A Wordsworthian image of the one life: the old man Herbert as borderer

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A Wordsworthian image of the One Life:
The old man Herbert as borderer

by

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INTRODUCTION

Although a considerable amount of attention has been devoted to Wordsworth's only drama, *The Borderers*, written during late 1796 and the spring of 1797, very little study has centered on the old man of the play, Herbert.¹ Instead, discussion has focused either on the presence or absence of Godwinian views in the play, on Shakespearean influences, or on the psychology of the two major characters, Mortimer and Rivers, particularly as a result of Wordsworth's preface to the play which identifies the neurosis of compulsive repetition.² Typically, until only recently, Herbert has been neglected as an ill-defined and poorly described victim; but, in the old man of *The Borderers*, one can find the seed of one of Wordsworth's most powerful images: the old man as borderer. As a borderer, the old man unites seemingly opposite qualities, such as motion and inertia and mortality and immortality. The embodiment of antithetic characteristics in one personage suggests that the image of the old man becomes a metaphor for Wordsworth's philosophy of the One Life.³ The image is more fully developed later in such memorable poems as "Old Man Travelling," "The Old Cumberland Beggar," and "Resolution and Independence"; but, clearly, the antecedent of the metaphor can be found in Herbert of *The Borderers*.

That Wordsworth uses boundary images, particularly in the form of a solitary, has been fairly well-established. For instance, Hartman posits that among the Romantics, Wordsworth comes closest to paralleling Virgil's blended, or boundary, image of Atlas as simultaneously mountain and man when Wordsworth depicts old men such as the leechgatherer.⁴ In his study on the lyrical characterizations of solitaries, Robert Langbaum further
recognizes that, to achieve such a blend, Wordsworth uses few individualizing traits and virtually eliminates all external detail in order to show the character's inner life as a "quality of soul." Thus, the physical and the spiritual are juxtaposed through their synthesis in the old man. Likewise, Jonathon Wordsworth, though he focuses on no particular type of borderer, suggests that these "marginal" characters are enviable not only for their peacefulness but also for their approaching a border to another world as exhibited by their extreme passivity. These critics, as well as many others, acknowledge both the existence of borderline beings in Wordsworth's work and the talent of the poet in his ability to create them so capably; but, of what significance are such characters to Wordsworth's philosophy of the One Life?

Through the image of the old man as borderer, Wordsworth is able to depict the continuity of life in man and nature and, thus, of eternity so that observers may intuit the Many in the One. In Wordsworth and The Poetry of Encounter, Frederick Garber relates the impact which the borderer as a solitary can have:

If singularity is now not quite a synonym for power and insight, it comes to be identified with them so closely that those qualities seem indissolubly a part of anything that is alone. Being alone, unique and single, then, comes to signify having about oneself an association with hidden powers which are difficult to know and never completely knowable. The powers seem tied in with the state of singularity itself, so that something that is alone can, at least potentially, have an immensely potent capacity to reveal the might of hidden forces connected with the insights afforded by imaginative vision.

The image of the borderer, therefore, is the means for an observer to come to fresh insight and assurance in a power within and beyond what is present; in other words, the borderer becomes the medium through which the life
force is revealed. Jonathan Ramsey supports this idea by suggesting that Wordsworth's "threshold people," associated with unusually intense powers of receptivity such as silence, passivity, and tranquillity, are presented as "quasi-human extensions toward the unself-conscious unity and repose symbolized in nature." He further comments:

Borderline figures in the poetry achieve much of their significance as links between one way of life or mode of awareness and another. Wordsworth tries not to look upon them as means of withdrawal or escape but rather as living symbols of mediation in his constant search for evidence of organic continuity.

Border figures, in the representative poems previously mentioned, are important to Wordsworth's expression of the One Life, since they become embodiments of that view. Herbert, the early border figure in Wordsworth's drama, may reveal the development of the theory.

As an antecedent to the image appearing in the poetry to be written still that year and even later, Herbert is not as polished an image as his counterparts, but the signs of their resemblance as border figures are unmistakeable. Although he does not specifically address the image of the old man, Pipkin acknowledges, in his study of the genesis and relationship of the spots of time to The Borderers, that many of Wordsworth's later ideas were present in his earliest works. Paul Sheats further comments that, in The Borderers, one finds Wordsworth's "tentative reconstruction of hope that looks forward to the achievements of 1798," while Basil Willey affirms that Wordsworth was preparing in the drama the foundations of faith expounded upon in his great decade. Thus, the affiliation between Herbert and the leech-gatherer, the old Cumberland beggar, and the father in "Old Man Travelling" is a tempting and suggestive one.
From the above ideas comes the focus for this paper: that the old man Herbert, as a prototype for later figures, is a boundary image, an instrument by which one perceives the intermingling of the One Life spirit within all beings, animate or inanimate.
THE MELD OF DESCRIPTIONS

Though the borderers of the drama's title are often thought to refer either to the band of "crusaders" during the Baron's Wars of 1265 in general or to Rivers and Mortimer in specific as a result of their Robin Hood activities, the title may be aptly applied in a different manner. By focusing on Herbert as the major borderer, one is able to see the inception of a character type as well as the seeds of the philosophy which Coleridge was soon to help Wordsworth articulate. The chief question at this point, then, is through what associations Wordsworth is able to make the old man a metaphor for the unity of the One Life. By attributing to Herbert images which combine characteristics of both life and death, Wordsworth achieves this synthesis.

One of the methods by which Wordsworth creates a sense of blending is the depiction of Herbert as often being at rest or asleep; seldom is the old man seen in action. Throughout the drama, the emphasis placed on Herbert's increasing need for rest focuses one's attention on the fact that he is becoming more and more sedentary and, therefore, more lifeless. In his sleeping or resting states, the opposites of life and death converge so that Herbert himself represents both qualities simultaneously. For instance, upon the first appearance of Herbert, Matilda's opening comment is "Dear Father, you sigh deeply; ever since/ We left the willow shade, by the brookside,/ Your natural breathing has been troubled" (p. 80; I, i, 75-77). Matilda, noting her father's difficulties and regretting her decision not to stay in the Shepherd's hut overnight, requires him to sit and rest (p. 82; I, i, 88-97). Activity has become more laborious for Herbert, and so
his need for rest is highlighted. This first view of Herbert as a man who requires activity to be balanced by rest foreshadows later portrayals. First, though the distance to the inn from where Herbert has rested is not far, once Herbert has reached the inn, he is so exhausted he can no longer accompany Matilda and so decides he must remain at the hostelry (p. 98; I, ii); and, after only a short time there, Herbert complains that he cannot gain respite at the inn because of the revelers and must return to the convent to find repose (p. 102; I, ii, 57-59). Moreover, even before Rivers and Mortimer can supposedly guide him to the convent where he can sleep easily, Herbert has to recuperate from his previous efforts (p. 102; I, ii, 65-68). Secondly, upon reaching the ruined castle, Herbert once again lies down to rest on the bed provided by Rivers and Mortimer (p. 150; II, iii, 98-100). Mortimer indicates the intensity of Herbert's rest at the castle: "When I spoke to you [Rivers], why did not you answer? You were afraid of/ waking him I suppose.—He must have been in a deep sleep, for I/ whispered to him twice" (p. 164; II, iii, 262-64). In the next scene with Herbert, the old man is once more stationary, as he is seated on a stone when Mortimer finds him (p. 190; III, iii). To this point, then, in each of the scenes in which Herbert has been present, he has been either resting or has been concerned about reposing soon; and his only "on-stage" activity has been walking on with Matilda in order to sit down, and his few activities, largely relating to his younger days, have merely been reported by others. Furthermore, Herbert's absence from the stage, though obviously a technique allowing action to progress, diverts attention away from any activity he may be participating in. Herbert's last appearance
shows him in his most active capacity; he crosses the stage with difficulty and collapses (pp. 224, 226; IV, i). This final exertion on Herbert's part underscores how his mobility, typically representative of animal vitality and life, has slackened to inertness, representative of stasis and constancy. The two contrarieties of life and death thus merge in the image of the old man.

That the distance between life and death for Herbert is minuscule is further supported by observations made by several of the characters of the play. Speaking to himself, Rivers says of Herbert, "Is he not eyeless? he has been half dead/ These fifteen years ..." (p. 162; II, iii, 242-43). The implication is clear: if the old man is half dead, then he too is half alive; and so both conditions of being are brought together in him. Another example of the precarious balance between life and death for Herbert is revealed in the scene at the castle. Mortimer relates to Rivers that "the old blind man/ Wept when you told him the mischance [of the dog's drowning], and hung/ Listening above the precipice" (p. 144; II, iii, 40-42). This statement shows that very little separates Herbert from death. The old man's recognition of being near the border is verified by Herbert himself when he speaks to Mortimer: "... but I never shall forget the shuddering/ that seized you when you led me over the torrent; but for you there/ had not been a hair betwixt my death and me" (p. 152; II, iii, 116-18). Herbert's proximity to death is, thus, reinforced by the image of hanging on the edge of life as he crosses the rushing river. Probably most convincing, though, are three assertions referring to Herbert's last living moments and to his death, each evoking the image of sleep and rest.
Of Herbert Robert tells his wife, "I tell you, his hands and body were cold -- how could I disturb his/ last moments? He strove to turn from me as if he wished to compose/ himself to sleep" (p. 250; IV, iii, 50-52).

Commenting also on the close relationship of life and death, Matilda instructs Mortimer, "But enter there and see him, how he sleeps/ Tranquil as if he died in his own bed ..." (p. 268; V, iii, 24-25). Lastly, on Rivers' asking if Herbert is dead, Mortimer simply answers, "Quiet" (p. 286; V, iii, 255), a response deliberately ambiguous. The word implies the final merging of the animate and inanimate since Herbert, though now incapable of making noise, is still referred to as if he can. The direct statements referring to Herbert's borderline state and the association of sleep and rest become the means through which Wordsworth is able to make the old man a border image, one with the characteristics of both life and death.

Besides being cast as a borderer between animate and inanimate states, Herbert is also a borderer between mortality and immortality. During his life, he encounters the problems and difficulties of every human being. First, he has suffered the loss of loved ones. While on his pilgrimage to Antioch, his wife and son are killed in a fire; but, despite his anguish, he endures. Herbert, like other men, also has need of food, clothing, and shelter; but he is provided for when the abbot of St. Cuthbert's not only allows him use of a hut but also presents him other needed provisions (p. 33, I, i, 167-70). Before the abbot extends his kindness, though, Herbert is forced to beg bread (p. 136; II, ii, 19). Furthermore, because of the difficulty he encounters through the seizure of his baronetcy, Herbert has been forced to separate from his daughter (p. 88; I, i, 164-72). Thus,
Herbert faces human predicaments throughout his life; yet the descriptions of his association with religion and nature undeniably link him to the eternal as well.

That Herbert is identified as a holy man has been fairly well-established, particularly by Robert Osborn. The first allusion to Herbert's religiosity is in his name. Osborn points out that Wordsworth must have chosen the name of Herbert for its seventh-century association with St. Herbert of Derwentwater. In his depiction of Wordsworth's Herbert, the critic also adds,

He [Herbert] has renounced the world, and shares with the Old Pilgrim [of The Ur-Borderers] the mystical sanctity of a man whose 'life is hidden with God' but without having lost his 'true and perfect mind'. Herbert's language is pervaded with biblical references and biblical rhythms: his vocabulary, his age, his blindness, and his humility all identify him as a holy man, and strengthen his association with Herbert of Derwentwater.

Allusions to St. Cuthbert, whose abbot tends to Herbert's needs, further supports Herbert's connection with religion. According to Osborn, St. Cuthbert, a friend of St. Herbert, was a hermit on the Farne Islands who ministered to the birds; and the crow arising from Herbert's dead body is a reference to Cuthbert's ministrations. The choice of Herbert's name, thus, clearly identifies Herbert with saintliness. Another confirmation of the intended association of Herbert with piety is Wordsworth's not altering the name of the old man in any of his later manuscripts, whereas all other characters' names were.

Moreover, as Osborn suggests, indications other than the name chosen for the old man assert his association with the divine: many descriptions by other characters demonstrate Herbert's link to religion. For example, in order to convince Mortimer that she is referring to Herbert, the beggar
woman hired by Rivers describes the old man: "Lank as a ghost and tall—
his shoulders bent/ And his beard white with age—yet evermore,/ As if
he were the only saint on earth/ He turns his face to heaven" (p. 112; I, iii, 87-90). Such language evokes the image of one bordering the mortal and immortal. Furthermore, when he begins to believe Rivers' deceptions about the old man, Mortimer instinctively associates Herbert with God when he says, "Father/ To God himself we cannot give/ An holier name" (p. 122; I, iii, 177-78). Though Mortimer despairs of Herbert's supposed crimes, he recognizes nonetheless that the old man is supposed to hold a sacred position; and when Mortimer is undeceived, Herbert's holy status as a father does not change. Noting the old man's role as a father, Osborn avers that Herbert is for Matilda a religious, as well as a secular, father. Another detail depicting Herbert's union with the holy is his staff. Upon the staff is carved: "'I am Eyes to the blind saith the Lord,/ 'He that puts his trust in me shall not fail'" (p. 202; III, iv, 150-51). An additional reference to Herbert's staff accentuates the tie to religion. Alluding to the 23rd Psalm, Robert describes the old man as he was found: "his head was bare—/ His staff was by his side; and near the brink/ Of a small pool he was laid,/ His face close to the water" (p. 260; V, ii, 29-32). Herbert's staff, then, also acts as a sign by which the old man is shown to be simultaneously mortal and holy: he uses it to prop his steps and he uses it as a reminder of the Biblical promise. Important to Herbert's being representative of the divine are references to religious structures. Herbert decides at the inn to return to the convent in order to rest (p. 102, I, i, 57-59), the host informs Matilda that she can find her father there (p. 182; III, i, 1), and, lastly, Robert reminds
Mortimer that the corpse must be taken to the church (p. 284; V, iii, 209). Such statements all demonstrate the kinship between Herbert and religion.

Perhaps even more conclusive than the above statements, though, is Herbert's tenacious faith, despite his many hardships, as evidenced by his blessings, prayers, and assertions. While he converses with Mortimer at the castle, for instance, Herbert declares, "Merciful God! thou has poured out the phials of thy wrath upon/ My head—but I will not murmer—blasted as I am thou hast left/ Me both ears to hear the voice of my daughter and arms to fold her/ To my heart—I will adore thee and tremble!" (p. 154; II, iii, 130-33). Alone on the moor with Mortimer, Herbert again affirms his connection with the heavenly. First he states that he stands alone "beneath the arch of heaven" (p. 198; III, iii, 85-86); and, shortly thereafter, he relates to Mortimer his history after leaving the Holy Land: "Like a Mendicant/ Whom no one comes to meet, I stood alone./ I murmured, but remembering him who feeds/ The pelican and ostrich of the Desert,/ From my own threshold I looked up to heaven,/ And did not want glimmerings of quiet hope" (p. 198; III, iii, 92-97). In spite of his many troubles, Herbert's faith in religion remains constant. Even during what may be considered Herbert's most trying time, his belief does not falter. During the ordeal to which Mortimer has sentenced him, he first cries out, "Hear me ye men upon the cliffs that pray/ To God the father of all mercy—hear—me" (p. 260; IV, i, 3-4). In spite of his immediate struggle, Herbert yet recognizes God as merciful. Moreover, one of the old man's last statements to Robert is "A stranger has done this to me,/ And in the arms of a stranger I must die,/ God be praised!—" (p. 226; IV, i, 21-23). Regardless of
the trials he faces, Herbert's faith does not falter; thus, his characteri-

cation as a religious man is affirmed.

Further advancing Herbert's identification with the sacred are allu-
sions to his being a saint or a martyr. One illustration describes the ef-
fect which Herbert has had on others. Talking to Mortimer, the old man
states, "Armed men/ Met in the roads would bless us—little children/ Rush-
ing along in the full tide of play/ Were silent as we passed them. I have
heard/ The boisterous carman in the miry road/ Check his loud whip and hail
us with mild voice/ And speak with milder voice to his poor beasts" (p.
196, III, iii, 73-79). For no specific reason should any of these people
be affected, but yet they "bless" the old man, apparently for something
holy they divine in his nature. Setting up the image of the martyr is
Mortimer. He, convincing himself of his duty to kill Herbert, persists:
"His tender cries/ And helpless innocence, do they protect/ The infant
lamb? and shall the infirmities/ Which have enabled this enormous culprit/
To perpetrate his crimes serve as a sanctuary/ To cover his punishment?
Fie ... We recognize in this old man a victim/ Prepared already for the
sacrifice (p. 178; II, iii, 391-96, 400-01). The depiction of Herbert as
a lamb to be sacrificed evokes the idea of atonement; of this offering,
Rivers says that Herbert's death will be "a monument to ages," thus sug-
gest ing the martyrdom of the old man (p. 180; II, iii, 429). Finally,
Mortimer, undeluded, reaffirms the association of Herbert with the holy:
"He is at peace,/ His body is at rest--there was a plot,/ A damned plot
against the soul of man ...." (p. 268; V, iii, 26-28). The reference to
the soul not only links Herbert with the religious, but it also implies
the idea of a spirit present in all things. By being defined as a saint or martyr, then, Herbert's character is connected with the holy after-life while, at the same time, his character is described as that of a devout human; thus, through the combination of descriptions, a borderer once again emerges.

Lastly, with regard to Herbert's affiliation with religion, Osborn notes that Herbert is a "perpetual pilgrim" whose life seems to parallel that of Christ. However, the critic quickly proposes that the old man preaches not the gospel of Christianity but the gospel of a "natural religion derived from biblical myth." What Osborn recognizes, then, is that Herbert's religion is not derived from formalized doctrine, but, instead, joins the concepts of a supreme being with the idea of its presence within nature. In Herbert, Wordsworth allows natural and religious images to merge, suggesting that, in The Borderers, the idea of the One Life may have found actualization.

Throughout The Borderers, several images containing allusions to both religion and nature are revelatory of Herbert's role in blending the two. As previously noted, Mortimer's statement relating Herbert to the sacrificed lamb evinces religious connotations; simultaneously, the image retains its affiliation with the earthly pastoral creature. Also exemplifying the connection between nature and religion are Herbert's avowal of faith in the God who fed the pelicans and ostriches of the desert (198; III, iii, 92-97) and Robert's description of the old man lying beside the waters before dying (p. 260; V, ii, 29-32). In addition, Herbert's statement about the effect which he and Matilda have made on travellers and carmen also alludes to the nexus between religion and nature. Walling points
out that the response the father and daughter receive is quite similar to Marmaduke's response to the star which jolts him into not murdering the old man. By juxtaposing the effect of the star with that of Herbert, the special powers of the old man who brings together both the natural and the religious is made evident. A further illustration of Herbert's blending the two concepts is reported by Mortimer who relates to Rivers that, on hearing a clap of thunder, Herbert declares that such is the time when guilt should shudder but that providence is there for those who are innocent (p. 146; II, iii, 67-71). In this situation, it is the thunder which recalls to Herbert the thought of divine care. Finally, Herbert himself, talking to Mortimer on the moor, links nature and the sacred:

So from the court I passed and down the brook,
Led by its murmur, to the ancient oak
I came, and when I felt its cooling shade,
I sat me down and cannot but believe--
While in my lap I held my little babe
And clasped her to my heart--my heart that ached
More with delight than grief--I heard a voice
Such as by Cherith on Elijah called
It said, 'I will be with thee' (p. 198; III, iii, 98-106).

The combination of the two consists of the river's leading the old man to a particular site in nature where a revelation is made to him. Such references attest to Walling's conclusion that Herbert communicates most successfully with God when he has retired into the world of nature. By characterizing Herbert simultaneously as a representative of both "ideas," Wordsworth is beginning to blend the two; and the Theory of the One, whether Wordsworth was aware of its conceptualization or not, is starting to materialize.

The permeation of nature and religion through the device of the old man is also supported by the fairly even balance of descriptions of Herbert
in association with each separate notion. By not emphasizing one relationship over the other, the implication of their equivalent importance is present. Of the lines Wordsworth assigns to Herbert, Walling claims that the poet was at least half-consciously identifying Herbert with the manifestations of visible nature. In the references linking the old man with nature, most connect him with animal life. Though several of these have a negative function in that they are used by the misled Mortimer or else by others who try to delude the young crusader, the images clearly point to Herbert's mortal and animal nature. For example, after hearing the beggar woman's lies, Mortimer names Herbert a "cruel viper" (p. 120; I, iii, 162); when Rivers prompts him to recall his mission with Herbert, Mortimer cries "that mole, that weazle, that old water-rat" (p. 190; III, ii, 107); and, when talking to the old man on the moor, he calls Herbert "a lynx" (p. 196; III, iii, 56). Rivers, evidently thinking of the old man's case, also indirectly links Herbert to nature. Addressing himself, he states, "murder! What, of whom?/ Of whom—or what? we kill a toad, a newt, a rat." The alteration in the 1842 version of this speech, though obviously a stylistic improvement, also implies that a negative connotation between nature and Herbert is not to be emphasized. In the latter version, Rivers proclaims, "Murder! What, of whom/ We kill a worn out horse, and who but women/ Sigh at the deed? Hew down a withered tree,/ And none look grave but dotards" (p. 163; II, iii, 926-29). Again, Herbert is compared to the mortal and the natural. Finally, when the beggar woman tries to deceive Mortimer, she describes Herbert as being "snappish as a cottage cur" (p. 114, I, iii, 112). Even this negative association is played down through Herbert's affection for his dog. Of these negative references to the aged
man's association with nature, only Mortimer's remarks are not altered nor toned down; these "defamations," then, point out not only Mortimer's delusion, but also the inaccuracy of the predatory connotation. Furthermore, supporting the idea that being termed as a predacious animal is not necessarily negative is one of Herbert's comments to Matilda before she is about to travel without him. He tells her, "Wolves/ Are not the enemies that move my fears" (p. 98; I, ii, 28). By so saying, Herbert implies that natural nonhuman creatures are more easily handled than men. By using Herbert's remark as a counter to Mortimer's, much of the "sting" of the other remarks is negated.

More prevalent than the somewhat derogatory links to nature are those denoting Herbert's affiliation with the more tranquil creatures of nature. Mortimer, about to abandon the old man, states, "With nerves so steady that the very flies/ Sit undisturbed upon his staff--innocent!/ If he were innocent--then he would tremble and be disturbed, as I am" (p. 200; III, iii, 117-20). The flies being at rest and seemingly a part of Herbert's self accentuates the bond between nature and the old man. After learning of Herbert's innocence and upon just finding Matilda, Mortimer alludes to the link with natural elements. Just before approaching the cottage where Herbert lies, Mortimer professes:

... I remember
Twas the first riddle that employed my fancy,
To hunt out reasons why the wisest thing
That the earth owns should never chuse to die
But some one must be near to count his groans.
The wounded deer retires to solitude--
and dies in solitude--all things but man,
All die in solitude--an awful lesson:
There is much wisdom in it (pp. 268, 270; V, iii, 30-38).
This declaration serves several purposes: first, it associates Herbert with the deer as the old man, too, has died in solitude; secondly, it suggests that Herbert is not typical of other human beings; and, lastly, it asserts the beneficence of being at one with natural elements. Once again, the Theory of the One Life is being asserted through Herbert. The last references to animate life link the old man to birds. In walking across the moor, Matilda claims that the larks cheered her and her father's path (p. 80; I, i, 80); and, when Matilda is trying to hearten Herbert, he replies that they are to be "two songsters bred/ In the same nest" (p. 84; I, i, 121-22). Furthermore, Rivers describes the castle cavern where Herbert has lain as "warm as a wren's nest" (p. 154; II, iii, 139-41); and Robert informs Mortimer that a solitary crow rose from the spot where Herbert's body was found (p. 262; V, ii, 70-71). These several descriptions, then, clearly link Herbert to animate nature.

The old man, though, is also portrayed in relation to inanimate nature, thus evoking the previously described dualism between rest and activity. A number of correlations are made between Herbert and heavenly objects. Mortimer, for instance, responds to Rivers' query that Herbert is "Sixty,/ A few moons more or less" (p. 290; V, iii, 239); and, prior to viewing the old man's body, the young man regrets that Herbert was unable to see "the moon in heaven" (p. 268; V, iii, 21-22). Since no other references to the moon are made within the drama, one must consider its attachment to Herbert significant. In addition to being associated with the moon, Herbert is also characterized in relation to the sun. Matilda, like Mortimer with the moon, laments Herbert's inability to see the sun (p. 84; I, i, 116-19).
Likewise, Herbert refers to the sun as well as the wind while he sits alone on the moor before Mortimer's arrival: "tis the feeble and earth-loving wind/ That creeps along the bells of the crisp heath plant./ Alas! Tis cold--I shiver in the sunshine--/ My limbs are cold--I could believe the air portended storm" (p. 190; III, iii, 3-7). In both cases, though the old man cannot see the sun, he is nonetheless aware of it. Finally, Matilda, unaware of her father's abandonment, exalts to Mortimer, "This is a happy day. My father soon/ Shall sun himself before his native door" (pp. 220, 222; III, v, 149-50). Though Matilda is probably literally thinking of her father's renewed right to his baronetcy, she may figuratively be referring to her father's death and return to the eternal. Sherry confirms this action:

Wordsworth takes imaginative advantage of the aura of the unknown which is part of the sensation surrounding the sun's disappearance and appearance. In setting, the sun moves, if only in terms of sensation and feeling, beyond the edge of the known into the unknown. The appearance of its disappearance is what Wordsworth uses to generate the sense of a link between the finite and the infinite. 22

Finally, the star which deters Mortimer from murder is first perceived by him only after he detects the likeness of Matilda in Herbert. The proximity of the effect of the familial similarity and the effect of the star thus establishes another link. The relation of Herbert to these heavenly bodies suggests that he, like they, are constant in existence, ever returning in their cycle of being.

Lastly, Herbert is described in connection with refuges in nature. When Herbert is tired from his exertions, a green bank is nearby where he can rest (p. 82; I, i, 102-03). Later, the old pilgrim recounts that, when he and Herbert were travelling, it began to storm, and "a cave that opened
to the road presented/ A friendly shelter”; and from the boughs and limbs which had been blown into the cave, the pilgrim was able to build a fire to warm them (p. 138; II, ii, 29-30; 33-36); thus, Herbert finds safety and comfort in nature. Herbert also finds shelter in the shade of trees, as recalled by Matilda when she tells how Herbert breathed naturally under the willow shade (p. 80; I, i, 76-77). Herbert is associated with trees under other circumstances as well, since Herbert refers to parts of his body as "limbs" (p. 96; I, ii, 5), and since Robert mistakes the old man's groans as "trees creaking in the wind" (p. 226; IV, i, 10). Robert also describes to Mortimer his excursion with Matilda: "there was a black tree,/ A single tree—she thought it was her father" (p. 262; V, ii, 64-65). All of these descriptions, then, clearly emphasize Herbert's relationship with nature.

When associating the old man with nature, one may also equate him with the eternal. Stallknecht demonstrates how this may be so. He suggests that the "vast and all-inclusive" beauty of nature, particularly as revealed through mountains, intimates "an eternal framework that endures throughout all the phases of the 'changeful earth'; and to this he adds that, while one is enraptured in nature, he steeped his consciousness in the permanence of its object."23 Through Herbert's association with the benevolent and beautiful aspects of nature, he is, thus, also linked to its infinity as one aspect of its entirety. In The Limits of Mortality, Ferry further explains how nature can be synonymous with infinity. He states:

... for them [non-humans], change brings no individual death, since in the human sense they have no individuality, no consciousness of death. In effect, this means to man that change for them brings no death at all. Therefore, nature can be for man a kind of metaphor for eternity, for the absence of death ....
To this he adds that man is unlike nature since he is conscious of change and so is aware that with the end of the changes in his own life he must die. In *The Borderers*, the awareness of death is so, but it is not Herbert who is pre-occupied with his death; instead, Mortimer, Rivers, and Robert are absorbed by the procedure, outcome, and consequences of the old man's demise. Herbert, meanwhile, though aware of his earthly transience, is accepting and little concerned about his decease except to wonder about Matilda's life without him. Through Herbert's lack of interest in his death and through his association with nature, he is also linked with eternity.

Several critics, commenting on the presentation of nature in *The Borderers*, may disagree with such a positive view of the natural, particularly when seen as revelatory of the vision of the One Life. Pipkin, for instance, suggests that in the play there are only two brief and not fully articulated references which foreshadow Wordsworth's later concept of nature, those being the star which halts Mortimer's murderous intention and the absent breeze which makes Rivers wonder if things would have been different had it blown. Though he admits to some pleasantness in nature, Thorslev also finds that "the overwhelming impression of Nature in the drama, however, is of storm, flood, and disaster, and in the progress of Oswald's [Rivers'] scheme, Nature acts almost as if in league with him." Lastly, Osborn concurs with the other two authorities by averring that throughout the play the images of nature such as the single star, the bare rock, and the solitary crow all belong to an impartial, if not alien, world. These three critics, though, all focus to a large extent on
nature from the perspective of Rivers or Mortimer and not from the characterization of Herbert. Once the reader concentrates on Herbert, however, it becomes evident that his view is primarily one of optimism even though he recognizes the ungentle and turbulent forces of the storm. It is in nature where Herbert finds protection and where he at last returns.

Herbert's characterization as a borderer between life and death, between mortality and infinity, leads one to believe that Wordsworth was beginning to conceive the philosophy of the One Life and was not so entirely despondent as has been believed. According to Sheats, the only positive result in the drama is that

Wordsworth turns once again to the sole remaining support available to the mind, nature in its role as epistemological and emotional object ... it is to the sheer existence of something beyond the mind that this play looks for hope. The border of its title is therefore not merely political, but epistemological and theological, a crucial interface that separates and yet connects man and nature, subject and object, the soul and grace."^28

Agreeing with Sheats, Priestman concludes that implicit in The Borderers is Wordsworth's notion that one is led to feelings of benevolence through a "love of nature which can inspire the selflessness prerequisite to a love of one's fellows."^29 Finally, Willey notes that Wordsworth's most urgent needs in nature are tranquillity and restoration, and he concludes,

... he [Wordsworth] could find these best by assimilating himself and other men as closely as possible with the landscape, and with the goings-on of the elements. Therefore the mergence of the human figure with Nature gave it that degree of dignity, of separation from the mere social crowd, in virtue of which alone it could become, for Wordsworth, a worthy symbol of human life as he understood it.^30

Through his bordering the states of rest, life, death, religion, and nature, Herbert becomes the medium through which one can perceive Wordsworth's development of the philosophy of the One Life. By blending these
images in one character, Wordsworth suggests that they are all integrally related and that there is a spirit running through all things. On the verge of life and death and betwixt humanity and eternity, Herbert is the borderer who merges all so that we may perceive the unity in the One.
THE JOURNEY THROUGH LIFE: THE CHILD AND THE OLD MAN

In much of Wordsworth's poetry, frequent allusions are made to journeys or travels; and, while the roving can be interpreted literally, it may also be construed as an allegorical image. From such a view, man is only a temporary traveller on earth, whereas some aspect of him is a "wanderer o'er eternity." Keeping this concept in mind, one readily recollects Wordsworth's presentation of the child in the early years of his great decade. In such works as the Lucy poems, "We Are Seven" and the Intimations Ode, one discovers the child to be a fire-bearer from the other side of reality, infinity. These children wear the vestiges of immortality, visible in their nonrecognition of death and in their intimate communion with the forces of nature representative of eternity. Children become borderers of the infinite in that they retain aspects of the immortal and of the finite as, with age, they slowly lose their innocence. One critic, Sherry, comments on this gradual loss by finding that the natural world is the way away from God as the child steps westward to death, but it is also the way back to God. At the opposite end of the spectrum, the figure of the old man borders infinity; but, rather than a slow weakening of his link to the everlasting, the old man begins to acquire strong associations with the immortal. Between the extremes of youth and old age lies the mature man, he who must come to terms with life and death. Perhaps through the means of the borderers, who represent the One Life, the mature adult can come to such acceptance. Such a perspective of life's journey thus takes form in this manner:
Concurring with this notion is Danby, who asserts,

The poems on old age (and Wordsworth had his vision of old age when he was very young) are as central as the poems on childhood. Wordsworth, as poet and as man, strives to bring the two into relation. Wordsworth is, above all, the poet of man's mortality, brooding over the complete organic cycle.33

More specifically, another critic, Hodgson, explains the poet's world view:

Wordsworth's cosmological model images all of life in terms of two hemi-spheres of sky: the hemi-sphere over our heads, which we see throughout our lives, and the hemi-sphere of our antipodes, the sky over the opposite side of the earth, which of course we cannot see. He presents the former as the mortal, naturalistic world, the latter as the heavenly transcendent world; the boundary between them, the horizon of man's mortal sight, demarcates the events of birth and death and the bournes of human understanding, the limits of man's mortal experience and the extremes of knowledge.34

By bordering the eternal, both the child and the old man offer reflections of immortality; thus, in recognizing the immortal aspects of border figures, those in the middle stage of life are able to find reassurance that the spirit flows through all things. Herbert, in The Borderers, like many of Wordsworth's other characterizations of old men, is a border figure reconciling several opposite elements, but his role as a borderer is further delineated through the journeying metaphor and through the descriptive associations made between him and his child, Matilda. Before examining Herbert more closely, though, one must consider in more depth Wordsworth's depiction of the child as the borderer of eternity.

Concerned with the child as an image of immortality, a considerable number of critics have focused on him as a traveler just arriving from the
eternal, and, in death, as a traveler returning. For example, in "An Approach to Wordsworth's Earlier Imagery," Sonn concludes,

... the children are of both and of neither [traveler-finitude and soul-infinitude]: they are children, but they are the children; they are at the edge of the sea, and at the edge of the land; they are and they are not, imprisoned by finitude: they 'keep their heritage.' And they are thus, in the passage, as in life, a third context; the focus in a totality of relation. 35

He, thus, recognizes the borderline quality of the children, yet he also alludes to their capacity for being a means to divine the One Life. Ferry, likewise, acknowledges the special role of the child when he suggests that the child, though never precisely a symbol, can symbolize the relation of time to eternity and that the child bears a "mystical" relation to the eternal because the youth's perfection is meaningful in view of the fact that it will be lost in the process of human experience. 36 Picking up on Ferry's note, Hartman perceives that the child is closest to divinity; but he cautions of the difficulties involved in humanizing one's soul without losing it and in binding the child's imagination without binding it down. 37 Hartman, then, implies that the child is the medium through which one is capable of discerning the One Life. The image of the child as a borderer of eternity is indeed crucial to Wordsworth's life theory.

Particularly revelatory of the child's relationship to the Theory of the One is the youth's attitude toward and his consanguinity with death as shown in much of Wordsworth's early poetry concerning childhood. In Book V of The Prelude, for instance, the Boy of Winander transcends his mortality and so acts as a medium for comprehending "the nature of things." Barth contends that death has lost much of its terror for Wordsworth with his proper understanding of man's relationship with nature, and the critic
points to the Boy of Winander as an exemplification since the child becomes a part of nature. Moreover, the critic determines that although the Boy of Winander has died, his death has revealed to the poet something beyond death—that death is not an unmitigated evil, that it can in fact be beautiful, can reveal order and harmony. Even beyond this revelation, the poet perceives something of the boy that continues to live on. Since the boy has communed so deeply with the "beautiful and permanent forms of nature," his spirit is at one with the spirit of nature, and thereby in some way partakes of nature's immortality. 38

In death, the young boy remerges completely with nature as does the child of the Lucy poems. Representing the majority opinion, Ferry explains the affinity between the child, nature, and the One Life:

These girls [of the Lucy poems], half-goddesses though also wholly human, are his chief or perhaps his most successful symbols for the relation with the eternal which he is always seeking. They are natural emanations of the landscape, creatures of the temporal scene but their humanness, the fact that they are girls and not flowers, means they are the fulfillment of his promise to himself that man and nature can be one .... 39

Finally, the little girl of "We are Seven" adds another dimension to the association between infinity and youth. Since the girl has not died as have the children of the previously mentioned poems, she represents the childhood vision of death, or rather, deathlessness. Her insistence that she shares an unaltered relationship with her deceased siblings, revealed both in her daily "activities" with them and in her denial that there are only five, suggests that the child does not regard death as change. In the cottage girl's resoluteness, Hodgson detects a preaching of the doctrine of the One Life. 40 These critical works which refer to the child's relationship to death accentuate the nearness of the child to the eternal and so propagate the view of the Many in the One.
Perhaps the most cited of the poems concerning childhood, though, is "Ode: Intimations of Immortality," since within this poem many critics find evidence of Wordsworth's belief in some type of eternity. First, Willey notes that Wordsworth uses the myth of the universal journey of man away from the East. Elaborating on Willey's findings, Sherry postulates that the "linearity of mortality" is transformed into the "circularity of eternal life" through the metaphor of the star/sun, two appearances of the same object. Another critic picks up on this point and compares the image of the child suspended between heaven and earth to that of the sun/star at daybreak suspended between the sky and the horizon. According to these authorities, the child, a borderer between mortality and eternity, has just begun his worldly walk.

The Ode, though, not only points out the identification of the child with the infinite, but also denotes that the adult comes to understand reality through the image of the child. The youth, according to Wordsworth, is the "Eye among the blind" who retains his link with eternity; therefore, the child is the instrument with which the adult is able to perceive his own unity with immortality: "In the soothing thoughts that spring/ Out of human suffering; In the faith that looks through death,/ In years that bring the philosophic mind" (p. 284; 11, 184-87; italics mine). Sperry, offering one explanation of how this is so, suggests that the adult is able to discriminate between two kinds of past experience, one mortal and the other transcendent, and that "what remains behind," as a sign of estrangement from something in the past, becomes an assurance of man's link with eternity. Lincoln, also relying on the idea of time, offers a
variant suggestion to man's reconciliation with his present state. This critic asserts,

he [the poet] must overcome the adult despair that time is destroying him. In the Ode the poet comes to see that the whole spectrum of life, childhood to old age, can be an occasion for contemplative celebration, if man can accept change as potential creation, not destruction. In this perspective man is an agent of time, rather than acted upon by time ....

Both borderers, thus, serve as a means for the adult to perceive the One Life.

Finally, the Intimations Ode also provides a view of old age: "The clouds that gather round the setting sun/ Do take a sober colouring from an eye/ That hath kept watch o'er mortality;/ Another race hath been, and other palms are won" (p. 285; ll. 197-200). These lines indicate the concept of the journey through life as well as the journey beyond: with the completion of the mortal race, one's rewards are forthcoming. Moreover, this passage, particularly through the use of the phrase "a sober colouring," suggests the impact and the sense of awe the observer experiences in beholding a return to that "endless sea." With regard to these lines, Hodgson resolves,

In truth, we must remember, such sunset clouds are gloriously colored and irradiated, even as are the eastern clouds of dawn; and this natural fact accords perfectly with Wordsworth's transcendent, cosmological trope, according to which our death should be but an awakening and a remembering, and the setting of our life's star a rising into the transcendent world, a return to the celestial light which is our source and home.

The Intimations Ode and the other poems on childhood, thus, furnish a great deal of information applicable to the old man as borderer. Unlike the child who is at the onset of his worldly travels, the old man is about to complete his earthly stay; but, both in their separate positions display a
link to the eternal, particularly through the descriptions which relate them to nature. These two borderers also share the role of acting as a medium through which the adult is to gain insight.

As a case in point, Herbert, in *The Borderers*, manifests many similarities to the child; but, because of his age, he has passed through the several ages of life in order to reach his present state. One way of relating Herbert to the child is through his journeying experience. Like the child, Herbert walks two roads simultaneously, the one of the finite world and the other of the eternal. During his temporal travels, the old man arrives at several finite destinations. In his early adulthood, Herbert travels on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land where he loses his wife and baby son; afterward, he returns to his home to find that his land and position have been usurped. With no place to call his own, he then makes his way to Rossland, where the abbot of St. Cuthbert's supplies him with a hut and where a kind stranger looks after Matilda (p. 88; I, i, 160-72). Now, though he has been outcast from his rightful home for years, the play finds Herbert returning to the country of his childhood where, unknown to him, his property is about to be restored to him.

These temporal excursions can easily be simultaneously interpreted as "travels" in relationship to eternity. As a youth before his expedition, Herbert was uninitiated just as is the child first entering the world. After initially leaving his fatherland, he finds that he can no longer return to the security his previous state has provided, and the world and its difficulties are thrust upon him. Symbolic of this alteration of states is Herbert's becoming blind during his trip to the Holy Land; on his travels
away from home, he has been separated from his native refuge and he becomes blind. Speaking of the origin of his blindness, Matilda proclaims, "When I behold the ruins of that face,/ Those eyeballs dark--dark beyond hope of light/ And think that they were blasted for my sake," (pp. 82, 84; I, i, 106-08). Matilda's statement implies that what remained after Herbert became blind was only a vestige of his former being. His being no longer as before, the immediate source of light has been extinguished from his eyes. Furthermore, Matilda describes Herbert returning from "the murderous flames,/ Blind as the grave" (p. 86; I, i, 147-48). In the sudden blinding, Herbert then is characterized as having been rent from his past by "murderous" forces (i.e., forces severing him from his childhood vision) and was, thus, momentarily left seemingly hopeless, "blind as the grave." On his first entering adulthood and being separated from his home, he would feel a deep loss and the grave would represent only despair; but, Herbert, learning to cope with the changes, is able to recoup fairly quickly. Though exiled from where he originally knew security and forced to wander in his adult life, the old man finds reassurances in nature and in faith. His condition reminds one of the great Ode: "What though the radiance which was once so bright/ Be now forever taken from my sight ... We will grieve not, rather find/ Strength in what remains behind" (p. 284; 11. 176-77, 180-81). Despite his actual blindness, Herbert is able to transcend these limitations in order to find true insight and solace in religion and the nature around him, as suggested in Chapter 1. His ability to cope is suggested through his finding comfort in the birds' songs, in God's care, and in his refuge in the caverns and under the trees. In specific, the Old Pilgrim, while talking to Matilda, relates how Herbert begins to transcend
his initial blindness: "His [Herbert's] countenance, methinks I see it now,/ When after a broad flash that filled the cave/ He said to me that he had seen his child/ --A face--and a confused gleam of human flesh,/ And it was you, dear Lady" (p. 138; II, ii, 44-48). Thus, with the assistance of Nature, Herbert is able to see his child, a child who, as the phrase "confused gleam of human flesh" implies, retains an aura of other-worldliness. With regard to this passage, one critic remarks that several later Wordsworthian motifs are present, particularly the child's association with the eternal and its proximity to the grave. For Herbert, his child becomes another means through which he is able to cope with his banishment and through which he again sees. Mortimer makes this evident when he claims that Matilda was the light to Herbert's path (p. 242; IV, ii, 180). Thus, in addition to his "deliverance" through the means of religion and nature, Herbert is also led to tranquillity with the help of child guides, particularly Matilda.

A number of indications throughout the drama suggest that the only guides the old man can trust are children. After he has been cast out, Herbert is "furnished" a guide, but he prefers his own child as he relates to Mortimer:

        I heard a voice
    Such as by Cherith on Elijah called;
It said, "I will be with thee." A little boy,
A Shepherd's lad, ere yet my trance was gone,
Hailed us, as if he had been sent from heaven,
And said with tears that he would be our guide;
I had a better guide--that innocent babe
Who to this hour hath saved me from all evil,
From cold, from death, from penury and hunger.
Therefore I bless her: when I think of man
I bless her with sad spirit; When of God,
I bless her in the fulness of my joy (pp. 198, 200; III, iii, 104-15).
Such a statement clearly evinces the child's distinctive role as a guide. Here the baby and the lad are both connected with heaven; but Herbert chooses as his guide the younger of the two children, who bears more signs of the immortal. Furthermore, Herbert credits Matilda with saving him from death, not only physically but spiritually, since it is through the child that he perceives death is not a finite end. In another conversation with Mortimer, Herbert reveals an additional sign of Matilda's role as a guide as well as of her link with heaven: "I turned away from the dwellings of my Fathers when I was remembered only by those who had trampled me underfoot—I bore/ her in my arms—her looks won pity from the world—when I had/ none to help me she brought me food, she was a raven sent to me in/ the wilderness" (p. 152; II, iii, 122-26). With respect to such descriptions of Matilda, Hodgson asserts that she is one of the prime agents and representatives of God's care and mercy. Despite the aid his daughter has brought him, though, Herbert is forced to separate from her temporarily when she is growing up; nonetheless, throughout his travels, he uses other child guides. For instance, the Old Pilgrim affirms that Herbert had a shepherd's boy as a guide when the two first met; but Herbert, grieved to encumber a child with himself, parted from him. Upon separation from the child, the Pilgrim and Herbert "joined [their] tales of wretchedness together" (p. 136; II, ii, 14-18). Without the child guide, Herbert commiserates with and is in the same condition as his fellow traveller. At last, Herbert requires Matilda to rejoin him; and, though she is likely in her teens, it is evident that Herbert still considers her a child, particularly as he continually refers to her as "child." The significance of this appellation is reinforced by Wordsworth's capitalizing this term in
the 1842 version. Furthermore, she is linked with the youth guides of the childhood poems through her association with nature: the beggar woman describes her as "lovely as a rose" (p. 112; I, iii, 80) and Mortimer refers to her as a flower (p. 194; III, iii, 52-53).\footnote{51} Herbert, then, can only entrust himself completely to child guides, rejects the peasant's offer to guide him since Matilda is at hand, and assigns the innkeeper's "boy" to lead him back to the convent before Rivers offers his false-intentioned services to the old man. Thus, during his earthly life, the true guides for Herbert in his blindness are children.

Through the descriptions linking Herbert specifically with his child, Matilda, one can trace the affinity between the child and the old man, an affinity which may ultimately reveal that both may function as guides. For instance, while they are resting, the old man says to his daughter, "I should be as cheerful [sic]/ As if we two were twins; two songsters bred/ In the same nest, my spring-time one with thine./ Well, be it so---" (p. 84; I, i, 120-23). This statement shows that Herbert indeed is in his "second childhood" where he takes on anew the trappings of eternity. Another indication of the affiliation between Herbert and Matilda occurs whenever Mortimer finds resemblances between the father and the daughter. Twice Mortimer asserts that the voices of the two are similar: he has told Rivers that the old man's voice was the "echo of Matilda's" (p. 158; II, iii, 191-93), and, in talking to Herbert, he states, "There is a vein of her voice that runs through his" (p. 196; III, iii, 63). Mortimer also recognizes facial similarities between the two when, after he fails to murder Herbert in the cave, he tells Rivers, "there was something in his face the very counterpart of Matilda ... Her very looks smiling in sleep.--"
Finally, during Rivers' "confession," Mortimer affirms that Matilda was "the very blood that moved in thee [Herbert]" (p. 242; IV, ii, 181). These descriptions confirm the affinity between the child and the old man, and so the possibility exists that the role of the one as a guide may be the role of the other as well.

Further linking Herbert and Matilda are references to death. Herbert, being close to his final return to eternity, and Matilda, representative of the child still retaining marks of a pre-life, are both closely connected to nonmortal life. Herbert, for instance, mentions that "few minutes gone a faintness overspread/ My frame, and I bethought me of two things/ I ne'er had heart to separate--my grave,/ And thee, my child!" (p. 84; I, i, 112-15). Secondly, before Robert's arrival, the old man, dying, calls out to his daughter (p. 226; IV, i, 5); and when Robert comes, Herbert asks that Matilda be given his blessing since she will never see him again (p. 226; IV, i, 24-25). In death, then, the old man remembers the child; and so the beginning and final stages of life are connected by images of death.

By associating Herbert with the image of the child, one is able to conclude that the old man's bordering eternity functions similarly to the child's bordering the infinite; both are means of perceiving the One Life.

Herbert's overcoming his blindness and separation from home is suggested in numerous ways other than through his ties to children. First, the scriptural passage on his staff, "'I am Eyes to the blind saith the Lord/ 'He that puts his trust in me shall not fail!'" has been etched there by Matilda (p. 202; III, iii, 150-51). Second, since he is the owner of the staff, the statement may naturally be understood as emanating from him.
Herbert, no longer blind to the world, has found means of seeing beyond earthly limitations; and so he now is the eye for those still blind to ways of transcending mortality. Furthermore, references to Herbert's journey also indicate his understanding of the world and his nearness to his imminent return to the eternal. First, Rivers comments on Herbert's progress: "So far into your journey! on my life, / You are a lusty traveller" (p. 100; I, ii, 42-43). Also, when Matilda learns the news of her father's regaining his land, the manner of expression suggests an allusion to another legacy. As Herbert is about to claim title to the land he once possessed, he, unknown to Matilda, is about to be reimmersed in eternity. In retrospect, the reader is also aware that Herbert's wandering on the moor after being deserted is the last leg of both his journeys; thus, one of Robert's statements comes to new significance: "it [the bell] rings as if a human hand were there/ To pull the cord.--I fancy he had heard it,/ And it had led him towards the precipice/ To climb up to the spot whence the sound came" (pp. 258, 260; V, ii, 25-28). On Herbert's journey to the grave and the eternal, he symbolically climbs to the brink where nature, as evinced by the wind, has led him. Lastly, the host of the inn also alludes to the closeness of the old man's completing his cycle of life by using an image commonly associated with dying. The host states that almost immediately after Herbert has gone into the inn to rest: "into the court, my friend [a musician]! and perch yourself/ Aloft upon the elm-tree. Pretty maids!/ Garlands, and flowers, and cakes, and merry thoughts/ Are here to send the sun into the west." (p. 104; I, ii, 69-72). Taking the sun as referring to Herbert, one reads the statement as a joyful response to Herbert's ending his journey through his worldly life as he
regains his place in infinity. Though once exiled from his home, Herbert now returns to where he began, and the cycle of his earthly life is completed.

Two metaphors, the child and the journey, thus help to corroborate the old man's function as a medium through which one may perceive the One Life. Like the child, he is near to eternity and bears resemblances of his closeness to it, especially as evidenced through descriptions relating both of them to nature. The journey metaphor, moreover, accentuates the cycle through which mortals must pass; but, in the most difficult of the stages, the middle one of adulthood, the human being is provided with two means of recognizing the One Life, both which negate finitude. The child and the old man, borderers of eternity, are the means through which the adult is reassured of his status in the order of reality.
PERSPECTIVE: FROM THE HUMAN BRIDGE

As a borderer, the old man functions purposefully in relation to those in the middle stage of the journey through life. Though the Baron Herbert is the primary borderer of the play, bringing together various seemingly contradictory elements, other personages "border" upon the insight a character such as Herbert offers. Though not fully articulated in The Borderers, indications of Herbert's function as a means of insight are evident, particularly through the character Mortimer on whom the drama focuses. Regarded as a tragedy by Wordsworth, the play describes the disillusionment of the young crusader and his separation from nature as he enters adulthood; nonetheless, glimmerings of a reversal in Mortimer's attitude and an acceptance of the change which has occurred within himself are present. These traces are mostly recognized in association with Herbert. Although the old man is the so-called victim of the play, he, especially in his relation to nature, is also the means by which Mortimer can recover; therefore, through his being a borderer of nature, Herbert becomes a bridge between the old disillusioned way of perceiving the world and the new mode of regarding its reality.

One way to ascertain that Mortimer is in the midpoint of his earthly journey, where reassurance is necessary, is his association with blindness. Unlike Herbert, who has prevailed over his blindness and suffering in order to recognize the salvation offered by the synthesis of nature and religion, Mortimer is blinded in a number of ways; yet, instances suggest the possibility of his eventual triumph over his own handicap. In Mortimer's blindness, he is about to enter "the deep dark of night" where the safety
and security once known to him will no longer be available, although he is able at times to perceive forthcoming changes though without considering the consequences of his actions. For instance, early in the drama he relates to Rivers, "The firm foundation of my life appears/ To sink from under me. This business [with Herbert and Matilda], Rivers,/ Will be my ruin" (p. 122; I, iii, 177-80). Though Mortimer is able to perceive the result, he is unable to see how his involvement in the situation may effect his "ruin" and how he may alter the event. Furthermore, Mortimer asserts a general truth, but does not apply it to himself when he informs a member of his band that

... we look
But at the surface of things, we hear
Of towns in flames, fields ravaged, young and old
Driven out in flocks to want and nakedness,
Then grasp our swords and rush upon a cure
That flatters us, because it asks not thought.
The deeper malady is better hid--
The world is poisoned at the heart" (p. 172; II, iii, 337-44).

Despite his recognition of his prior manner of acting, Mortimer does not revise his own method at this point and still acts rashly; and when he asserts that the world is poisoned, he speaks of his own growing disillusionment. Though Mortimer is able to back away from himself momentarily, he cannot do so for long, and so returns to his old limited vision without applying any of his brief insight to himself. In spite of his inability to look beyond for long, Mortimer's comments do reveal that he is capable of some insight; thus, with experience and time, the young crusader may very well learn to look through and beyond the immediate situation as has Herbert.
Most notably, the young crusader's blindness is manifested in his acceptance of Rivers and his lies. By not allowing the old man to lead, Mortimer is led into a state of upheaval by Rivers. First, in believing Rivers, Mortimer is unable to see both Herbert's true affection for his daughter and Herbert's innate goodness; yet, at times, Mortimer intuits the truth and flings away his false intentions. For example, he throws away his sword and does not murder the old man (p. 160; II, iii, 203-06); and he allows the vision of Herbert and the star to deter him. Eventually, though, he is dissuaded from his insight and is again blinded through Rivers' deception. The young man recognizes, but does not fully apprehend, Herbert's innocence: "At this infernal blasphemy [Herbert's saying providence is with the innocent] I thought/ The spirit of vengeance seemed to ride the air;/ ... I listened but/ The echoes of the thunder died away/ Along the distant hills" (p. 148; II, iii, 72-76). The diminishing of the thunder is a sign of the falsity of his belief that vengeance is required; but, Mortimer does not connect the two.

By not regarding the world in the same way as Herbert, Mortimer's vision is obscured. According to Walling, Marmaduke's [Mortimer's] alienation from the real Herbert, as a result of Oswald's [Rivers'] machinations, is almost purely perceptual. 52 Revelatory of this is Rivers' gloating: "[Now] for a few swelling phrases, and a flash of truth enough to dazzle and to blind,/ And he [Mortimer] is mine for ever" (p. 124; II, i, 10-12). Rivers does succeed in altering Mortimer's vision as is evidenced by Mortimer's concluding that eyes were made to weep with (p. 192; III, iii, 12-17), and by his admission that "[his] eyes are weak" with regard to what
he should do with Herbert (p. 200; III, iii, 120-23). Through his trust in Rivers, then, Mortimer's perception of truth gradually deteriorates until his vision is completely destroyed by Rivers. Upon learning of the extent of his short-sightedness, Mortimer plunges into the depths of despair and is further alienated from the natural and the view of the world which Herbert takes. An exemplification of this is the first woodsman's report to Rivers: "Then, as it seemed from some strange intimation/ Of things to us invisible, he [Mortimer] turned/ And looked around him with an eye that shewed/ As if it wished to miss the thing it sought" (p. 254; V, i, 8-11). Moreover, on entering the scene, Mortimer is described as having "an expression of vacancy in his eye, which at last settles upon the ground" (p. 254; note). Thus, the young crusader is depicted as being so greatly affected by his recognition of his past blindness that he retreats further into himself, as displayed by his madness. It is in this state that Mortimer is seen as the drama closes, but the possibility of his "recovery" is likely. Particularly pertinent in this hope are Mortimer's desire that Matilda's eye were present in his heart (p. 278; V, iii, 134) and Matilda's wish that Mortimer had seen her father alive (p. 270; V, iii, 49-50). Although Mortimer saw Herbert physically when he was alive, he failed to see him spiritually; but, with reflection, that opportunity is now open to Mortimer. Both statements suggest that the way Mortimer can transcend his blindness is through the model provided by Herbert. Despite his despondency at the conclusion of the play, Mortimer has the chance to recover and to see the totality of the world rather than its segmentation.
Another sign that Mortimer is in the second stage of his life is his separation from nature; but, as with the idea of blindness, Mortimer has the potential to reunite with it once his vision clears. One sign of Mortimer's dissociation is his fear of the drowned dog as he says to Rivers: "if he [the dog] were here again/ I swear the sight of him would quail me more/ Than twenty armies" (p. 144; II, iii, 38-40). This statement indicates the distance which Mortimer feels is between himself and nature; yet, he feels a sentiment toward it, for he chastises Rivers for having purposelessly drowned the animal (p. 144; II, iii, 43-45). The most descriptive passages of Mortimer's alienation from nature, though, occur following his discovery of Rivers' duplicity. Describing the extent of his guilt, Mortimer claims, "... this scrip [of Herbert's] which would not cause/ The little finger of a child to ache/ DOTH lie upon my bosom with a load/ A mountain could not equal" (p. 276; V, iii, 112-15). At this point, nature is not a solace, but rather a burden, for him. He also tells Matilda that "all nature curses [him]" (p. 274; V, iii, 94); clearly, he believes himself to be alienated from nature. Additionally, the woodsmen's reports about Mortimer's activities suggest his estrangement, since Mortimer listens to the torrent as if he has heard a moaning there (p. 254; V, i, 5-7) and since he regards it as if he would stop the current (p. 254; V, i, 1-3). Mortimer projects onto the river the discontinuity which he feels. His severance from nature, as he perceives it, is also asserted by his belief that the dust moves and eddies at his feet even though the air is still (p. 254; V, i, 14-15). Finally, his sense of separation from nature is revealed in Mortimer's sentence for himself: He will be a "wanderer on earth" and "all the uncertain way/ Shall be as darkness to [him],
a waste unnamed by man" (p. 294; V, iii, 265, 269-71). The above are clear manifestations of Mortimer's feeling of alienation from nature and of his despair at his own ineptitude; nonetheless, signs of his ability to overcome his sense of separation are evident. Not understanding nature correctly, Mortimer is presently blind to its true meaning; but, as Ferry points out, nature, for Wordsworth, is "... a language to be read, signposts to that metaphysical place to which he [Wordsworth] wants to go."53 Once Mortimer interprets nature accurately, he will again sense his unity with it.

Mortimer will be able to transcend his disillusionment and estrangement through the old man whom he has victimized. The chief suggestion of the powerful influence Herbert may have over Mortimer is the effect he has had on the young man during several incidents before Mortimer became dejected. The first record of Herbert's impact on Mortimer notes the young man's reverence for his elder:

Though I have never seen his face, methinks
There cannot be a time when I shall cease
To love him. -- I remember, when a Boy
Of six years' growth or younger, by the thorn
Which starts from the old church-yard wall of Lorton,
It was my joy to sit and hear Matilda
Repeat her father's terrible adventures
Till all the band of playmates wept together,
And that was the beginning of my love.
And afterwards, when we conversed together
This old man's image still was present: chiefly
When I had been most happy (pp. 78, 80; I, i, 59-71).

Without ever having met Herbert, Mortimer retained a memory of him, a fact which clearly reveals the influence Herbert has exerted over him. Now that Mortimer has met him and once he distances himself from the events leading to Herbert's death, the crusader may again call the memory to himself and
remember the way in which Herbert accepted his trials; Herbert will then provide inspiration and insight for him. The high plausibility of this occurring is reinforced by Walling's conclusion that this passage is a "clumsy forerunner of Wordsworth's greatest poetry." Mortimer also reacts to Herbert as have carmen and armed travellers (p. 196; III, iii, 73-79). Thinking of Herbert's supposed crimes, he states, "And yet in pluming the abyss of vengeance/ Something I strike upon which turns my thoughts/ Back on myself--I think again--my breast/ Concenters all the terrors of the universe,/ I look at him [Herbert] and tremble like a child--" (p. 146; II, iii, 61-65); thus, Mortimer divines Herbert's association with the universe and its power, while, at the same time, he equates himself with a child. Mortimer also relates that twice, when he was about to strangle the old man, a weakness overcame him so that he "could have dropped asleep upon his [Herbert's] breast" (p. 160; II, iii, 196-98). The presence of the old man, then, becalms Mortimer and leads him away from his dire intentions; and Mortimer's ease in falling asleep evokes the earlier observation that, for Herbert, sleep is a borderline condition which enforces the idea of the Many in the One. Another suggestion of the power Herbert holds over the young man is Mortimer's statement: "It must be--I must see/ That face of his [Herbert's] again--I must behold it--/ 'Twere joy enough to end me" (p. 170; II, iii, 308-10). Mortimer, recognizing Herbert's dynamic influence, is compelled to regard him again and perceives that what he sees in the old man is a form of reassurance about the rightness of the world. The most prominent indication of Herbert's effect is Mortimer's rendition of how he could not murder the old man:
Twas dark, dark as hell--yet I saw him--I tell thee I saw him, his face towards me--the very looks of Matilda sent there by some fiend to baffle me.--It put me to my prayers--I cast my eyes upwards, and through a crevice in the roof I beheld a star twinkling over my head, and by the living God--I could not do it-- (p. 168; II, iii, 287-9).

Herbert, as the impetus which leads Mortimer to discern the star, acts as a link between nature and Mortimer; and Mortimer's ability to see the old man despite the darkness indicates Herbert's power to affect others. According to Priestman, this account of the star's exertion of power over Mortimer indicates that the young man's mind is affected by the impressions made by nature. Sheats expands on Priestman's report on the effect of the star: "Even as Mortimer's intellect strives to deny the autonomous life of the star, however, his language affirms it: the atom remains an 'eye,' a watching presence, able to judge and redeem." Lastly, Jones comments that Mortimer is not blind to the presence of the star as is Rivers, who sees nothing but himself, and that seeing, as Mortimer does, is the topic of Wordsworth's poetry the next ten years. These critical conclusions, though they do not acknowledge Herbert's role, indicate that, despite Mortimer's eventual feeling of alienation from nature at the end of the drama, he nonetheless has recognized the influence of nature once and, so, is likely to perceive it again when time has passed. The feasibility of Herbert's role in Mortimer's eventual acceptance of his status is suggested by Herbert's association with both the star and the sun. Herbert, more often connected with the sun, is too close to Mortimer during the play; therefore, Mortimer cannot perceive clearly at this point. He is, in effect, blinded by his nearness to Herbert. The star's one-time
effect on Mortimer, though, implies that a distance from the source of light will permit a clearer perspective.

Mortimer's ability to recuperate through an awakening perception to Herbert's life and philosophy and through a dawning awareness of nature's totality is highlighted by several comments made by Rivers. Although he manipulates facts to his own advantage, Rivers at times perceives accurately the power Herbert may exert on Mortimer. For instance, Rivers recognizes that in this universe "... the least control the greatest" and "the faintest breath that breathes can move a world" (p. 216; III, v, 83-85). Such is the role for Herbert as he, who is one of the least who falters between life and death, is able to influence others. Likewise, Rivers comments truthfully when he proclaims to Mortimer that "the seed must be/Hid in the earth or there can be no harvest;/ Tis nature's law" (p. 244; IV, ii, 214-16). The good represented by Herbert has been hidden from Mortimer; but, now that his worth has been revealed, the "seed" may begin to grow and the young crusader may learn from his elder. Lastly, Rivers claims,

I now perceived [sic]
That we are praised by men because they see in us
The image of themselves; that a great mind
Outhuns its age and is pursued with obliquy [sic]
Because its movements are not understood.
I felt that to be the world's friend
We must become the objects of its hate (p. 240; IV, ii, 151-57).

These circumstances apply to Herbert better than to any other character in the play since he has been abused; and, though what he represents has not been understood by Mortimer as yet, the crusader may perceive it at some point. Herbert, having been the object of Mortimer's hate, is now the
friend through whom Mortimer can be consoled and reconciled with nature.

Finally, there are several indications that suggest Mortimer's ability to transcend his disillusionment and disconsolation. The first sign of this inability is when he forgives Rivers for misleading him (p. 290; V, iii, 247-49); although Rivers is responsible for provoking the crusader to misdirected actions, Mortimer exhibits largess by freeing Rivers of his responsibility. Secondly, Mortimer rejects Rivers' method of coping with the situation and his guilt; and, as Stoddard points out—though he finds The Borderers to be "the nadir of Wordsworth's hope for man"—this act of renunciation is "the only hopeful aspect of the tragedy." Despite Stoddard's bleak appraisal of the entire play, Mortimer's rejection of River's solution allows for the possibility that the young man may eventually grasp Herbert's conception of the world upon reflecting on the old man and his way of life. Another indication that Mortimer will be able to withstand his despondency is that he chooses solitude for his punishment, the same choice Herbert made during his lifetime. Jones points out that, in doing so, Mortimer takes on the "mantle of Herbert" and, thus, "accepts his solitude as a condition imposed by the natural order of things, uncontrived and inescapable." Osborn also notes that Mortimer and Herbert become identified with each other since the younger assigns to himself the ordeal to wander which he had inflicted on Herbert. By taking this upon himself and isolating himself from his fellow creatures, Mortimer will be exposed to nature in its many forms as was Herbert.

Mortimer has a purpose in choosing a penance of solitude—that he will come to understand the world better. According to Sheats, the crime, which concludes in the above manner, becomes a "... rite de passage beyond which
the soul can progress only through humility and atonement." In a pilgrim-
age such as Mortimer's there is freedom and hope.61 In addition, though Osborn does not believe the final lines invoke the doctrine of the One Life, he asserts, nonetheless, that

Mortimer does in the final lines of the early version propose a route toward the healing of the opposition between man and nature through an openness to suffering that will eventually be redeemed through the experience to "forgetfulness." The burden Mortimer takes on is that of experiencing total exposure to the "nature of nature," and thereby the nature of man's condition in nature, which he had imposed on Herbert as an "ordeal."62

For Mortimer, there is hope in his being able to overcome his despondency, particularly as he has opted for a life like Herbert's, indicating at least his potential recognition of the "correct" view held by the old man.

In association with Mortimer's choice of penance is the role memory will play during his wanderings. An example of this can be found in Mortimer's remarks to himself in the woods: "in terror,/ Remembered terror, there is love and peace" (p. 208; III, v, 3-4). This statement reveals that, in recalling his actions, Mortimer will be able to transcend his situation. A large part of this will be due to his memories of Herbert. As Mortimer later professes to Robert, he "could have borne him [Herbert]/ A thousand miles" (p. 260; V, ii, 45-46); and, in his wanderings, Mortimer figuratively will bear Herbert and his image with him. It is through this memory that Mortimer will be able to cope with his relation to the rest of his life. Pipkin, for one, notices that memory does play an essential part in The Borderers, since this play is Wordsworth's first exploration of "the way in which the memory of a particular place and event in the past can form the foundation for a person's whole philosophy ...."63 Mortimer will undoubtedly recall the old man's contentment and acceptance as manifested
in his relationships both with religion and with nature; thus, he is sure to see the two merging in Herbert. What Stallknecht points out about perception directly relates to the function of Mortimer's memory: "... the instability of every object [i.e., Herbert] does not involve the possibility of its total eradication. No object can disappear without leaving traces of itself and the omnipresence of such persistence is open to intuition." In remembering Herbert, then, traces of the old man are still alive in Mortimer, a sign of the young man's continuity with Herbert.

Through his choice of wandering, and through the function of memory, the potential for Mortimer to reconcile himself with nature and to transcend his short-sightedness is implied within the play. The primary means for Mortimer's recovery lie in the image of Herbert. Though physically dead, the old man's spirit is present within Mortimer. The borderer of life and death and nature and religion acts as a bridge from which those in the middle stage of life can intuit the continuity of life.
CONCLUSION

Though Herbert of The Borderers may seem rather inconsequential at first glance, he takes on great significance upon scrutiny. Noting the associations of the old man with opposing qualities, one sees the germination of Wordsworth's philosophy of the One Life. Herbert's intimate connection with a state of reduced motion suggests his link to both the animate and inanimate. This bond is also affirmed through his close association with living and moving creatures and with stationary aspects of nature. Herbert's contiguous relationship with nature, furthermore, intimates his relationship with the eternal, since, for Wordsworth, nature becomes a primary symbol of the everlasting. Also suggesting the old man's kinship with the immortal is his characterization as a religious figure. In his being the character most closely related to nature and religion, Herbert is a means for a melding of the two; and the immortality associated with religion is transmitted to nature. Through his affiliation with such states, the character Herbert crystalizes the concepts associated with each quality in order to become a metaphor for the One Life. That Herbert is a worthy symbol for this theory is established by his own acquiescence to his condition. Well into the last stage of his human life, Herbert has accepted and is content with his status in the world order and so has transcended the limitations of life's middle phase.

As a metaphoric borderer, Herbert functions like the Wordsworthian child who still retains signs of his immortality. Both provide the mature, disillusioned man a means for finding consolation and salvation. He who openly regards either is able to discern the One Life and, therefore,
is reassured of his own link to the eternal. Thus, though seemingly weak and helpless, the old man Herbert displays his own type of fortitude and furnishes strength for those observing him.

The embodiment of an evolving philosophy, Herbert becomes the prototype for later Wordsworthian venerables. His progeny includes the old Cumberland beggar and the traveller of "Animal Tranquillity and Decay," and the image culminates with the leechgatherer of "Resolution and Independence." Like Herbert, these aged solitaries combine various characteristics in order to assert their role as representatives of the One Life. The borderer Herbert, the early literary figure, is, thus, an important and vital character in Wordsworth's evolving conceptualization of the One Life. He is the vehicle for understanding man's relationship to nature and the eternal.
ENDNOTES

1 The text of The Borderers used for the basis of this essay is the early version (1797-99) as found in Robert Osborn, ed. (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1982). This version is based on the fair copy text of Dove Cottage MS 23 made in 1799. The play, essentially finished in 1797, thus belongs to the year before Wordsworth's great decade supposedly begins. I have chosen the early version of the play in order to examine the possible embodiment of the Theory of the One in the old man Herbert. Documentation of quotations from the drama will be intext notes within parentheses. Unless otherwise indicated, all references will be taken from the early version.


3 The Theory of the One Life will be discussed more fully later in the essay.


9 Ramsey, p. 263.


18 This point will be further elaborated in Chapter 3.

19 Walling, p. 337.

20 Walling, pp. 334-35.

21 This statement, by bringing together the images of the flies and the staff, also serves as a link between nature and religion. Furthermore, if one juxtaposes the above statement with Herbert's when the thunder reminds him that guilt should shudder, one is made more fully aware of the veracity of the old man's statement and the falsity of Mortimer's.


28 Sheats, p. 133.

30 Willey, p. 287.
31 George Gordon, Lord Byron, Childe Harold, Canto iii, Stanza 70.
32 Sherry, p. 197.
36 Ferry, p. 43.
39 Ferry, p. 79.
40 Hodgson, p. 88.
41 Willey, pp. 286-87.
42 Sherry, p. 197.
45 Stuart M. Sperry, Jr., "From 'Tintern Abbey' to the 'Intimations Ode': Wordsworth and the Function of Memory," Wordsworth Circle, 1, No. 2 (Spring 1970), 45.
46 Lincoln, p. 214.
47 Hodgson, pp. 108-09.
54


49. Herbert's blessing Matilda in sad spirit when he thinks of men suggests his recognition of the change which occurs within mortals.

50. Hodgson, p. 5.

51. It must be noted that as the play advances and as Matilda is separated longer from her father, she loses some of her associations with the child and so begins her journey into adulthood. For instance, Matilda first alludes to the possibility of her change when she says, "Why if a wolf should leap from out a thicket/ A look of mine would send him scurrying back,/ Unless I differ from the thing I am/ When you [Herbert] are by my side (p. 98; I, ii, 24-27). Her situation is also paralleled with the daughter of the captain abandoned by Rivers (p. 234; IV, ii, 81-89). Furthermore, Mortimer suggests the immediacy of her change when he tells her, "I feel a most unusual fondness for thee./ Thou must be wise as I am, thou must know/ What human nature is, decoyed, betrayed--" (p. 272; V, iii, 57-59). Once Matilda knows that her father is dead, she curses her father's murderer; and Mortimer, responding to her curse, says, "... my heart has joined thee" (p. 272; V, iii, 60-73). With her curse, Osborn notes that Matilda thus rejects the ethic of blessing all which her father taught her and so she is now separated from the "natural religion" she followed during Herbert's lifetime (Introduction, p. 35). She, then, is entering the same stage as Mortimer. Also indicative of Matilda's change is her status as a twice born; and as Hartman notes, according to archetypal theory, she is a symbol of anti-nature consciousness based on a fatal or violent separation from nature (Hartman, Murder, p. 768). She has been abruptly torn from her father, who has been associated with nature, and now is entering a new stage of life. It is crucial to remember, though, that from Herbert's perspective, Matilda is always a child.

52. Walling, pp. 328-29.

53. Ferry, p. 10.

54. Walling, p. 335. Walling also recognizes that this passage is an "inchoate blending of nature, memory, joy and fear."

55. Priestman, pp. 60-61.

56. Sheats, p. 133.


59 Jones, p. 60.
61 Sheats, p. 127.
63 Pipkin, p. 111.
64 Stallknecht, p. 92.
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