The feelings or emotions of beauty or sublimity are not simple and innate, but complex, and are the result of experience. This is called associationism.[19] In discussing Wordsworth's knowledge of English philosophy, Professor Beatty shows why the poet approached his poetic theories by way of associationism and discussed them in such terms as nature, emotion, imagination, fancy, activity, power, and reason. Wordsworth's reactionary theories, both in art and in morals and conduct, says Beatty, led him to the earlier authors and philosophers whose teachings and practices had been ignored by later writers. Thus, Wordsworth revolted against eighteenth-century poetic diction and returned to Milton, Shakespeare, and Chaucer; in philosophy he revolted against Rousseau and Godwin, and adopted Hartley, Locke, and the general tradition of English philosophy. The substance of Wordsworth's poetry and prose is "philosophic in that it is an analysis of the human mind and an examination into the validity of the knowledge on which men act and form moral and social judgments and institutions."[20]

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[19] Ibid., pp. 34-43.

[20] Ibid., p. 17.

He was constantly trying to find out the truth concerning the instincts, affections, and passions of mankind. In his search he studied life not only directly, but sought its reflection also in books that dealt with realities: books of travel, of science, of philosophy, and more especially books of poetry by his favorite authors--Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton.[21]

> By the authority of Shakespeare and Milton he judges the riot of external sensuous imagery in which the theorists and practitioners of 'poetic diction' indulged, and sets out to classify the ideas of the time on poetic theory by calling attention to the great tradition of the English language and by pointing out that any permanent and 'philosophic' language must be based, not on the mere authority of self-constituted critics, but on real experiences of real people.[22]

In the preface to the second edition of Lyrical Ballads, Wordsworth explains that poets of every age make a formal engagement to "gratify certain known habits of association" when they write in verse. People in different eras of literature have enjoyed various forms of metrical language:

> for example, in the age of Catullus, Terence, and Lucretius, and that of Statius or Claudian; and in our own country, in the age of Shakespeare

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[21] Ibid., p. 18.

[22] Loc. cit.

> and Beaumont and Fletcher, and that of Donne and Cowley, or Dryden, or Pope.[23]

As for the poems in the Lyrical Ballads, Wordsworth believes that many readers will feel that he has not kept the terms of an agreement he has "voluntarily contracted" in that he has not conformed to the style of writing prevalent at that time. It is his purpose "to choose incidents and situations from common life," and to relate them in a "language really used by men," for this language, he believes, is adaptable to the purposes of poetic pleasure. He condemns the gaudy and inane phraseology of many of his contemporaries and gives warning to his readers that they will suffer with feelings of strangeness when they read his poetry.[24]

His aim is to present "a natural delineation of human passions, human characters, and human incidents." In so doing, he is following in the steps of those who have written "valuable works" that will endure.

> It is apprehended, that the more conversant the reader is with our elder writers, and with those in modern times who have been most successful in painting manners and passions, the fewer complaints will he have to make.[25]

In the preface to the second edition to Lyrical Ballads he continues:

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[23]"Preface to the Second Edition. . . Lyrical Ballads," II, 386.

[24]"Advertisement to the Lyrical Ballads, 1798," II, 383.

[25]Ibid., II, 383-384.

> The invaluable works of our elder writers, I had almost said the works of Shakespeare and Milton, are driven into neglect by frantic novels, sickly and stupid German Tragedies, and deluges of idle and extravagant stories in verse.--When I think upon this degrading thirst after outrageous stimulation I am almost ashamed to have spoken of the feeble endeavour made in these volumes to counteract it. . . .[26]

In brief, the form which his "feeble endeavour" assumed was: first, each of his poems was to have a purpose; second, the feeling therein developed should give importance to the action and situation, and not the action and situation to the feeling; third, there would be little poetic diction found in his poems. He was endeavoring to replace poetic language with a language of simplicity. To Wordsworth "triviality and meanness" of thought and language had no place in poetry. His fundamental creed was that "all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling,"[27] and should have thrown over it "a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect."[28]

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[26] "Preface to the Second Edition . . . of Lyrical Ballads," II, 389.

[27] Ibid., p. 387.

[28] Ibid., p. 386.

Professor R. D. Havens says that to Wordsworth "imagination is the central, the one essential quality of the poetic mind."[29] He contends, however, that Wordsworth's imagination differs from Shakespeare's in that he deals with the familiar and the real rather than with the unusual and improbable.[30]

In the "Preface to the Editon of 1815" Wordsworth lists imagination as one of the "powers requisite for the production of poetry."[31] He discusses the "all-importance" of imagination as a poetic gift and quotes in part from the famous passage in A Midsummer Night's Dream,[32] when he describes imagination as

> that faculty of which the Poet is "all compact;" he whose eye glances from earth to heaven, whose spiritual attributes body forth what his pen is prompt in turning to shape. . . .[33]

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[29] Raymond Dexter Havens, The Mind of a Poet (Baltimore, 1941), p. 255.

[30] Ibid., p. 249.

[31] "Preface to the Edition of 1815," II, 432.

[32] A Midsummer Night's Dream, V, 1, 12-17.

> The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
> Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
> And as imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name.

All references to Shakespeare are to The Complete Works of William Shakespeare, edited by George Lyman Kittredge (Boston, 1941).

[33] "Preface to the Edition of 1815," II, 436.

Wordsworth says that the images in his poetry are not merely a "faithful copy" of external objects in the mind, but they denote "operations of the mind upon those objects, and processes of creation or of composition, governed by certain fixed laws."[34] He illustrates the workings of the imagination by citing passages from Virgil, Shakespeare, and Milton, dwelling upon imaginative connotations of words. The passage he quotes from Shakespeare is taken from King Lear:

> Hangs half way down
> one who gathers samphire. . . .[35]

Here the word hangs does not mean that the samphire-gatherer literally hangs like a monkey or parrot, but rather it is used metaphorically, flashing upon the mind an illusion of something hanging.[36]

In the "Preface to the Edition of 1815," Wordsworth has much to say concerning the difference between imagination and fancy. Imagination, he says, "shapes and creates." It gives order, unity, and significance to phenomena; whereas fancy is used chiefly to entertain.[37] Fancy does not fuse or

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[34] Loc. cit.

[35] Loc. cit., (quoted from King Lear, IV, vi, 14-15).

[36] Ibid., II, 438.

[37] Ibid., II, 441.

transform the material it handles. Again he quotes from "Fancy's Child"--this time from Romeo and Juliet--the lines which describe Queen Mab as coming

> In shape no bigger than an agate-stone
> On the fore-finger of an alderman.[38]

Fancy is free, capricious, playful, and extravagant; imagination, on the contrary, is bound to truth and reality and is

> but another name for absolute power
> And clearest insight, amplitude of mind,
> And Reason in her most exalted mood.[39]

Two kinds of poetical imagination Wordsworth mentions.

> The grand store-houses of enthusiastic and meditative Imagination, of poetical, as contra-distinguished from human and dramatic Imagination, are the prophetic and lyrical parts of the Holy Scriptures, and the works of Milton; to which I cannot forbear to add those of Spenser. . . . Of the human and dramatic Imagination the works of Shakespeare are an inexhaustible source.[40]

To illustrate the latter, Wordsworth quotes again from King Lear:

> I tax not you, ye Elements, with unkindness,
> I never gave you kingdoms, call'd you Daughters![41]

Another article in Wordsworth's creed is that poetry should aim to "produce excitement" together "with an overbalance of pleasure." Even when the subject is painful in

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[38] Loc. cit., (quoted from Romeo and Juliet, I, iv, 55-56).

[39] The Prelude, XIV, 190-192.

[40] "Preface to the Edition of 1815," II, 439-440.

[41] Loc. cit., (quoted inaccurately by Wordsworth from King Lear, III, ii, 16-17).

itself, the poet must so treat it that the result will yield pleasure. Shakespeare does this, he says, in his most pathetic scenes, which never act upon us beyond the bounds of pleasure.[42] This pleasure is secured partly through the influence of metre, which tends to temper "the painful feeling always found intermingled with powerful descriptions of the deeper passions."[43] Wordsworth believed that

> The Poet writes under one restriction only, namely, the necessity of giving immediate pleasure to a human Being possessed of that information which may be expected from him, not as a lawyer, a physician, a mariner, an astronomer, or a natural philosopher, but as a Man.[44]

Tranio says much the same in The Taming of the Shrew:

> No profit grows where is no pleasure ta'en.[45]

But poetry to Wordsworth is not mere entertainment. It

> is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all Science. Emphatically may it be said of the Poet, as Shakespeare hath said of man, "that he looks before and after."[46] He is

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[42]"Preface to the Second Edition . . . of Lyrical Ballads," II, 400.

[43]Ibid., II, 401.

[44]Ibid., II, 395.

[45]The Taming of the Shrew, I, i, 39.

[46]Here Wordsworth is quoting from Hamlet, IV, iv, 33-39.

> What is a man,
> If his chief good and market of his time
> Be but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more.
> Sure he that made us with such large discourse,
> Looking before and after, gave us not
> That capability and godlike reason
> To fust in us unus'd.

> the rock of defence for human nature; an upholder and preserver, carrying everywhere with him relationship and love.[47]

He is the man "who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind. . . ."[48] This opinion of Wordsworth's probably harks back to Dryden's "Essay of Dramatic Poesy," in which Dryden affirms that Shakespeare was "the man who of all modern and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul."[49] Or again, Wordsworth may have been recalling his conversations with Coleridge who describes Shakespeare as "the greatest genius, that perhaps human nature has yet produced."[50] At all events, Wordsworth once more agrees with Shakespeare that the poet should be imbued with more understanding than ordinary men.

In the "Essay, Supplementary to the Preface," Wordsworth proposes to take a hasty retrospect of the poetical literature of the last two centuries. Two things he asserts: first, lasting success is the ultimate test of genius; second, the best poetry does not instantly achieve popularity. After

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[47]"Preface to the Second Edition. . .of Lyrical Ballads," II, 396.

[48]Ibid., II, 393.

[49]John Dryden, "An Essay of Dramatic Poesy," in The Best of Dryden, edited by Louis I. Brevold (New York, 1933), p. 432. This fact, not generally recognized, was called to my attention by Dr. Alwin Thaler.

[50]See above, p. 5.

discussing the greatness of Spenser and his waning popularity, he turns to Shakespeare.

> A dramatic Author, if he write for the stage, must adapt himself to the taste of the audience, or they will not endure him; accordingly the mighty genius of Shakespeare was listened to. The people were delighted; but I am not sufficiently versed in stage antiquities to determine whether they did not flock as eagerly to the representation of many pieces of contemporary Authors, wholly undeserving to appear upon the same boards. Had there been a formal contest for the superiority among dramatic writers, that Shakespeare, like his predecessors Sophocles and Euripides, would have often been subject to the mortification of seeing the prize adjudged to sorry competitors, becomes too probable . . . . At all events, that Shakespeare stooped to accommodate himself to the People, is sufficiently apparent; and one of the most striking proofs of his almost omnipotent genius, is, that he could turn to such glorious purpose those materials which the prepossessions of the age compelled him to make use of. Yet even this marvellous skill appears not to have prevented his rivals from having some advantage over him in public estimation. . . .[51]

This lengthy passage contains in essence the opinion Wordsworth had of Shakespeare. The phrase "almost omnipotent genius," is an even stronger hyperbole than Coleridge's well known tribute, "our myriad-minded Shakespeare."[52] Almost every English and American poet of note has left a tribute to the greatest of all poets, but none has phrased it more roundly than Wordsworth.

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[51]"Essay, Supplementary to the Preface," II, 414-415.

[52]See above, p. 5.

Wordsworth's opinion that Shakespeare's works "made but little impression upon the ruling Intellects of the time" was not correct, for much evidence to the contrary has come down to us.[53] Shakespeare was summoned by Queen Elizabeth to play before her and the court at Greenwich. The esteem which King James had for his tragedies is well known. Hamlet was acted in the first year of its production in London and at Oxford and Cambridge. Classical Ben Jonson, poet, scholar, and dramatist, called him

> Soul of the Age!
> The applause! delight! the wonder of our Stage![54]

Nor was Wordsworth's statement that Shakespeare's genius was not realized during the Restoration wholly true. Certainly during this period literary taste was at a low ebb, and naturally the plays of Shakespeare were neglected at a time when the emphasis was upon the artificial and the formal. Wordsworth quotes Dryden as telling us

> that in his time two of the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher were acted for one of Shakespeare's. And so faint and limited was the perception of the poetic beauties of the dramas in the time of Pope, that, in his Edition of the Plays, with a view of rendering

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[53] "Essay, Supplementary to the Preface," II, 415.

[54] Ben Jonson, "To the Memory of My Beloved, the Author, Mr. William Shakespeare and What He Hath Left Us," in The Poems of Ben Jonson, edited by H. Newdigate (Oxford, 1936), p. 243.

> to the general reader a necessary service, he printed between inverted commas those passages which he thought most worthy of notice.[55]

In scanning the countries of Europe to determine the poetical prestige of Shakespeare in 1800, Wordsworth concluded that they had not come to the full realization of the superiority of Shakespeare. The French critics, he observed, had an aversion for "this darling of our Nation"; the best educated of the Italians, although they were familiar with the English language, were "wholly incompetent to measure the proportions of Shakespeare"; only the Germans were beginning to know and feel his greatness; even the English people seemed to hold him lightly by referring to him as "a wild irregular genius, in whom great faults are compensated by great beauties."[56] Wordsworth hoped that this conception would soon pass and that the people would universally acknowledge that

> the judgment[57] of Shakespeare in the selection of his materials, and in the manner in which he has made them, heterogeneous as they often are, constitute a unity of their own, and contribute all to one great end. . . .[58]

Wordsworth accepts the sonnets of Shakespeare as autobiographical. He describes them as poems in which the author

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[55]"Essay, Supplementary to the Preface," II, 415.

[56]Ibid., II, 415-416.

[57]Wordsworth and Coleridge were in entire agreement concerning the judgment of Shakespeare. See "Shakespeare's Judgment Equal to His Genius," in Coleridge's Shakespearian Criticism, edited by Thomas M. Raysor (Cambridge, 1930), I, 219-222.

[58]"Essay, Supplementary to the Preface," II, 416.

expresses his own feelings in his own person. Elsewhere he reiterates this belief when he says, "with this key Shakespeare unlocked his heart."[59] Although Wordsworth followed the form of Milton in his own sonnets, his praise for the sonnets of Shakespeare is genuine and generous.[60] He condemns the poor judgment of George Steevens, the first variorum editor of the sonnets, for being "insensible" to their beauty. Wordsworth says that

> in no part of the writings of this Poet is found, in an equal compass, a greater number of exquisite feelings felicitously expressed.[61]

He regrets that the reading public were unaware of the beauty of the sonnets, even as twenty-five years before they had been indifferent to the works of Milton and to the plays of Shakespeare. In eleven years after the publication of Paradise Lost, only three thousand copies had been sold, and "probably" only one thousand copies of the works of Shakespeare from 1623-1664--a period of forty-one years.[62]

In this same essay Wordsworth gives various criticisms of other writers. He speaks of Thomson in terms of admiration, complimenting in particular his "Castle of Indolence." Still

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[59] "Miscellaneous Sonnets," Part II, I, 2-3.

[60] See Wordsworth's letter to Hamilton, below, p.33.

[61] "Essay, Supplementary to the Preface," II, 416.

[62] Ibid., II, 417.

greater is the debt Wordsworth feels he owes to the editor of "Percy's Reliques," whose genius in this kind of writing he admires more than that of any other writer by whom it had been cultivated in modern times, although his efforts were ridiculed by his fellow countrymen. He contrasts the cold reception given the "Reliques" with the effusive acclaim accorded Macpherson's "Ossian."

> The Editor of the Reliques had indirectly preferred a claim to the praise of invention, by not concealing that his supplementary labours were considerable; how selfish his conduct, contrasted with that of the disinterested Gael, who like Lear, gives his kingdom away, and is content to become a pensioner upon his own issue for a beggarly pittance![63]

In Macpherson's work everything that is not stolen is deadened, dislocated, and indistinct, says Wordsworth. The language of the "Ossian" is a "motley assemblage from all quarters,"--from the Bible, Shakespeare, Milton, and Pope. Since these writers could not have copied the language of Macpherson, Wordsworth concludes that Macpherson must have owed his "fine feathers" to them.[64]

Another name which Wordsworth is astonished to find listed among the names of eminent English poets is that of Cowley, who occupied a place of honor merely because his books brought in a profit to the booksellers. Wordsworth thinks

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[63] Ibid., II, 423.

[64] Ibid., II, 424.

again of the "paucity of readers" of the works of the masters.

> What is become of the morning star of English Poetry? Where is the bright Elizabethan constellation? Or, if names be more acceptable than images, where is the ever-to-be-honoured Chaucer? where is Spenser? where Sidney? and, lastly, where he, whose rights as a poet, contradistinguished from those which he is universally allowed to possess as a dramatist, we have vindicated,--where Shakespeare?--These, and a multitude of others not unworthy to be placed near them, their contemporaries and successors, we have not. But in their stead, we have. . . metrical writers utterly worthless and useless, except for occasions like the present, when their productions are referred to as evidence what a small quantity of brain is necessary to produce a considerable stock of admiration, provided the aspirant will accommodate himself to the likings and fashions of his day.[65]

"Away, then, with the senseless iteration of the word, popular, applied to the new works in poetry," exclaims Wordsworth.[66] It makes its appeal to the shallow, superficial reader whose tastes are satisfied by incidents which keep the mind curious and "the fancy amused without trouble of thought." Wordsworth did not aspire to write this kind of poetry, although it might have brought him temporary acclaim. Rather, he longed to be numbered with the group of poets who "send the soul into herself, to be made conscious of her power;- wherever life and nature are described as operated upon by

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[65] Ibid., II, 425.

[66] Ibid., II, 429.

the creative or abstracting virtue of the imagination. . . ."[67] But Wordsworth realized that many times the poet whose works image man and nature, whose thoughts are "a history of the remote past and prophetic enunciation of the remotest future," will perhaps not have many hearers.

> Grand thoughts (and Shakespeare must often have sighed over this truth), as they are naturally and most fitly conceived in solitude, so can they not be brought forth in the midst of plaudits, without some violation of their sanctity.[68]

It was no doubt of these writers he was thinking when he wrote:

> Blessings be with them--and eternal praise,
> Who gave us noble loves, and noble cares--
> The Poets, who on earth have made us heirs
> Of truth and pure delight by heavenly lays!
> Oh! might my name be numbered among theirs,
> Then gladly would I end my mortal days.[69]

It is not in the literary prefaces alone that Wordsworth expresses his admiration for Shakespeare. In his conversations he engaged in many discussions that, although less formal, are none the less revealing.

An interesting conversation recorded by Haydon in his autobiography describes a dinner on December 28, 1817, to which the originally invited guests were Keats, Lamb,

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[67] Loc. cit.

[68] Loc. cit. See in this connection Shakespeare's Sonnet CX, 1-4.

> Alas, 'tis true I have gone here and there
> And made myself a motley to the view,
> Gor'd mine own thoughts, sold cheap what is most dear,
> Made old offenses of affections new.

[69] "Personal Talk," IV, 51-56.

Landseer, Monkhouse, and Wordsworth. The account follows.

> Wordsworth was in fine cue, and we had a glorious set-to-on Homer, Shakespeare, Milton and Virgil. Lamb got exceedingly merry, and exquisitely witty; and his fun in the midst of Wordsworth's solemn intonations of oratory was like the sarcasm and wit of the fool in the intervals of Lear's passion.[70]

Christopher Wordsworth, the poet's nephew and biographer, relates three conversations in which Wordsworth spoke words of praise for the great Elizabethan.

> I cannot account for Shakespeare's low estimate of his own writings, except from the sublimity, the superhumanity, of his genius. They were infinitely below his conception of what they might have been, and ought to have been.[71]

In commenting on the tragedies, Wordsworth showed that he had made an intensive study of their structural techniques.

> Macbeth is the best conducted of Shakespeare's plays. The fault of Julius Caesar, Hamlet, and Lear is, that the interest is not, and by the nature of the case could not be, sustained to their conclusion. The death of Julius Caesar is too overwhelming an incident for any stage of the drama but the last. It is an incident to which the mind clings, and from which it will not be torn away to share in other sorrows. . . . Again, the opening of Hamlet is full of exhausting interest. There is more mind in Hamlet than any other play; more knowledge of human nature. The first act is incomparable. . . . There is too much of every-day sick room in the death-bed scene of Catherine, in Henry the Eighth--too much of leeches and apothecaries' vials. . . .

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[70]Benjamin Robert Haydon, Life of R. B. Haydon from His Autobiography and Memoirs, edited by Alexander P. D. Penrose (New York, 1929), p. 231.

[71]Memoirs, II, 470.

> Zanga is a bad imitation of Othello. Garrick never ventured on Othello: he could not submit to the blacked face. He rehearsed the part once. During the rehearsal Quin entered, and, having listened for some time with attention, exclaimed, 'Well done, David! but where's the teakettle?' alluding to the print of Hogarth, where a black boy follows his mistress with a teakettle in his hand . . . . In stature Garrick was short. . . . A fact which conveys a high notion of his powers is, that he was able to act out the absurd stage-costume of those days. He represented Coriolanus in the attire of Cheapside. I remember hearing from Sir G. Beaumont, that while he was venting, as Lear, the violent paroxysms of his rage in the awful tempest scene, his wig happened to fall off. The accident did not produce the slightest effect on the gravity of the house, so strongly had he impregnated every breast with his own emotions.[72]

The third conversation, dated October 10, 1836, also shows how carefully Wordsworth examined the language of Milton and Shakespeare. "Paradise Regained he [Wordsworth] thought the most perfect in execution of anything written by Milton; that and the Merchant of Venice, in language, he thought were almost faultless."[73]

R. P. Graves reports another conversation in which Wordsworth said that "the Tragedy of Othello, Plato's record of the last scenes of the career of Socrates, and Isaac Walton's Life of George Herbert, were in his opinion the

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[72] Ibid., II, 470-471.

[73] Ibid., II, 311.

most pathetic of human compositions."[74]

Crabb Robinson in his diary, dated January 31, 1836, records the following reply made by Wordsworth to John Wilson's accusation that Wordsworth never quoted any poems except his own.

> You know how I love and quote, not even Shakespeare and Milton, but Cowper, Burns, etc. As to the modern poets—Byron, Scott, etc. I do not quote them. . . . they came too late, my taste was formed, for I was forty-five when they appeared, and we cannot after that age love new things.[75]

Wordsworth's respect for Shakespeare seemed to grow with the years. The feelings he had expressed in 1815, he repeated in a conversation with Lady Richardson on August 26, 1841.

> Wordsworth made some striking remarks on Goethe in a walk on the terrace yesterday. He thinks that the German poet is greatly overrated, both in this country and in his own. He said, 'He does not seem to me to be a great poet in either of the classes of poets. At the head of the first class I would place Homer and Shakespeare, whose universal minds are able to reach every variety of thought and feeling without bringing their own individuality before the reader. They infuse, they breathe life into every object they approach, but you never find <u>themselves</u>. At the head of the second class, those whom you can trace individually in all they write, I would place Spenser and Milton.'[76]

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[74]De Selincourt records this conversation in his notes, IV, 416.

[75]Henry Crabb Robinson, <u>Books and Their Writers</u>, edited by Edith J. Morley (London, 1938), II, 486.

[76]Edith M. Batho, <u>The Later Wordsworth</u> (London, 1933), pp. 374-375.

In the poetry of Wordsworth there are many passages which contain direct references to Shakespeare and further indicate the admiration and respect Wordsworth felt for the dramatist. In The Prelude he says,

> Oftentimes at least
> Me hath such strong entrancement overcome,
> When I have held a volume in my hand,
> Poor earthly casket of immortal verse,
> Shakespeare, or Milton, labourers divine![77]

And again,

> When, having closed the mighty Shakespeare's page,
> I mused, and thought, and felt, in solitude.[78]

In the same book of The Prelude he speaks of the comely bachelor who ascends his rostrum and, looking up with seraphic glance expounds the Evangelists--Isaiah, Job, Moses,

> and he who penned, the other day,
> The Death of Abel, Shakespeare, and the Bard
> Whose genius spangled o'er a gloomy theme
> With fancies thick as his inspiring stars,
> And Ossian (doubt not--'tis the naked truth)
> Summoned from streamy Morven--each and all
> Would, in their turns, lend ornaments and flowers
> To entwine the crook of eloquence that helped
> This pretty Shepherd, pride of all the plains,
> To rule and guide his captivated flock.[79]

In speaking of the French Revolution, Wordsworth describes the conditions after Robespierre gained control and

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[77] Prelude, V, 161-165.

[78] Ibid., VII, 484-485.

[79] Ibid., VII, 563-572.

> Wielded the sceptre of the Atheist crew.
> When the calamity spread far and wide--
> And this same city, that did then appear
> To outrun the rest in exultation, groaned
> Under the vengeance of her cruel son,
> As Lear reproached the winds--I could almost
> Have quarreled with that blameless spectacle
> For lingering yet an image in my mind
> To mock me under such a strange reverse.[80]

"Personal Talk" describes the friendly evenings in which Wordsworth revelled in the company of books which are

> a substantial world, both pure and good:
> Round these, with tendrils strong as flesh and blood,
> Our pastime and our happiness will grow.
> There find I personal themes, a plenteous store,
> Matter wherein right voluble I am,
> To which I listen with a ready ear;
> Two shall be named, pre-eminently dear,--
> The gentle Lady married to the Moor;
> And heavenly Una with her milk-white Lamb.[81]

In "Vaudracour and Julia," he regrets that he is not able to describe the rapture of the lovers in verse as delightful as that of the "darling bard" who wrote Romeo and Juliet.

> I pass the raptures of the pair;--such theme
> Is, by innumerable poets, touched
> In more delightful verse than skill of mine
> Could fashion; chiefly by that darling bard
> Who told of Juliet and her Romeo,
> And of the lark's note heard before its time,
> And of the streaks that laced the severing clouds
> In the unrelenting east.[82]

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[80] Ibid., X, 501-509.

[81] "Personal Talk," III, 34-42.

[82] "Vaudracour and Julia," 87-94.

In one of his most famous sonnets Wordsworth takes the controversial view that Shakespeare's sonnets are autobiographical.[83]

> Scorn not the Sonnet; Critic, you have frowned,
> Mindless of its just honours; with this key
> Shakespeare unlocked his heart. . . .[84]

In the memorable sonnet on independence and freedom, the poet's voice is the voice of a patriot.

> We must be free to die, who speak the tongue
> That Shakespeare spake; the faith and morals hold
> Which Milton held.--In everything we are sprung
> Of Earth's first blood, have titles manifold.[85]

In the 1800-1804 MS of "Artegal and Elidure," Wordsworth refers to Shakespeare as "England's Darling."

> Praised be this book, and honour'd be the page
> Where England's Darling found a basis laid
> To those dread scenes which on the tragic stage
> To trembling multitudes his art displayed.[86]

Once more Wordsworth is recalling Shakespeare in "Yarrow Revisited" in alluding to

> Avon, a precious, an immortal name.[87]

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[83] In this connection see Robert Browning's poem, "House," in Complete Poetical Works, edited by Horace E. Scudder (Boston, 1895), pp. 808-809.

> "With this same key
> Shakespeare unlocked his heart," once more!
> Did Shakespeare? If so, the less Shakespeare he!

[84] "Miscellaneous Sonnets," (Part II), I, 1-3.

[85] "Independence and Liberty," (Part I), XVI, 11-14.

[86] "Artegal and Elidure," 1800-1804 MS, 49-52.

[87] "Yarrow Revisited," XX, 1.

In addition to Wordsworth's discussions and quotations of Shakespeare and the allusions to him just mentioned, William and Dorothy Wordsworth left in their personal letters, and in Dorothy's Journals, more evidence of the influence of the Elizabethan. Professor De Selincourt has edited the letters in six volumes which he divides into three periods: The Early Years (1787-1805), The Middle Years (1806-1820), and The Later Years (1821-1840). He notes the following allusions and quotations.

EARLY LETTERS OF WILLIAM AND DOROTHY WORDSWORTH (1787-1805)[88]

Letter of Dorothy to Jane Pollard, January 25 [1790]	Merchant of Venice, I, iii,22.
"how we are squandered abroad." p. 24.	and other ventures he hath squand'red abroad.

William to Francis Wrangham, March 7, 1796.	Dedication to Shakespeare's sonnets.
this adventurer wisheth not.	"Wisheth. The.Well-wishing. Adventurer.In.Setting.Forth."

William to Sir George Beaumont, October 14, 1803.	Part II, Henry IV, III, 1, 29.
"my appliances and means to boot." p. 339.	With all appliances and means to boot. . . .

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[88] The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, The Early Years (1787-1805), edited by Ernest De Selincourt (Oxford, 1935). 1 volume.

Dorothy, William, and Mary to S. T. Coleridge, March 6 [1804].

Farewell my beloved Friend.
William. . . is sitting beside me reading Hamlet. . . . . I am about to read Shakespeare through, and have read many of the plays.
p. 367.

William to Sir George Beaumont, December 25, 1804.

From what you have seen, Sir George, how do you think he could manage a character of Shakespeare?
[Wordsworth is speaking here of the young Roscius.]
p. 425.

William to Sir George Beaumont, May 1, 1805.

I wish much to have 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 which 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 of the 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.
pp. 489-490.

William To Sir George Beaumont, May 1, 1805.

[Concerning Beaumont the poet]
One is astonished when one thinks of that man having been only eight-and twenty years of age, for I believe he was no more, when he died. Shakespeare, we are told, had scarcely written a single play at that age.
p. 490.

William To Walter Scott,
November 7, 1805.

I am not apt to haunt myself
with fears of accident from
flood and field.
p. 540.

Othello, I, iii, 135.

Of moving accidents by
flood and field. . . .

THE MIDDLE YEARS (1806-1820), 2 volumes.[89]

William To Sir George Beaumont (January or February, 1808)

Let the poet first consult his own heart as I have done and leave the rest to posterity; to, I hope, an improving posterity. The fact is, the English Public are at this moment in the same state of mind with respect to my Poems, if small things may be compared with great, as the French are in respect to Shakespeare; and not the French alone but almost the whole Continent. In short, ... I am condemned for the very thing for which I ought to be praised; viz., that I have not written down to the level of superficial observers and unthinking minds. Every great Poet is a Teacher: I wish either to be considered as a Teacher, or as nothing.
I, 170.

William to S. T. Coleridge [late May or early June, 1808].

When I think of the sacredness of my feelings in connection with this object it is a strange thing indeed to be summoned now to Mrs. Hazlitt and her sapient conclusions in order to assert (for of proof the thing is incapable if what must be in your own head does not prove it) that in the affair of Shakespeare's sonnets I did not take part with her Brother against you.
I, 217.

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[89] The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, The Middle Years (1806-1820), edited by Ernest De Selincourt (Oxford, 1937), 2 volumes.

THE LATER YEARS (1821-1840)[90]

William to Allan Cunningham, November 23 [1823].

The collection of songs which you announce I had not heard of. Your own poetry shows how fit you are for the office of editing native strains; and may not one hope that the taste of the public in these matters is much improved since the time Macpherson's frauds met with such dangerous success, and Percy's ballads produced that host of legendary tales that bear no more resemblance to their supposed models than Pope's Homer does to the work of the blind bard. Do not say I ought to have been a Scotchman. Tear me not from the country of Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton.
I, 128.

William to Alaric Watts, November 16, 1824.

I am disposed strenuously to recommend to your habitual perusal the great poets of our own country, who have stood the test of ages. Shakespeare I need not name, nor Milton, but Chaucer and Spenser are apt to be overlooked. It is almost painful to think how far these surpass all others.
I, 159.

William to William Rowan Hamilton, September 24, 1827.

[Criticism of Hamilton's choice of words]
'Sickly ardour o'er' was at first reading to me unintelligible. I took 'sickly' to be an adjective joined with 'ardour', whereas you meant it as a portion of a verb, from Shakespeare, 'Sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought', but the separation of the parts, or decomposition of the word, as here done, is not to be endured.
I, 275.

William to Alexander Dyce, October 29, 1828.

I do not doubt that the lines in Belle's Edition of the Highland Ode are spurious; but on this opinion I am far

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[90] Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, The Later Years (1821-1840), edited by Ernest De Selincourt (Oxford, 1939), 3 volumes.

less disposed to insist, than to maintain that the principle is decidedly bad of admitting anything as the genuine work of a deceased Author but upon substantial external evidence. There may be exceptions to this rule, but they are very rare; and in our Literature are almost confined to certain works of Shakespeare (Pericles for example) which ought to be admitted from internal evidence alone.
I, 313.

William To Henry Nelson Coleridge [?late summer, 1830].

You will naturally expect some account of the Impression your Book made upon me. . . . If I am not mistaken you and I had some talk about Homer, when you were here, so that possibly you will not be at a loss as to how far I am likely to agree with you. My own judgment I feel to be of no especial value, for I cannot pretend to have read those Poems critically; and scholastically know little about them,--but speaking from general impression and results I should say that the Books of the Iliad were never intended to make one Poem, and that the Odyssey is not the work of the same man or exactly of the same age. These are startling things to affirm, but as in respect to Ossian, to Rowley etc, etc. there is or may be on my mind a feeling and conviction, but slightly affected either for or against by such particulars of scholarship as I am at all competent to judge of. As to the merits of the Poetry, it is in my judgement only second to Shakespeare; at the same time I cannot but think that you in some points overrate the Homeric Poems, especially the manners.
I, 506.

William Wordsworth to William Hamilton, November 22, 1831.

Shakespeare's sonnets. . . are not upon the Italian model, which Milton's are; they are merely quatrains with a couplet tacked to the end; and if they depended upon the versification they would unavoidably be heavy.
II, 587.

William Wordsworth to John Kenyon, January 26 [1832].

[Concerning the paintings of Hogarth]
He reminds me both of Shakespeare and Chaucer; but these great Poets seem happy in softening and diversifying their views of life, as often as they can, by metaphors and images from rural nature; or by shifting the scene of action into

the quiet of groves or forests. What an exquisite piece of relief of this kind occurs in The Merchant of Venice--where, after the agitating trial of Antonio, we have Lorenzo and Jessica sitting in the open air on the bank on which the moonlight is sleeping.
II, 600.

William Wordsworth to Francis Wrangham, February 2 [1835].

I cannot forget that Shakespeare, who scarcely survived 50--(I am now near the close of my 65th year) wrote

> In me that time of life thou dost behold
> When yellow leaves, or few, or none, do hand
> Upon the bough.

II, 728.
[See Shakespeare's Sonnet LXXIII, 1-4.

> That time of year thou mayst in me behold
> When yellow leaves, or none,or few, do hang
> Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
> Bare ruin'd choirs where late the sweet birds sang.]

William Wordsworth to Lady Frederick Bentinck [1835].

To the great Whig lords may be truly applied the expression in Macbeth,

> They have eaten the insane root
> That takes the reason prisoner.
> [Macbeth, I, iii, 84-5.
> Or have we eaten on the insane root
> That takes the reason prisoner?]

II, 753.

William Wordsworth to Henry Taylor, 1831-40.

Among my friends the yellow leaf has been falling and the green leaf swept off lately in an appalling way.
II, 728.

[Macbeth, V, iii, 32-3]

William Wordsworth to Alexander Dyce, March 11, 1835.

Tell Mr. Mitford that the passage in King John is at the close of the 4th Act--the words these, or something like it--

Vast Confusion waits as doth a Raven on, etc.
The imminent decay--
near the commencement of the fifth act you will meet the word Amazement.
[King John, V, i, 35. "And wild amazement hurries up and down. . . ."]
II, 732.

William Wordsworth to Sir Robert Peel, May 3, 1838.

And if from small things [speaking of his own publications] we may ascend to great, how slowly did the poetry of Milton make its way to public favour; nor till very lately were the works of Shakespeare himself justly appreciated even within his own country.
II, 936.

William Wordsworth to E. R. Moran, September 2, 1840.

Tho' not very anxious about making Proselites, it is nevertheless natural that I should be pleased to hear of Converts, or Convertites as with the authority of Shakespeare and others you give the word.
II, 1032.
[See As You Like It, V, iv, 190-191.
Out of these convertites
There is much matter to be heard and learn'd.]

Dorothy Wordsworth's Journals give the following accounts of her reading of the plays of Shakespeare.

[May 17, 1800] Saturday.
Worked hard, and read Midsummer Night's Dream.
I, 39.

[May 19, 1800] Monday.
Read Timon of Athens.
I, 40.

[May 25, 1800] Sunday.
Read Macbeth.
I, 41.

[May 29, 1800] Thursday.
In the morning worked in the garden a little, and read King John.
I, 42.

[June 3, 1800] Tuesday.
Read R[ichar]d Second.
I, 44.

May 8 [1802] Saturday morning.
We sowed the scarlet beans in the orchard, and read Henry V, there. William lay on his back on the seat.
I, 145.

May 15 [1802] Saturday morning.
I read in Shakespeare.
I, 147.

[June 22, 1802] Tuesday morning.
I read the Midsummer Night's Dream, and began As You Like It.
I, 162.

June 23 [1802] Wednesday.
I read a scene or two in As You Like It.
I, 163.

[July] 8th [1802] Thursday.
I read Winter's Tale.
I, 167.

CHAPTER II

RECOLLECTIONS OF SHAKESPEARE IN THE BORDERERS

The influence of Shakespeare upon the writings of Wordsworth is unmistakably apparent in Wordsworth's one play, The Borderers. From a literary standpoint the play is far inferior to Wordsworth's best works, but it is important for this study because the characters, the situations, and the language are reminiscent of Shakespeare's great tragedies--Othello, Lear, Macbeth, and Hamlet.

M. Legouis, observing that Wordsworth was experiencing a "moral crisis" when the play was written in 1795-96, suggests that the poet's depressed spirit was best satisfied by the tragedies of Shakespeare and that he, after the manner of Goethe, purged himself of his pessimism by giving utterance to it in The Borderers.[1]

In discussing the literary sources of the play, Professor De Selincourt notes its similarities to the Shakespearian tragedies.

> Othello is not the only Shakespearian influence on the play. Its central scene, on a desolate moor in a storm, has its obvious analogy in Lear,

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[1] Legouis, op. cit., p. 278.

> whilst apart from definite verbal borrowing there are many lines which in their rhythm and phrasing recall the language of Shakespearian tragedy.[2]

Perhaps it was this Shakespearian element which caused it to appeal so strongly to Coleridge, for when the play was read to him he pronounced it "absolutely wonderful." He wrote:

> There are in the piece 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.[3]

But, as Professor De Selincourt has observed, posterity has not upheld Coleridge's pronouncement, for The Borderers is probably one of the least admired works of Wordsworth. A comparison of the play with the tragedies of Shakespeare accentuates its shortcomings, for it is weak in the qualities in which Shakespeare's plays excel: its characters are unconvincing; its action is forced and unreal; and its verse is prosy and uninspired. A brief synopsis of the play, however, will show that there are similarities between it and the plays of Shakespeare.

> Along the Tweed and Esk Rivers near the Scottish border, a benevolent outlaw named Marmaduke gathers under his leadership a band of men, who, in Robin Hood fashion, go about trying to befriend the oppressed.

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[2]De Selincourt's notes on The Borderers, I, 344.

[3]Letter from Coleridge to Cottle (June, 1797?). J. Dykes Campbell, Life of Coleridge (London, 1894), p. 67.

They are joined by Oswald, a villainous fellow, whose purpose in joining the clan is to try to drag their chieftain down to his own moral level. Years before, Oswald had been of good character, but, having fallen into evil ways, he longs for a companion in crime. Marmaduke is in love with Idonea, the daughter of Herbert, a blind baron of noble character. Oswald poisons Marmaduke's mind against the old man by bribing a beggar woman to swear that Idonea is her daughter whom she sold to the baron years before, and whom Herbert is now planning to marry off to the wealthy Lord Clifford. Marmaduke is convinced by Oswald that Herbert is not fit to live; consequently they lead the old man to a deserted castle on a lonely moor where Oswald leaves Marmaduke to strike the fatal blow. When the critical moment arrives, Marmaduke looks into the face of the old man and sees a strong resemblance there to the features of Idonea. Instead of killing him, he leaves him at the mercy of a driving storm from the ravages of which he believes Providence will save him if he is innocent.

Oswald, thinking that Marmaduke has slain Herbert, confesses that the old man is innocent. Upon hearing this, Marmaduke hurries out upon the moor to rescue Herbert, but it is too late--the baron has not survived the storm. In the meantime, Idonea has found her father's lifeless body and carried it to the shelter of a peasant's home nearby.

In the end of the play, the beggar woman confesses her perfidy and begs for forgiveness; Idonea faints and is carried from the stage; Marmaduke in sorrow decides to become a wanderer through the world; Oswald is slain by Wallace, one of the members of the clan.

Wordsworth in the Prefatory Essay to the play, written in 1842, approximately six years after the play was finished, points to the similarity between Oswald, the villain in The Borderers, and Shakespeare's Iago. In describing Oswald's character he says:

> 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.[4]

It is not surprising that Wordsworth chose to pattern his play after Othello, for he tells us elsewhere that he was particularly fond of the play, and was deeply moved by its pathos.[5]

Professor De Selincourt in commenting upon the striking likeness between Oswald and Iago asserts that

> Oswald's real motives like Iago's, are hatred of the good, lust for power, a loathing engendered by envy that one whom he feels to be his intellectual inferior holds a higher esteem than he; like Iago, he bolsters himself up with a philosophy of his own, of which the main features are a cynical contempt for all human feelings and for the claims of conventional morality; like Iago, he uses as his tool a woman who is ignorant of the terrible part she is playing in the tragedy; and as in Othello, the woman so employed is the main agent in his final discomfiture.[6]

George Wilbur Meyer agrees with De Selincourt that Wordsworth had his eye "firmly fixed" on Iago when he created Oswald. Meyer refers to the similarity, however, as more

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[4] Ibid., I, 347.

[5] See above, "Personal Talk," p. 27, and conversation with R. P. Graves, p. 24.

[6] Quoted by George Wilbur Meyer in his book, Wordsworth's Formative Years (Ann Arbor, 1943), p. 172, from Ernest De Selincourt, "Wordsworth's Preface to The Borderers," Oxford Lectures on Poetry (Oxford, 1934), pp. 157-179.

apparent than real. He believes that Iago is simply determined to prove a villain, whereas Oswald, on the contrary, has a noble motive, for he has an interest in what he calls "man's intellectual empire."[7]

George Lyman Kittredge in his introduction to Othello says:

> There is no difficulty. . . in finding a motive for Iago, and (what is vital in every tragic action) this motive is not only human (that is, neither monstrous nor maniacal), but has a kind of foundation in reason and justice. In Iago's cankered nature, resentment for real or fancied injury brought with it boundless possibilities of crime. But Shakespeare has combined with this the motive that he found in Cinthio--lust (II, i, 300); and to this he has added the suspicion that Othello is Emilia's lover.[8]

These thoughts fill Iago with a hatred which, in his own words:

> Doth, like a poisonous mineral,
> gnaw my inwards. . . .[9]

M. Legouis thinks that Oswald's motives are those of a being who, because of his own personal interests, ambition, and desire, seeks to corrupt an innocent man, so that he himself may have a companion in crime.[10] Oswald believes that their complicity will make them fellow-laborers to enlarge

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[7] Ibid., p. 173.

[8] See Kittredge, op. cit., introduction to Othello.

[9] Othello, II, i, 306.

[10] Legouis, op. cit., p. 278.

man's intellectual empire.[11]

As Professors De Selincourt and Meyer have observed, Oswald bears a striking resemblance to Iago. Both Iago and Oswald are bitter because preferment has gone to another man of poorer qualifications. Both villains, however, have their understandable motives--not to say the virtues of their defects. Wordsworth has Marmaduke describe Oswald's merits early in his play, while Shakespeare permits Iago to sing his own praise. Marmaduke describes Oswald to his fellow clansmen as honorable and deserving because--

> Strong feelings to his heart
> Are natural; and from no one can be learnt
> More of a man's thoughts and ways than his
> experience
> Has given him power to teach: and then for
> courage
> And enterprise--what perils hath he shunned?
> What obstacles hath he failed to overcome?[12]

And Iago speaks for himself:

> I (of whom his eyes had seen the proof
> At Rhodes, at Cyprus, and on other grounds
> Christian and heathen) must be belee'd and calm'd
> By debitor and creditor, this counter-caster.
> He (in good time!) must his lieutenant be,
> And I (God bless the mark!) his Moorship's
> ancient.[13]

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[11] The Borderers, III, 1855-1856.

[12] The Borderers, I, 33-38.

[13] Othello, I, 1, 28-33.

Wordsworth's villain expresses in soliloquy his hatred of good and his contempt for his master, as does Shakespeare's Iago. Oswald's scornful and scheming nature is apparent in the lines:

> They chose him for their Chief!--what covert part
> He, in the preference, modest Youth, might take,
> I neither know nor care. The insult bred
> More of contempt than hatred. . . .I have left him
> To solitary meditations;--now
> For a few swelling phrases, and a flash
> Of truth, enough to dazzle and to blind,
> And he is mine forever--here he comes.[14]

Iago expresses many times the bitter hatred he feels for the Moor--hatred as acute as "hell pains,"[15] which

> Doth, like a poisonous mineral, gnaw my inwards;
> And nothing can or shall content my soul
> Till I am even'd with him. . . .[16]

In the furtherance of the plots of the two plays, both villains use a woman.[17] Wordsworth's beggar woman, however, is a poor substitute for Shakespeare's plucky Emilia.

> Oswald. I have prepared a most apt Instrument--
> The Vagrant must, no doubt, be loitering somewhere
> About this ground; she hath a tongue well skilled,

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[14] The Borderers, II, 551-565.

[15] Othello, I, i, 155.

[16] Ibid., II, i, 306-308.

[17] See De Selincourt's comment on this likeness above, p. 40.

By mingling natural matter of her own
With all the daring fiction I have taught her,
To win belief, such as my plot requires.[18]

Emilia unintentionally furthers Iago's scheme by giving him Desdemona's handkerchief.

Emilia. I am glad I have found this napkin.
This was her first remembrance from the Moor.
My wayward husband hath a hundred times
Woo'd me to steal it; but she so loves the token
(For he conjur'd her she should ever keep it)
That she reserves it evermore about her
To kiss and talk to. I'll have the work ta'en
out and give 't Iago.
What he will do with it heaven knows, not I;
I nothing but to please his fantasy.[19]

Although both women are stupidly blind, each proves the undoing of her villain. The beggar woman says:

I thought there was no harm: but that bad Man,
He bribed me with his gold, and looked so fierce.
Mercy! I said I know not what--oh pity me--
I said, sweet Lady, you were not his Daughter--
Pity me, I am haunted:--thrice this day
My conscience made me wish to be struck blind;
And then I would have prayed, and had no voice.[20]

Emilia courageously reveals Iago's guilt.

Emilia. O thou dull Moor, that handkerchief thou
speak'st of
I found by fortune, and did give my husband;
For often with a solemn earnestness
(More than indeed belong'd to such a trifle)
He begg'd of me to steal't.[21]

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[18]The Borderers, I, 364-369.

[19]Othello, III, iii, 290-299.

[20]The Borderers, V, 2213-2219.

[21]Othello, V, ii, 225-229.

The character of Oswald and his scheming treachery and final undoing, and the subsidiary characters of the beggar woman and Emilia, are not the only similarities between The Borderers and Othello. In at least one scene between Marmaduke and Idonea, she pleads her innocence in terms somewhat reminiscent of Desdemona.[22] Though Idonea, at best, is but a shadowy half-sister to Desdemona, there can be little doubt that Wordsworth was perhaps thinking of "the gentle lady married to the Moor," when he created this scene.

Professor De Selincourt also says that "Marmaduke's account of how his love for Idonea had its beginning is obviously indebted to Othello's account of how Desdemona came to love him."[23] Wordsworth somewhat crudely reverses Shakespeare by having his hero begin to love the heroine as he listened to her recount the dangers her father had passed. Desdemona loved the Moor for the dangers he had passed.

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[22] Compare Marmaduke's

"Thou art a Woman,
To bring perdition on the universe."
(The Borderers, III, 1637-38)

with Othello's

"Excellent wretch! Perdition catch my soul
But I do love thee! and when I love thee not,
Chaos is come again."
(Othello, III, iii, 90-92).

[23] De Selincourt's notes on The Borderers, II, 349.

Marmaduke. I remember, when a Boy
Of scarcely seven years' growth, beneath the Elm
That casts its shade over our village school,
'Twas my delight to sit and hear Idonea
Repeat her Father's terrible adventures,
Till all the band of playmates wept together;
And that was the beginning of my love.[24]

Othello. Her father lov'd me, oft invited me;
Still question'd me the story of my life
From year to year--the battles, sieges, fortunes
That I have pass'd. . . . This to hear
Would Desdemona seriously incline;
But still the house affairs would draw her thence;
Which ever as she could with haste dispatch,
She'd come again, and with a greedy ear
Devour up my discourse. . . .
She lov'd me for the dangers I had pass'd,
And I loved her that she did pity them.[25]

Although Iago and Oswald are more noticeably alike than any of the other characters, Professor Meyer sees in an earlier edition of The Borderers the feigned madness of Hamlet, especially from the third act on.[26] This likeness is not so apparent in the later edition; there is in Marmaduke and Hamlet, however, a similarity of moral nature--a passion for doing right. Hamlet's anxiety to be sure of his uncle's guilt prevents him from taking immediate steps to avenge his father's death. Marmaduke has a revulsion against killing Herbert, because he cannot be certain of the old man's guilt.

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[24] The Borderers, I, 89-95.

[25] Othello, I, iii, 128-168.

[26] Meyer, op. cit., p. 173.

Hamlet has his own suspicions and the testimony of his father's ghost that his uncle is a murderer, and yet he wants more proof. Marmaduke has Oswald's word and the testimony of the beggar woman that Herbert is guilty, but still he cannot strike the fatal blow.

There are earlier speeches of Marmaduke which are also reminiscent of the speeches of Hamlet. Both heroes are vacillating:

Marmaduke. Weak! I am weak--there does my torment lie,
Feeding itself.[27]

Hamlet. I am pigeon-liver'd and lack gall. . . .[28]

And yet Marmaduke's perplexity is like that of Hamlet.

Marmaduke. Which way soe'er I turn, I am perplexed.[29]

Hamlet. A thought which, quarter'd, hath but one
part wisdom
And ever three parts coward,--I do not
know
Why yet I live to say 'This thing's to do,'
Sith I have cause, and will, and strength,
and means
To do 't.[30]

Marmaduke at last makes up his mind, as does Hamlet.

Marmaduke. It must be ended![31]

Hamlet. O, from this time forth,
My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth![32]

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[27]The Borderers, II, 884.

[28]Hamlet, II, ii, 604.

[29]The Borderers, II, 878.

[30]Hamlet, IV, iv, 42-46.

[31]The Borderers, II, 914.

[32]Hamlet, IV, iv, 65-66.

In setting, the most definitely Shakespearian scene in The Borderers is the storm scene on the heath, as De Selincourt has observed.[33] One cannot read it without seeing its similarity to one of the most memorable scenes in King Lear. The scenes in both plays are blinding storms--in Lear, on a lonely heath; in The Borderers, on a desolate moor. In each, the central figure is an old man at the mercy of the elements. The blind baron in Wordsworth's play, storm-beaten and bewildered, cries out in utter dejection:

> Herbert. Fallen am I, and worn out, a useless Man;. . .
> Sightless, and from my heritage was driven,
> A wretched Outcast. . . .[34]

There is less dejection than angry protest in the voice of Lear as he invokes the elements to let fall their horrible pleasure:

> Lear. Here I stand your slave,
> A poor, infirm, weak and despis'd old man.
> But yet I call you servile ministers,
> That will with two pernicious daughters join
> Your high-engender'd battles 'gainst a head
> So old and white as this! O! O! 'tis foul![35]

Lear, exposed as he is to the bitter elements, remains a king, whose lordly bearing has not dropped from him in spite of his

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[33] See above, p. 37.

[34] The Borderers, II, 824-830.

[35] Lear, III, ii, 19-24.

misfortune. He retains, even in his madness, a dignity which commands respect. On the contrary, Herbert, always rational, has a meekness and gentleness that evokes pity. Like Lear, he is a man, a father, and an outcast, but he does not have Lear's kingly bearing. Rather, Herbert's helplessness is more like that of Gloucester after Regan and Cornwall have put out his eyes. He seems resigned to the punishment being administered to him.

> Herbert. I will not murmur, merciful God!
> I will not murmur; blasted as I have been,
> Thou hast left me ears to hear my Daughter's
> voice,
> And arms to fold her to my heart. Submissively
> Thee I adore, and find my rest in faith.[36]

So Gloucester, blind and comfortless on the heath, thinks only of the son whom he has wronged.

> Gloucester. I have no way, and therefore want no eyes;
> I stumbled when I saw. Full oft 'tis seen
> Our means secure us, and our mere defects
> Prove our commodities. Ah dear son Edgar,
> The food of thy abused father's wrath!
> Might I but live to see thee in my touch,
> I'ld say I had eyes again![37]

In describing Herbert's shelter in the storm on the moor, Wordsworth must have been recalling Lear's hovel on the heath, as well as his repeated phrase,

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[36] The Borderers, II, 850-854.

[37] Lear, IV, i, 18-24.

> In such a night
> To shut me out. . . .
> In such a night as this![38]

Herbert's shelter, however, was a roofless rock for which he is grateful.

> A roofless rock had been a comfort,
> Storm-beaten and bewildered as we were;
> And in a night like this to lend your cloaks
> To make a bed for me![39]

Although the plot, the characters, and the setting of The Borderers are more like Othello and Lear than any other Shakespearian plays, De Selincourt notes that there are two passages that quite definitely recall Macbeth.[40]

After Oswald has goaded Marmaduke to the point where he believes it is his duty to kill Herbert, Marmaduke descends to the dungeon to do it, but he cannot strike the sleeping man because

> The features of Idonea
> Lurked in his face.[41]

These lines echo the idea of Lady Macbeth, who said of the sleeping Duncan:

> Had he not resembled
> My father as he slept, I had done 't.[42]

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[38] Ibid., III, iv, 17-19.

[39] The Borderers, II, 814-817.

[40] De Selincourt's notes, II, 352.

[41] The Borderers, II, 967-968.

[42] Macbeth, II, ii, 13-14.

Marmaduke's excited though awkwardly uninspired speech after his return from the dungeon where he was to have murdered Herbert, recalls the scene in Macbeth following the murder of Duncan.

> Marmaduke. Why came you down?
> And when I felt your hand upon my arm
> And spake to you, why did you give me no
> answer?
> Feared you to waken him? he must have been
> In a deep sleep. I whispered to him thrice.
> There are the strangest echoes in that place![43]

In Shakespeare's play we have the same fear-stricken tone in verse which makes the lines quoted above sound like a very wretched parody indeed.

> Macbeth. I have done the deed. Didst thou not hear
> a noise?
>
> Lady Macbeth. I heard the owl scream and the crickets cry.
> Did not you speak?
>
> Macbeth. When?
>
> Lady Macbeth. Now.
>
> Macbeth. As I descended?
>
> Lady Macbeth. Ay.[44]
>
> Macbeth. Methought I heard a voice cry "Sleep no more!
> Macbeth doth murder sleep."[45]

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[43] The Borderers, II, 957-962.

[44] Macbeth, II, ii, 15-18.

[45] Ibid., II, ii, 35-36.

In addition to the likenesses in character, situation, and plot mentioned above, there are other words, phrases, and sentences in The Borderers that are definitely imitative of Shakespeare. In the following compilation, the parallel passages observed by De Selincourt are credited to him by the initial (S); the others are my own.

Borderers, I, 69.	Othello, V, ii, 345-46.
A man not easily moved.	One not easily jealous, but, being wrought, Perplex'd in the extreme.

Borderers, I, 98.	Othello, II, i, 192.
When I had been most happy.	'Twere now to be most happy!

Borderers, I, 551.	Othello, I, i, 17.
They chose him for their Chief!	"I have already chose my officer."

Borderers, I, 558.	Timon of Athens, III, vi, 34.
birds of winter.	summer birds.

Borderers, II, 565.	Othello, II, i, 183.
And he is mine forever-- here he comes.	Lo, where he comes! Othello, III, iii, 479. I am your own forever.

Borderers, II, 714.	Hamlet, I, ii, 184; 189.
Your Father. His voice--me thinks I hear it now.	Methinks I see my father. . . . I think I saw him yesternight.

Borderers, II, 725.	Lear, II, iv, 311.
'Tis a wild night.	'Tis a wild night.
Borderers, II, 727.	Hamlet, I, iv, 2.
'Tis nipping cold.	It is a nipping and eager air.
Borderers, II, 733.	Hamlet, I, i, 8.
'Tis a bitter night.	'Tis bitter cold.
Borderers, II, 770.	Lear, III, iv, 17.
In such a night as this.	In such a night.
Borderers, II, 816.	Lear, III, iv, 19.
And in a night like this.	In such a night as this!
Borderers, II, 779. (S)	Macbeth, III, iv, 102-103.
Not a nerve would tremble.	and my firm nerves Shall never tremble.
Borderers, II, 794. (S)	Macbeth, IV, i, 138.
The spirit of vengeance seemed to ride the air.	Infected be the air whereon they ride.
"Prefatory Essay to The Borderers," Vol. I, p. 346.	Macbeth, I, v, 18-19.
The mild effusions of thought, the milk of human reason are unknown to him.	It is too full o' th' milk of human kindness To catch the nearest way.
Borderers, II, 726.	Lear, II, iv, 303-304.
The wind blows keen; My hands are numb.	Alack, the night comes on, and the bleak winds Do sorely ruffle.

Borderers, II, 869.	Lear, III, iv, 179.
Come, let us house together.	Come, let's in all.
Borderers, II, 1002. (S)	Julius Caesar, II, i, 66.
Or be chastised by mortal instruments.	The genius and the mortal instruments.
Borderers, II, 1035.	Lear, III, iv, 8.
The deeper malady.	The greater malady.
Borderers, II, 1069.	Hamlet, IV, vii, 127.
Stab him, were it Before the Altar.	To cut his throat i' th' church!
Borderers, III, 1304. (S)	Hamlet, I, i, 116.
squeak and jibber in.	Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets.
Borderers, III, 1305.	Lear, III, ii, 57.
close-pent guilt.	close pent-up guilts.
Borderers, III, 1546-1547.	Othello, III, iii, 348.
Farewell. . . the light dancing of the thoughtless heart.	Farewell, the tranquil mind! farewell content!
Borderers, III, 1637.	Othello, III, iii, 90-92.
Thou are a Woman, To bring perdition on the universe.	Excellent wretch! Perdition catch my soul But I do love thee! and when I love thee not, Chaos is come again.

Borderers, IV, 1963.	Lear, III, ii, 60.
Ay, and his head was bare.	Alack, bareheaded?

Borderers, V, 2064. (S)	Macbeth, III, ii, 36.
Ay, in a word a thousand scorpions lodge.	O, full of scorpions is my mind.

Borderers, V, 2311. (S)	Macbeth, V, viii, 1-2.
Like the old Roman, on their own sword's point.	Why should I play the Roman fool, and die On mine own sword?

Although The Borderers has been called one of the sins of Wordsworth's youth,[46] its severest critics admit that there is acute psychology and fine poetry in the play.[47] Marjorie Latta Barstow, in her book, Wordsworth's Theory of Poetic Diction, says that the best thing in the play is the language. She thinks that Wordsworth uses a clear, effective imitation of actual speech and that he seems to have acquired for the first time a command of the English idiom.[48] Certainly the close study he made of the language of Shakespeare's plays was

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[46] Legouis, op. cit., p. 269.

[47] De Selincourt, Notes on The Borderers, I, 345.

[48] Marjorie Latta Barstow, Wordsworth's Theory of Poetic Diction (New Haven, 1917), p. 126.

beneficial to him. If, as Legouis says, the writing of The Borderers gave vent to his pessimism and paved the way for the optimism of his more mature poetry in the years which followed, it was eminently worthwhile. Even if no other lines in his voluminous works could be shown to reflect the Elizabethan dramatist, The Borderers alone would support the theme of this study that Wordsworth read, absorbed, and imitated Shakespeare.

CHAPTER III

ECHOES OF SHAKESPEARE IN THE PRELUDE AND OTHER POEMS

The simple life at Racedown in companionship with his sister Dorothy and his new friend Coleridge did much to rescue Wordsworth from the embittered, disillusioned state of mind he had experienced from 1793 to 1796--the period of The Borderers. When he left Alfoxden in 1798, where he and Dorothy had moved in 1796 in order to be near Coleridge, he was cured of his sickness. It was at this time that he wrote his great hymn of thanksgiving to nature, "Tintern Abbey."

Then came The Prelude, a joyous, happy poem, which Ernest Bernbaum calls the best autobiography in English verse.[1] It was composed between the years 1798 and 1805, during the most fruitful years of Wordsworth's poetic life, and was known by his family and friends as "the poem of his own early life," or, "a poem on the growth of his mind," or "a poem addressed to Coleridge." Although it was finished in 1805, it was carefully revised many times and was not given to the world until after the poet's death in 1850. The poem is written in blank verse and in the final edition has seven thousand lines. The

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[1]Ernest Bernbaum, Guide Through the Romantic Movement (New York, 1938), p. 148.

first five books describe his early years--the springtime of his soul--a fair springtime. The other nine books are given over to the period of storm and stress, and account for the origins of his beliefs. As we read The Prelude, we see into the poet's mind at that very period when his creative powers were at their height, and watch its first searching after a true history of his inner life. Wordsworth said in the Advertisement prefixed to the poem that it was to be a preparatory poem to The Recluse, a more ambitious, philosophical poem containing views on man, nature, and society, and was to have the same relation to it that the Ante-chapel has to the Gothic Church. All his other shorter poems were to have the same connection with this main work that the little cells, oratories, and sepulchral recesses have to the main edifice. But Wordsworth, in writing The Prelude, included in it many things which he had intended to incorporate in The Recluse. This, according to Professor De Selincourt cannot be regretted, for

> in The Prelude, which had a unity springing directly from the poet's own mind and personality, Wordsworth produced a masterpiece. . . . It opens with an outburst of joy that after years of anxiety the poet is at last free to devote his life to its true vocation.[2]

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[2]De Selincourt, op. cit., p. xxvii.

Out of his past he brought to light the elements which he felt had contributed to his genius. It is here he shows his true ancestry, says De Selincourt.[3] Here he describes how nature first

Peopled the mind with forms sublime or fair.[4]

He recalls that from childhood his thoughts and passions had been impressed with life and nature. In Wordsworth's mind nothing in nature was trivial. Nature had, in his way of thinking, a greater part in the development of his moral life than had man. His imagination was always interpreting to his emotions the meaning of what he saw. All these thoughts were steeped in feelings. Of them he says:

> I was only then
> Contented, when with bliss ineffable
> I felt the sentiment of Being spread
> O'er all that moves and all that seemeth still;
> O'er all that, lost beyond the reach of thought
> And human knowledge, to the human eye
> Invisible, yet liveth to the heart;
> O'er all that leaps and runs, and shouts and sings,
> Or beats the gladsome air; o'er all that glides
> Beneath the wave, yea, in the wave itself,
> And mighty depth of waters. Wonder not
> If high the transport, great the joy I felt,
> Communing in this sort through earth and heaven
> With every form of creature, as it looked
> Toward the Uncreated with a countenance
> Of adoration, with an eye of love.[5]

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[3] Ibid., p. xxix.

[4] The Prelude, I, 546.

[5] Ibid., II, 399-414.

Helping to reveal this voice of nature to him was his sister Dorothy

> in whose sight
> Those days were passed, now speaking in a voice
> Of sudden admonition--like a brook
> That did but cross a lonely road, and now
> Is seen, heard, felt, and caught at every turn,
> Companion never lost through many a league--
> Maintained for me a saving intercourse
> With my true self; for, though bedimmed and changed
> Much, as it seemed, I was no further changed
> Than as a clouded and a waning moon:
> She whispered still that brightness would return,
> She, in the midst of all, preserved me still
> A Poet, made me seek beneath that name,
> And that alone, my office upon earth.[6]

Again he refers to her as,

> Child of my parents! Sister of my soul!
> Thanks in sincerest verse have been elsewhere
> Poured out for all the early tenderness
> Which I from thee imbibed: and 'tis more true
> That later seasons owed to thee no less;
> For, spite of thy sweet influence and the touch
> Of kindred hands that opened out the springs
> Of genial thought in childhood, and in spite
> Of all that unassisted I had marked
> In life or nature of those charms minute
> That win their way into the heart by stealth
> (Still to the very going-out of youth),
> I too exclusively esteemed that love,
> And sought that beauty, which, as Milton sings,
> Hath terror in it. Thou didst soften down
> This over-sternness; but for thee, dear Friend!
> My soul, too reckless of mild grace, had stood
> In her original self too confident,
> Retained too long a countenance severe;
> A rock with torrents roaring, with the clouds
> Familiar, and a favourite of the stars:
> But thou didst plant its crevices with flowers,
> Hang it with shrubs that twinkle in the breeze,
> And teach the little birds to build their nests

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[6] Ibid., XI, 335-348.

> And warble in its chambers. . . .[7]
> thy breath,
> Dear Sister! was a kind of gentler spring
> That went before my steps.[8]

And then he acknowledges his indebtedness to Coleridge, who is the only person other than Dorothy to whom Wordsworth admits a deep indebtedness.[9]

> O capacious Soul!
> Placed on this earth to love and understand,
> And from thy presence shed the light of love,
> Shall I be mute, ere thou be spoken of?
> Thy kindred influence to my heart of hearts
> Did also find its way.[10]

The influence of Spenser may be found in many lines of The Prelude. Wordsworth spoke of him as

> Sweet Spenser, moving through his clouded heaven
> With the moon's beauty and the moon's soft pace.[11]

Throughout The Prelude there are many echoes of Milton, whose poetry Wordsworth had so completely absorbed that often the style and the language of The Prelude in its more eloquent passages take on a distinctly Miltonic manner. The language,

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[7] Ibid., XIV, 232-256.

[8] Ibid., XIV, 264-266.

[9] Legouis, op. cit., p. 318.

[10] The Prelude, XIV, 277-282.

[11] Ibid., III, 283-283.

too, echoes the phrasing and cadence of Milton.[12]

But the influence with which we are concerned in this study is the influence of Shakespeare. Although Wordsworth in The Prelude does not openly acknowledge his indebtedness to the great dramatist, numerous are the times that he quotes from him directly or refers to him by name, and even more numerous are the passages which recall the ideas of Shakespeare.

In Book V, Wordsworth speaks of the liberty and joy he experienced in reading. "How often," he says

> though a soft west wind
> Ruffled the waters to the angler's wish
> For a whole day together, have I lain
> Down by thy side, O Derwent! murmuring
> stream,
> On the hot stones, and in the glaring sun,
> And there have read, devouring as I read,
> Defrauding the day's glory, desperate!
> Till with a sudden bound of smart reproach,
> Such as an idler deals with in his shame,
> I to the sport betook myself again.[13]

His reading was wide and varied in scope, including the legendary exploits of Robin Hood, the adventures of Jack the Giant Killer, and Fortunatus, the owner of the magic cap.[14] In school, in college, and during vacation he read the works of Swift, of Cervantes, and of Fielding.[15] We know that he

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[12]See De Selincourt's introduction to The Prelude, p. xxx.

[13]The Prelude, V, 481-490.

[14]Ibid., V, 341-346.

[15]Memoirs, I, 10.

memorized long passages from his favorite authors: Spenser, Chaucer, Milton, and Shakespeare.[16] He recalls in this same book of The Prelude, the happy hours he spent in the company of these "labourers divine."

> Oftentimes at least
> Me hath such strong entrancement overcome,
> When I have held a volume in my hand,
> Poor earthly casket of immortal verse,
> Shakespeare, or Milton, labourers divine![17]

In Book VII, he describes his pleasure in the theatre during his residence in London in 1791.

> Enough is said to show
> How casual incidents of real life,
> Observed where pastime only had been sought,
> Outweighed, or put to flight, the set events
> And measured passions of the stage, albeit
> By Siddons trod in the fulness of her power.[18]
> Yet was the theatre my dear delight;
> The very gilding, lamps and painted scrolls,
> And all the mean upholstery of the place,
> Wanted not animation, when the tide
> Of pleasure ebbed but to return as fast
> With the ever-shifting figures of the scene,
> Solemn or gay.[19]

It was during this same winter in London that Wordsworth was most passionately moved to "sobs and tears" by the theatre,[20]

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[16] See above, p. 1.

[17] The Prelude, V, 161-165.

[18] Mrs. Sarah Kemble Siddons was the leading Shakespearian actress of the day.

[19] The Prelude, VII, 401-413.

[20] Ibid., VII, 470-476.

or perhaps he merely sat in quiet meditation after reading some of the plays.

> When, having closed the mighty Shakespeare's page,
> I mused, and thought, and felt, in solitude.[21]

Wordsworth again recalls Shakespeare in describing his visits to the House of Commons where he listened to "tongue-favoured men, perform," where

> One, of whose name from childhood we had heard
> Familiarly, a household term, like those,
> The Bedfords, Glosters, Salsburys, of old
> Whom the fifth Harry talks of.[22]

Here he is referring to the speech of Henry V, as he encouraged his men on the eve of battle, in the play, which, according to Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal, especially impressed her brother.[23]

> Then shall our names,
> Familiar in his mouth as household words--
> Harry the King, Bedford and Exeter,
> Warwick and Talbot, Salisbury and Gloucester--
> Be in their flowing cups freshly rememb'red.[24]

In a satirical passage Wordsworth again mentions Shakespeare in describing a fashionable preacher, who beginning with "seraphic countenance" and "in a tone elaborately low," rings all the changes of voice and gesture, and quotes glibly

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[21] Ibid., VII, 484-485.

[22] Ibid., VII, 495-498.

[23] Dorothy's Journals, May 8, 1802.

[24] Henry V, IV, iii, 51-55.

from the Old Testament and the New, from Byron, Macpherson, and Shakespeare, words that captivate his "flock."[25]

In another passage he speaks of

> . . . the courtly band whose fortunes
> Entered, with Shakespeare's genius, the wild woods
> Of Arden, amid sunshine or in shade,
> Culled the best fruits of Time's uncounted hours,
> Ere Phoebe sighed for the false Ganymede;
> Or there where Perdita and Florizel
> Together danced, Queen of the feast, and King.[26]

There are in The Prelude, in addition to these allusions to Shakespeare, several direct quotations from his plays or sonnets. Professor De Selincourt tells us that in the line, "Might almost 'weep to have' what he may lose,"[27] the phrase enclosed in quotation marks comes from Shakespeare's Sonnet LXIV.[28]

> This thought is as death, which cannot choose
> But weep to have that which it fears to lose.

Wordsworth seemed to have had a particular fondness for this sonnet, for in the "Essay,Supplementary to the Preface," he lists it among those sonnets of Shakespeare which he thought were exceptionally beautiful in thought and language.[29]

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[25] The Prelude, VII, 554-572.

[26] The Prelude, VIII, 137-143. See As You Like It, V, ii, 92, and Winter's Tale, IV, iv, 166.

[27] Ibid., V, 26.

[28] See De Selincourt's notes on The Prelude, p. 526.

[29] "Essay, Supplementary to the Preface," II, 416.

Another obvious quotation appears in the lines,

> Until I seemed to hear a voice that cried
> To the whole city, "Sleep no more."[30]

This voice, of course, is the one that cried out in Macbeth:

> Methought I heard a voice cry, "Sleep no more!"[31]

Professor De Selincourt also observes that Wordsworth uses the word "pressure" in the Shakespearian sense in quoting from Hamlet's speech to the players:

> Here too were "forms and pressures of the time."[32]

A comparison of the following parallel passages from The Prelude and Shakespeare's plays will show that the similarities are many. Once more De Selincourt's citations are credited by the letter S.

The Prelude, I, 224-227. (S)	The Tempest, IV, i, 150-156.
Some variegated story, in the main Lofty, but the unsubstantial structure melts Before the very sun that brightens it, Mist into air dissolving.	Melted into air, into thin air; And, like the baseless fabric of this vision, The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces, The solemn temples, the great globe itself, Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve, And, like this insubstantial pageant faded, Leave not a rack behind.

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[30] The Prelude, X, 86-87.

[31] Macbeth, II, ii, 35.

[32] The Prelude, VII, 288.

The Prelude, I, 536-537. (S)	As You Like It, II, vii, 177-178.
. . . the frost . . . . with keen and silent tooth.	Thy tooth is not so keen, Because thou art not seen. . . .
The Prelude, V, 206-208. (S)	Twelfth Night, II, iv, 43-47.
. . . from those loftiest notes . . . From cottagers and spinners at the wheel.	O, fellow, come, the song we had last night. . . . it is old and plain. The spinsters and the knitters in the sun. . . . Do use to chant it.
The Prelude, VI, 526 (1805-6 MS). (S)	King John, II, i, 208.
Before the eye and progress of my Song.	Before the eye and prospect of your town. . . .
The Prelude, VII, 724, (1805-6 MS). (S)	
The measure and prospect of the soul.	
The Prelude, VI, 647. (S)	Macbeth, II, ii, 36.
. . . innocent sleep.	. . . the innocent sleep. . . .
The Prelude, VI, 634. (S)	
The unfetter'd clouds, and region of the Heavens.	. . . her eyes in heaven Would through the airy region stream so bright. . . . Sonnet XXXIII, 12. The region clouds.

The Prelude, VII, 428. (S)	Macbeth, II, i, 58.
Prate somewhat loudly of the whereabouts.	The very stones prate of my whereabouts.
The Prelude, IX, 910-911. (1805-6 MS). (S)	Othello, V, ii, 304.
From that time forth he never utter'd word To any living. (Altered in the later texts to avoid comparison with Othello.)	From this time forth I never will speak word.
The Prelude, VII, 288. (S)	Hamlet, III, ii, 27.
Here too were "forms and pressures of the time."	The very age and body of the time has form and pressure.
The Prelude, VIII, 466.	Hamlet, I, i, 167.
High eastern hill.	High eastward hill.
The Prelude, VII, 475-476.(S)	Julius Caesar, II, i, 285-286.
. . . yet the storm Passed not beyond the suburbs of the mind.	Dwell I but in the suburbs Of your good pleasure?
The Prelude, X, 86-87. (S)	Macbeth, II, ii, 41.
Until I seemed to hear a voice that cried, To the whole city, "Sleep no more."	Still it cried "Sleep no more!" to all the house. . . .
The Prelude, X, 337-338. (S)	Hamlet, I, iv, 41.
. . . blasts From hell came sanctified like airs from heaven.	Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell. . . .

Wordsworth's earliest poems, "Descriptive Sketches" and "Evening Walk," published in 1793, also show evidence of the influence of Shakespeare. Both poems are compact collections of images mostly derived from personal observation, and Legouis[33] observes that although they are full of poetic diction similar to the prevailing style of the descriptive writers of the day, they show promise of greatness in the author. Incidentally, their poetic diction also owes something to the Elizabethans. De Selincourt notes the folloring similarities between Shakespeare's plays and these early poems:

Evening Walk, 65-66. (1794)	Measure for Measure, III, i, 120-121.
Their sensible warm motion was allied To the dull earth that crumbled at their side.	This sensible warm motion to become A kneaded clod.
Evening Walk, 81-82. (1793)	As You Like It, II, i, 31-32.
Beyond, along the vista of the brook, Where antique roots its bustling course o'erlook.	Under an oak, whose antique root peeps out Upon the brook that brawls along this wood.
Evening Walk, 360. (1793)	Tempest, IV, i, 155-156.
No wrack of all the pageant scene remains.	And, like this insubstantial pageant faded, Leave not a rack behind.

[33]Legouis, op. cit., p. 148.

Descriptive Sketches, 467. (1793)	Hamlet, I, iv, 75-76.
To mock the mind with "desperation's toys."	The very place puts toys of desperation, Without more motive, into every brain.
Descriptive Sketches, 579. (1793)	As You Like It, II, i, 7.
Secure, the chiding of the baffled wind.	Churlish chiding of the winter's wind.
Descriptive Sketches, 802-804. (1793)	Henry V, I, Prologue, 6-8.
And crouching fearful at the feet of Pow'r Like Lightnings eager for th' almighty word, Look up for sign of havoc, Fire and Sword.	And at his heels (Leash'd in, like hounds) should famine, sword, and fire Crouch for employment.
	Julius Caesar, III, i, 272-273.
	Shall in these confines with a monarch's voice Cry "Havoc!" and let slip the dogs of war.[34]

Over and above the allusions to or quotations from Shakespeare, or adaptations of his words in The Borderers, The Prelude, the prose prefaces and letters, and his early poems, "Descriptive Sketches" and "Evening Walk," there are many passages in Wordsworth's other poems which show Shakespeare's influence in one way or another. I shall use the

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[34]This passage, not listed in De Selincourt, was called to my attention by Dr. John A. Hansen.

following symbols to denote the critics who have observed these similarities:

S - Ernest De Selincourt, The Works of William Wordsworth, 6 vols., London, 1926-49.

P - Abbie F. Potts, The Ecclesiastical Sonnets of William Wordsworth, New York, 1922.

H - Raymond Dexter Havens, The Mind of a Poet, Baltimore, 1941.

Those without initials are my own observations.

Louisa, 19. (S)	King Lear, IV, vi, 26-27.
Take all that's mine "beneath the moon."	. . . For all beneath the moon Would I not leap upright.

Mottoes for Peter Bell. (S)	Romeo and Juliet, II, ii, 43.
"What's in a Name?"	What's in a name?
"Brutus will start a Sprit as soon as Caesar!"	Julius Caesar, I, i, 147. 'Brutus' will start a spirit as soon as 'Caesar.'

The Waggoner, IV, 12. (S)	Hamlet, I, v, 58.
Scents the morning air.	But soft! methinks I scent the morning air.

She Was a Phantom of Delight, 22. (S)	Hamlet, II, ii, 124.
The very pulse of the machine.	"Thine evermore, most dear lady, whilst this machine is to him. . . ."

Nightingale, 2. (S)	3 Henry VI, I, iv, 67.
A creature of a "fiery heart."	What? hath thy fiery heart so parch'd thine entrails?
Hart-Leap Well, 97. (S)	Othello, I, iii, 135.
The moving accident is not my trade.	Of moving accidents by flood and field.
Hart-Leap Well, 98. (S)	All's Well That Ends Well, I, iii, 155.
To freeze the blood I have no ready arts. (De Selincourt notes that in the 1800 edition the line reads "curl the blood." He suggests that this is probably a misprint for curd the blood.)	God's mercy, maiden! does it curd thy blood? Hamlet, I, v, 69-70. And curd, like eager droppings into milk, The thin and wholesome blood.
On the Power of Sound (1828), 134-136. (S)	A Midsummer Night's Dream, II, i, 150-151.
The dulcet sound Steals from the deck o'er willing waves, And listening dolphins gather round.	And heard a mermaid, on a dolphin's back, Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath. . . .
Artegal and Elidure, 12.	Macbeth, I, iii, 149-150.
Current of forgotten things.	My dull brain was wrought With things forgotten.
Solitary Reaper, 1 .	
Old, unhappy, far-off things.	
Stanzas Suggested in a Steamboat off Saint Bees' Heads, 37. (S)	King Lear, III, iv, 95.
"Cruel of heart were they, bloody of hand."	False of heart, light of ear, bloody of hand. . . .

Stanzas off Saint Bees' Head, 94. (S)	Hamlet, IV, v, 25-26.
With staff and cockle hat and sandal shoon.	From Ophelia's song-- By his cockle hat and staff And his sandal shoon.
The Somnambulist, 82-85. (S)	Macbeth, V, 1.
In sleep She sometimes walked abroad, Deep sighs with quick words blending, Like that pale Queen whose hands are seen With fancied spots contending.	Lady Macbeth. Sleep-walking scene.
To the Moon, XIII, 50. (S)	Sonnet CXVI, 6.
"To look on tempests, and be never shaken."	That looks on tempests and is never shaken.
Personal Talk, 6. (S)	A Midsummer Night's Dream, I, i, 76-78.
Maiden's withering on the stalk.	But earthlier happy is the rose distill'd Than that which, withering on the virgin thorn, Grows, lives, and dies in single blessedness.
Personal Talk, 41. (S)	Desdemona in Shakespeare's play, Othello.
The gentle Lady married to the Moor.	
Recluse-Prospectus, 83-85. (H)	Sonnet CVII, 2-3.
Descend prophetic Spirit! that inspir'st The human Soul of universal earth, Dreaming on things to come.	The prophetic soul Of the wide world, dreaming on things to come.

Epistle I to Sir George Beaumont, 161. (S)	As You Like It, II, v, 1-8.
Wild Arden's brakes.	Amiens. Under the greenwood tree Who loves to lie with me, And turn his merry note Unto the sweet bird's throat, Come hither, come hither, come hither! Here shall he see No enemy But winter and rough weather.
Gold and Silver Fishes in a Vase, 1-2. (S)	Cymbeline, II, iii, 22.
Lark. . . at heaven's gate.	Hark, hark! the lark at heaven's gate sings.
	Sonnet XXIX, 11-12.
	Like to the lark at break of day arising From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate.
The White Doe of Rylstone, II, 400.	Twelfth Night, I, i, 4.
That name--pronounced with a dying fall.	That strain again! It had a dying fall.
Once I Could Hail Howe'er Serene the Sky, 20. (S)	Twelfth Night, III, iv, 401.
Before me?--nothing blemished the fair sight.	In nature there's no blemish but the mind.
Ode on Intimations of Immortality, 66.	Henry VIII, V, v, 18.
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!	That royal infant--heaven still move about her!

Ecclesiastical Sonnets, 2.18, 1-2.	(P)	Henry VIII, III, ii, 107-109.
"Woe to you, Prelates! rioting in ease And cumbrous wealth--the shame of your estate."		What piles of wealth hath he accumulated To his own portion! and what expense by th' hour Seems to flow from him!
Ibid., 3.21, 12.	(P)	Macbeth, IV, i, 83.
Or seek to make assurance doubly sure.		But yet I'll make assurance double sure.
Ibid., 1.39, 1.	(P)	Measure for Measure, III, i, 124.
Unless to Peter's Chair the viewless wind.		To be imprison'd in the viewless winds.
Ibid., 1.21, 7-14.	(P)	A Midsummer Night's Dream, IV, i, 45-47.
Within his cell Round the decaying trunk of human pride, At morn, and eve, and midnight's silent hour, Do penitential cogitations cling; Like ivy, round some ancient elm, they twine In grisly folds and strictures serpentine; Yet, while they strangle, a fair growth they bring, For recompense--their own perennial bower.		So doth the woodbine the sweet honeysuckle Gently entwist; the female ivy so Enrings the barky fingers of the elm.
Ibid., 2.26, 9-10.	(P)	Romeo and Juliet, V, i, 3.
"Lightly for both the bosom's lord did sit Upon his throne."		My bosom's lord sits lightly in his throne.

Miscellaneous Sonnets, Part I, XXXIV, 1-3. (S)	Macbeth, I, vi, 7.
A volant Tribe of Bards on earth are found, Who, while the flattering Zephyrs round them play, On "coignes of vantage" hand their nests of clay.	Coign of vantage.

Juvenilia, Sonnet XXVII, 5-8. (S)	Twelfth Night, II, iv, 113-115.
That cheek, those auburn locks which now exceed. That bad[e] concealment on my spirit feed. . . . [See De Selincourt, Appendix, I, 308.]	She never told her love, But let concealment, like a worm i' th' bud, Feed on her damask cheek.

Upon the Same Occasion, 14. (S)	Macbeth, V, iii, 22-23.
My leaf is sear.	My way of life Is fall'n into the sear, the yellow leaf.

Lines Written in the Album of the Countess of Lonsdale, 60-61.	Macbeth, V, iii, 22-23.
A life declining with the golden light Of summer, in the season of sere leaves.	My way of life Is fall'n into the sear, the yellow leaf.

Troilus and Cressida, 104-105. (S)	Hamlet, II, ii, 629.
All which he of himself conceited wholly Out of his weakness and his melancholy.	Out of my weakness and my melancholy.

Ibid., To Sleep, Part I, XIV, 13.	Macbeth, II, ii, 37-38.
Come, blessed barrier between day and day.	Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleave of care, The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath. . . .
The Warning, 3.	Hamlet, I, iv, 2.
Nipping air.	A nipping and an eager air.
The White Doe, Canto III, 775.	Hamlet, I, I, iv, 2.
The nipping wind.	A nipping and an eager air.
Poem Founded on Affection, XIII, 1.	As You Like It, IV, i, 107-108.
'Tis said, that some have died for love.	Men have died from time to time, and worms have eaten them, but not for love.
The Brothers, 388.	Two Gentlemen of Verona, III, i, 243.
Time Is a true friend of sorrow.	Time is the nurse and breeder of all good.
The Excursion, I, 370-1. (S)	The Tempest, I, ii, 5-6.
He could afford to suffer With those whom we saw suffer.	O, I have suffer'd With those that I saw suffer!
Ibid., I, 708-710. (S)	A Midsummer Night's Dream, I, i, 211.
The soft and bladed grass, Springing afresh, had o'er the hay-field spread Its tender verdure.	Decking with liquid pearl the bladed grass. . . .

Ibid., III, 401-403. (S)

Where earth is quiet and her face unchanged
Save by the simplest toil of human hands
Or seasons' difference.

As You Like It, II, i, 6.

Here feel we but the penalty of Adam,
The seasons' difference.

Ibid., IV, 800-805. (S)

The Shepherd-lad, that in the sunshine carves,
On the green turf, a dial--to divide
The silent hours; and who to that report
Can portion out his pleasures, and adapt,
Throughout a long and lonely summer's day
His round of pastoral duties.

Henry VI, Part III, II, v, 21-25.

O God! methinks it were a happy life,
To be no better than a homely swain;
To sit upon a hill, as I do now,
To carve out dials quaintly, point by point,
Thereby to see the minutes how they run.

Ibid., IV, 1264. (S)
(Obviously indebted to two of Hamlet's speeches)

So build we up the Being that we are.

Hamlet, II, ii, 316-27.

What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculties! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals! And yet to me what is this quintessence of dust? Man delights not me--no, nor woman neither, though by your smiling you seem to say so.
Rosencrantz. My lord, there was no such stuff in my thoughts.
Hamlet. Why did you laugh, then, when I said "Man delights not me"?

	Hamlet, IV, iv, 33-39.
	What is a man, If his chief good and market of his time Be but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more. Sure he that made us with such large discourse, Looking before and after, gave us not That capability and godlike reason To fust in us unus'd.
Ibid., VI, 119-20. (S) (MS, 1814-20)	Twelfth Night, II, iv, 113-115.
And pined When he had told his love. (altered in 1827 to avoid comparison with Twelfth Night.)	She never told her love, But. . . pin'd in thought.
Ibid., VI, 327. (S)	Love's Labour Lost, V, ii, 927.
The wide-stering owl.	Then nightly sings the staring owl.
Ibid., VI, 550-551. (S)	Othello, III, iii, 354.
Give the pomp Of circumstance; and here the tragic Muse Shall find apt subjects for her highest art. Amid the groves under the shadowy hills, The generations are prepared; the pangs, The internal pangs, are ready.	Pride, pomp, and circum- stance of glorious war!

Ibid., VI, 905. (S)	Hamlet, III, i, 72.
Pang of despised love.	The pangs of despis'd love.
Ibid., VII (app. crit.), 621.	As You Like It, II, i, 6.
The season's difference.	Here feel we but the penalty of Adam, The seasons' difference
The Recluse, I, 58.	The Tempest, IV, i, 152.
Cloud-capt hills.	Cloud-capp'd towers.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

The facts presented in the foregoing chapters indicate that the influence of England's greatest poet upon the writings of England's greatest nature poet was profound. Wordsworth himself points the way to this unfluence when he says he turned to the masters for guidance in forming his poetic principles. Early in life he realized that poetic success came most truly to those who endeavored to make the great poets their pattern. Since Shakespeare was one of those whom Wordsworth studied and absorbed in a conscious effort "to equal" if he could, it is not surprising that many of Wordsworth's literary principles, as set forth in the prefaces, reflect the influence of the works of the great Elizabethan. As Shakespeare kept the spectator in the company of flesh and blood, so Wordsworth wished "to keep the reader in the company of flesh and blood" and in so doing interest him.[1] Again and again in the prefaces, which might well be called Wordsworth's theory of poetics, he cites Shakespeare as the authority for many of his poetic practices. Some of these theories

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[1] "Preface to the Second Edition. . . of Lyrical Ballads," II, 390.

which obviously were influenced by Shakespeare are: (1) Poetry should produce excitement together "with an overbalance of pleasure."[2] (2) Imagination is an essential quality of the poetic mind. It is the faculty which makes the poet "all compact."[3] (3) "Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge."[4] (4) The poet is the man "who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind."[5] (5) Poetic language should be a language of simplicity--a language free from poetic diction, conventional figures of speech, and the excessive use of personification and allegory.[6]

In Wordsworth's poetry there are many verbal echoes of Shakespeare, which indicate that he had studied the language of the dramatist until it had perhaps unconsciously become a part of his own. These echoes, according to the careful notes of Professor De Selincourt, are not so numerous as the Miltonic phrases, but there are many of them.

The Borderers is the most "consciously Shakespearian"

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[2]"Preface to the Second Edition. . . of Lyrical Ballads," II, 400.

[3]"Preface to the Edition of 1815," II, 436.

[4]"Preface to the Second Edition. . . of Lyrical Ballads," II, 396.

[5]"Preface to the Edition of 1815," II, 436.

[6]"Advertisement to the Lyrical Ballads, 1798," II, 383.

of all Wordsworth's poetry. In plot, in language, in setting, and in characterization, it abounds in reminiscence of Othello, King Lear, Macbeth, and Hamlet. Although it is not Wordsworth at his best, it served as an important step in his poetical growth, and perhaps deserves more study than has heretofore been given it.

Wordsworth's letters and his conversations also reflect Shakespeare's influence upon his ideas and taste, for it is here that Wordsworth reveals his intimate, unguarded opinions, which are possibly more significant than words spoken for publication.

Literary borrowing is neither new nor dishonorable. It is a practice which has contributed to the growth of writers throughout the years. "What good authors borrow may be bettered in the borrowing."[7] Shakespeare himself "dressed old words new," picking up phrases from chroniclers, from Marlowe, Spenser, Daniel, and others.[8] It was common practice among Elizabethans to borrow without making acknowledgement. Nor has this practice been altogether discontinued through the years, for writers, both great and small, have continued consciously, or more frequently unconsciously, to use phrases

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[7]See Alwin Thaler, Shakespeare and Sir Philip Sidney (Cambridge, 1947), p. 73.

[8]Ibid.

and ideas which they have acquired from the works of their literary forebears. So it was with Wordsworth who, by his own admission, chose to associate himself with the minds of the literary masters and thus managed to absorb much from them, as one does from the language and ideas of a friend.

One cannot agree with Wordsworth, however, in the remark he is reported to have made to Charles Lamb in a literary discussion on style in which Wordsworth said he did not see "much difficulty in writing like Shakespeare," if he had a mind to try. No more can one agree with Lamb's prompt reply that "nothing is wanting but the mind."[9] For in spite of phrases parallel with Milton, Shakespeare, Thomson, Dryden, and scores of others, Wordsworth was original. Coleridge has very ably expressed this in pointing to the pre-eminence of Wordsworth's imagination.

> In imaginative power, he stands nearest of all modern writers to Shakespeare and Milton; and yet in a kind perfectly unborrowed and his own. To employ his own words, which are at once an instance and an illustration, he does indeed to all thoughts and to all objects
>
> add the gleam
> The light that never was, on sea or land,
> The consecration, and the poet's dream.[10]

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[9]Rannie, op. cit., p. 224.

[10]Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, II, 24.

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